

# INSIGHT



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## Quick Links

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# UNLEASH YOUR CREATIVE TALENTS

Your original artwork could be  
the next cover of *INSIGHT*!

The External Affairs Department  
of Middlesex County Magnet Schools is now  
accepting submissions of vibrant, inspirational,  
original artwork to be featured as the cover of  
the award-winning district newsletter, *INSIGHT*.

Submit your artwork by  
[clicking here\\*](#)

Deadline to submit to be featured  
in the Spring issue is March 10.

*\*Rules and more information detailed within.*

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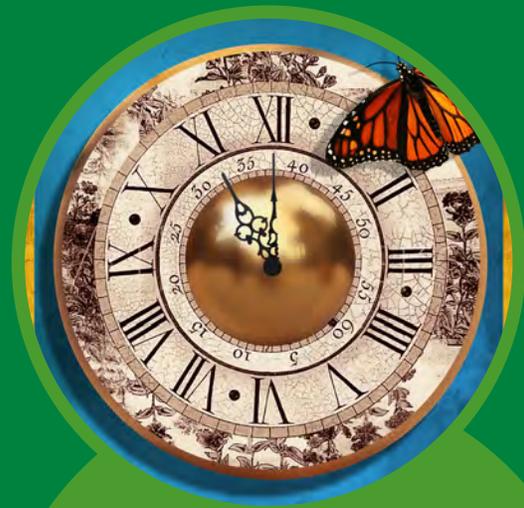
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## Cover Artwork

*"Give Yourself Time"  
Created by Hailey Toth*

*Class of 2025  
Graphic Design Program  
East Brunswick Magnet School  
(full feature on next page)*



Time



Yourself



Give

"Give Yourself Time"  
Created by Hailey Toth

Class of 2025  
Graphic Design Program  
East Brunswick Magnet School

# A MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

## Middlesex County Magnet Schools celebrates a thriving educational community



The holiday season is behind us and I hope everyone enjoyed their winter break. Whether you stayed local or traveled beyond Middlesex County, I hope you were able to create new and meaningful memories with loved ones.

A common theme for the new year is reflection. As we eagerly look forward to what awaits our school district in 2025, let us first reflect on some incredible achievements from throughout the district this past fall/winter season.

I am proud to acknowledge Alayna Ruby, East Brunswick Magnet School Social Worker, and Grace DiMarco, District Social Worker on their recent completion of the Nurtured Heart Institute's Certification Training Intensive. The Nurtured Heart Approach (NHA) is a philosophy for creating healthy relationships with others and consists of strategies that assist students in further developing their self-regulation. The approach focuses on transforming how students perceive themselves, their caregivers, and their world. We anticipate weaving these principles into our school district, and we are thankful that Alayna and Grace placed the wellbeing of our students first by achieving this certification.

It gives me great satisfaction to highlight a remarkable initiative recently undertaken by Kenya Lopez and Daniella Fatola, co-presidents of the Interact Club at Perth Amboy Magnet School. Through their collaboration with the Salvation Army, these exceptional students orchestrated a donation drive that exemplifies the values we strive to instill in our educational community. What began as a straightforward service project evolved into a powerful demonstration of our students' leadership capabilities and our school's collective spirit of giving.



# A MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

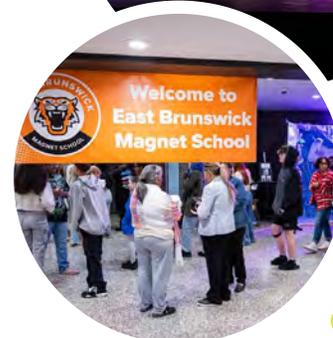
For these young volunteers, the donation drive became more than just a school project, it became a testament to how their hard work could create meaningful change in their community. Sometimes the simplest initiatives can yield the most profound impacts; a job well done to our student organizers and all who donated.

I am delighted to share with you a remarkable achievement from Chef Mastrella's Culinary Arts program at Piscataway Magnet School. Our talented students recently demonstrated their professional capability through an innovative "Dinner to Go" initiative, aptly named "Couples Night," which served our dedicated staff members. Our students embraced every aspect of the culinary profession. They didn't simply prepare meals, they elevated the entire experience. Their careful consideration of table arrangements and packaging demonstrated a thorough understanding of how fine dining extends beyond just the food itself. This comprehensive approach to their craft exemplifies the real-world professional skills we aim to develop in our career and technical education programs.

East Brunswick Magnet School of the Arts held their annual Senior Showcase.

The showcase represented more than a traditional performance, it was a celebration of artistic diversity and student innovation. Seniors within the School of the Arts dedicated countless hours to conceptualizing and crafting original works spanning multiple disciplines, from visual arts and dance performances to musical performances and innovative film productions. The depth of talent displayed was nothing short of extraordinary. What makes this event particularly meaningful is how it unites the entire East Brunswick Magnet School senior class.

Watching students support and admire their peers' creative expressions in the brand new East Brunswick Magnet School Performing Arts Center has been long awaited by the school community.



# A MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT



I am also excited to report the exceptional news regarding our district's representation in the prestigious 2024-2025 Governor's STEM Scholars program. In a highly competitive selection process that drew over 1,000 applicants from across New Jersey, seven of our outstanding students from Edison Academy and Woodbridge Academy Magnet Schools have earned places in this distinguished cohort of just 111 participants statewide. The selection of these seven students not only reflects their exceptional academic abilities but also represents our district's commitment to fostering excellence in STEM education. I look forward with great anticipation to witnessing how their experiences in the Governor's STEM Scholars program will contribute to the next generation of scientific innovation and discovery.

This is merely a small portion of what has been achieved and celebrated recently within the Middlesex County Magnet Schools. In this issue of INSIGHT, you will read about a plethora of students, teachers, and activities that will inspire you. I am proud to acknowledge that this is a daily occurrence throughout our schools, and I hope you enjoy the 2025 winter edition of the award winning district newsletter, INSIGHT.

Kind Regards,

**Jorge E. Diaz**  
*Superintendent*



# ALUMNI PORTAL

## Graduating This Year? Alumni of the District? Register Today!

Congratulations to the Middlesex County Magnet Schools Class of 2025. We couldn't be prouder of all our seniors, who have proven that through hard work and perseverance, greatness can be achieved.

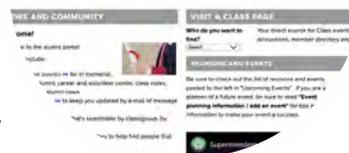
As you embark on the next phase of your lives and careers, please consider staying in contact with your alma mater and all your fellow alumni. [Click here](#) for the official announcement video.

In our schools, we believe in the power of lifelong connections and in providing students with opportunities to benefit them throughout life. The bonds formed within our schools can continue to grow after graduation day, and we're very excited to announce a new platform that will further strengthen those connections. Our alumni website is a dedicated online platform designed exclusively for our graduates who have passed through our halls in East Brunswick, Edison, Perth Amboy, Piscataway and Woodbridge. This digital hub will be a centralized place for networking, mentorship, career development, and much more.

Whether you were a Vo-Tech student years ago or are a recent Magnet Schools graduate, with the alumni portal, you'll be able to:

- **Connect with fellow alumni:** Reconnect with old friends and make new connections within our growing alumni network. Find classmates, join affinity groups based on graduation years, and expand your professional network.
- **Explore career opportunities:** Discover job openings, internships, and mentorship programs tailored to our career and technical education community. Perhaps you'd like to seek career advice from other graduates – or post a new job opportunity? This platform will be your go-to resource.
- **Stay updated:** Receive the latest news, events, and announcements from the Magnet Schools and throughout Middlesex County. Stay informed about reunions, alumni gatherings, and other opportunities to engage with your alma mater.

Our student successes reflect our community's strength, and we actively want to forge lifelong relationships with every member of our extended family. Join us today on [alumni.mcmsnj.net](https://alumni.mcmsnj.net) to connect, and help recent graduates continue to unleash their passion.



# MIDDLESEX COUNTY<sup>3</sup>

*Our district, the county, the  
college, and beyond*

# MIDDLESEX COUNTY<sup>3</sup> (MC<sup>3</sup>)

## Caught in 4K - Piscataway Mayor Brian C. Wahler visits Piscataway Magnet School

Piscataway Magnet School had the distinct honor of hosting Mayor Brian C. Wahler and officials from the Township of Piscataway for a comprehensive tour of the career and technical education programs. Students were able to showcase their craft and share their perspective on what career-focused education means for them and their futures.

Mayor Wahler and his team were intrigued by the engagement of our students and the depth of their knowledge. The career programs that the guests visited included Culinary Arts, Graphic Design, Cosmetology, Welding, Automotive Maintenance and Light Repair, Construction Maintenance and Design, The Hook Cafe, Global Logistics / Supply Chain Management, and lastly Baking and Pastry Arts. They saw firsthand how Magnet School students learn with industry standard equipment and are taught industry relevant skills. Mayor Wahler was especially intrigued by the Global Logistics career program because Piscataway Township is home to a plethora of business warehouses where expertise in global tracking systems are essential.

Thank you to all the students and teachers who prepared for Mayor Wahler's visit. Piscataway Magnet School left a positive, lasting impression that career and technical education is thriving and the Middlesex County Magnet Schools District is leading the way in specialized career training.



# MIDDLESEX COUNTY<sup>3</sup> (MC<sup>3</sup>)

## Middlesex County Magnet School of the Arts: Music Performance and Technology Students Rock The Stage At Annual Winter Music Festival



Students of the Middlesex County Magnet School of the Arts: Music Performance and Technology program brought the warmth of live music to the East Brunswick Magnet School Performing Arts Center for their annual Winter Music Festival. With instruments such as guitars, keyboards, bass, and drums, the students seamlessly blended genres of music ranging from slow jazz to modern pop into their track list. Standout performances included “Respect,” a bold and energetic anthem, “How Far I’ll Go,” a musical number from Disney’s Moana, an a-capella version of “BIRDS OF A FEATHER,” and “At Last,” a timeless ballad exclusively performed by the program’s senior class.

Senior Maddox Funk, who played the guitar in the performance, shared his thoughts about the experience: “Our first years performing were kind of nerve-wracking. Now, we’re used to it. We don’t really have stage fright.”

Senior Giselle Provost, a vocalist, echoed a similar sentiment, adding, “This was our last winter show as seniors. It made me think, ‘Wow, this is really it.’”

Students are able to replicate a professional performance with a fully digital audio system housed within the East Brunswick Magnet School Performing Arts Center. They are also able to train on industry standard equipment all through the Music Technology program, facilitated by Mr. Andy Greatorex.

“Compared to previous shows, I challenged my students with harder material,” he explained. “And they certainly rose to the challenge.”

A fantastic performance by all; we cannot wait for the next music festival.

*Written by Tesia Yachimovicz, class of 2025*



# MIDDLESEX COUNTY<sup>3</sup> (MC<sup>3</sup>)

## External Affairs represented Middlesex County Magnet Schools at the New Brunswick Community Kwanzaa Celebration.

This family friendly event was held at the New Brunswick Performing Arts Center and was a celebration of light and unity. Throughout the celebration attendees were able to enjoy cultural and artistic performances, indulge in delicious food, and learn about various community based organizations. External Affairs was able to provide useful insight to families and prospective students about the school district. Thank you to the New Brunswick NAACP for welcoming us and providing an opportunity to be part of the beautiful and uplifting Kwanzaa celebration. We look forward to joining again next year.



## The Middlesex County Board of County Commissioners held its annual Reorganization Meeting on January 7th at the Middlesex College Performing Arts Center.

The event brought together distinguished guests, including Governor Philip Murphy and Assembly Speaker Craig Coughlin, alongside an audience of local officials, community leaders, and residents. The evening featured the swearing-in ceremonies for Commissioner Director Ronald G. Rios and Commissioner Deputy Director Shanti Narra.

Reflecting on the past year, Middlesex County Commissioner Director Ronald G. Rios celebrated Middlesex County's commitment to innovation, collaboration, and improving the quality of life for all residents.

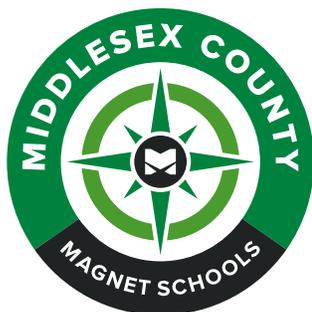
"The primary mission of the Board of County Commissioners is to serve every person who lives or works in Middlesex County. We do that by innovating daily and in every way possible," said

Middlesex County Commissioner Director Ronald G. Rios. "In 2024, we worked tirelessly to create opportunities, strengthen our communities, and build a brighter future. As we step into 2025, we remain steadfast in our mission to innovate and lead while constantly looking for new and better ways to serve our residents and business community."

For more event highlights, visit [MiddlesexCountyNJ.gov](https://MiddlesexCountyNJ.gov).



# FOLLOW US!



**COLLEGE READY.  
CAREER READY.  
LIFE READY.**



**ADULT  
EDUCATION**

Keep up to date on what's happening throughout the Middlesex County Magnet Schools by following us on all of our social media accounts!



**COLLEGE READY.  
CAREER READY.  
LIFE READY.**



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**EAST BRUNSWICK**

PRODUCTION OF

# MAMMA MIA!

MUSIC AND LYRICS BY  
**BENNY ANDERSSON**  
**BJÖRN ULVAEUS**

AND SOME SONGS WITH STIG ANDERSON

BOOK BY **CATHERINE JOHNSON**

ORIGINALLY CONCEIVED BY **JUDY CRAYMER**

MAMMA MIA! WAS ORIGINALLY PRODUCED IN LONDON  
BY JUDY CRAYMER, RICHARD EAST AND BJÖRN ULVAEUS  
FOR LITTLESTAR IN ASSOCIATION WITH UNIVERSAL

ADDITIONAL MATERIAL & ARRANGEMENTS  
**MARTIN KOCH**

MUSIC PUBLISHED BY UNIVERSAL MUSIC PUBLISHING GROUP AND  
EMI GROVE PARK MUSIC INC. AND EMI WATERFORD MUSIC INC.

**February 20 – Performance, 7pm**  
**February 21 – Performance, 7pm**  
**February 22 – Performance, 7pm**  
**February 23 – Performance, 2pm**

Directed by Brian Homer  
Choreographed by Cleo Mack  
Musical Director Andy Greatorex  
Technical Director Lea Anello

For tickets and info visit us at

<https://MiddlesexCountyMagnetSchoolNJ.ludus.com/200472661>

# NEWS RECOGNITION



## Featured Articles About Us:

### Edison Academy Magnet School Student Breaks Guinness World Record

- [TapInto South Plainfield](#)
- [TapInto Woodbridge / Carteret](#)
- [TapInto Woodbridge / Carteret - Arts & Entertainment](#)

### INDIA TIMES Names Academies as Popular High Schools

- [INDIA TIMES](#)

### Students Who Were Named Governor's STEM Scholars for 2024-2025

- [Patch Edison / Metuchen](#)
- [TapInto East Brunswick](#)

### Edison Students Accept NASA App Challenge

- [Patch Edison / Metuchen](#)
- [TapInto Edison](#)

### 2024 United Soccer Coaches High School Fall Team Ethics and Sportsmanship Award Winner

- [United Soccer Coaches](#)

↳ [View all District News posted on mcmsnj.net](#)

↳ [View all School News posted on mcmsnj.net](#)



# MCMS LIFE

*Spotlighting the  
accomplishments of our  
students, staff, and their impact  
on their communities*

# BEYOND THE BOOKS

## Serving Beyond Our Classrooms

East Brunswick Magnet School and their dedicated SkillsUSA chapter volunteers rose early to support the Metuchen YMCA Tot Trot & Fall Festival held at St. Joseph High School. They worked together to set up the event, ran engaging games and races for the children, and stayed afterward to assist with cleanup, showing their commitment to creating a memorable and smoothly run experience for the entire community.

Edison Academy Magnet School Senior Archith Raman has broken the Guinness World Record for the fastest time to type the alphabet while blindfolded, setting a new record at 3.51 seconds! He was recently featured in TAPinto News for this achievement.

The Woodbridge Academy Magnet School Interact Club, under the guidance of Ms. Bowen, hosted a school-wide holiday food drive to support the St. James Food Pantry in Woodbridge. A total of 985 items were collected. The pantry serves Woodbridge township residents and the greater Middlesex County community.

Ms. Dlugosz's Visual Arts classes at Perth Amboy Magnet School created Spooky Book Sculptures that celebrated Halloween. Students sculpted the books out of cardboard and hot glue, decided on a creative title and theme, then decorated the cover and spine with acrylic paint. What better way to present them than in the library. Thank you to Ms. Forsman for helping display the Spooky Books, and a job well done to the students of Perth Amboy Magnet School.



# STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

## Extraordinary Students Making a Difference in Their Own Way

Piscataway Magnet School's Alfonso Tapia, a senior in the Welding Technology program, showcased exceptional skills by fabricating a specialized tool for removing reduction gears from a Caterpillar bulldozer. To accomplish this, Alfonso earned a Dual Shield Certification under the guidance of Mr. Glen Foli, demonstrating remarkable technical expertise and dedication to his craft.



Aditya Sha, a Junior at Woodbridge Academy Magnet School and an officer of the BioComp Club, has achieved a significant milestone with the publication of his research paper in the peer-reviewed journal *Advances in Genetics*, a wide-scope journal focused on cutting-edge research in gene science. The paper highlights the critical role of genetics in the development and progression of Type 2 diabetes, contributing valuable insights to the growing body of research on the topic.

Aditya has been interning at the Perry Lab at Yale University, part of the Department of Cellular and Molecular Physiology and Internal Medicine. The lab specializes in research on cancer, metabolism, and exercise.

Currently, Aditya is continuing his research at the Perry Lab, focusing on an ongoing project exploring the impact of obesity, menopausal status, and exercise on breast cancer prognosis. This research is expected to be published in Summer 2025.

We are incredibly proud of Aditya's achievements and the valuable work he continues to do, not only as a researcher but also as a leader and mentor through the BioComp Club. His dedication to scientific exploration and his commitment to guiding fellow students set an inspiring example for the entire Woodbridge Academy Magnet School community.

# FACULTY SPOTLIGHT

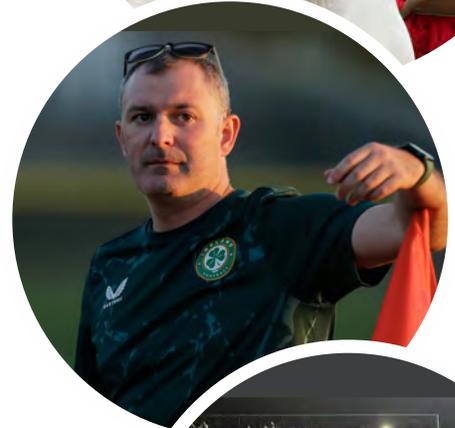
The Middlesex County Magnet School district Cosmetology instructors attended a class on manicuring at Gregg's Wholesale and Retail Beauty Supply in Linden, NJ.

The instructors learned the latest techniques on manicuring and gel applications by an industry professional. This class is part of three class series that instructors will attend, which is funded through the Perkins Grant. The instructors are excited to share what they learned with their students.

The Piscataway Magnet School boys soccer head coach Mike O'Boyle was selected as the Gold Division Coach of the year, and the GMC Conference Coach of the Year. Congratulations to coach O'Boyle.

Ms. Wechsler, Ms. Byszynski from Piscataway Magnet School, and Ms. Carcamo-Zeidman from East Brunswick Magnet School attended the 2024 ACTFL Convention in Philadelphia. They joined more than 6,000 colleagues from around the world to share and explore creative and innovative approaches to world language instruction.

Ms. Pelcman and Mr. Bohackyj, science teachers at East Brunswick Magnet School, attended an amazing professional development opportunity. They spent a few hours on the Rutgers University research vessel up the Raritan River in Middlesex County. They collected data on water quality, and did qualitative observations on wildlife visible from the vessel. They shared data and ideas as to how to bring this back to our ecology lessons.

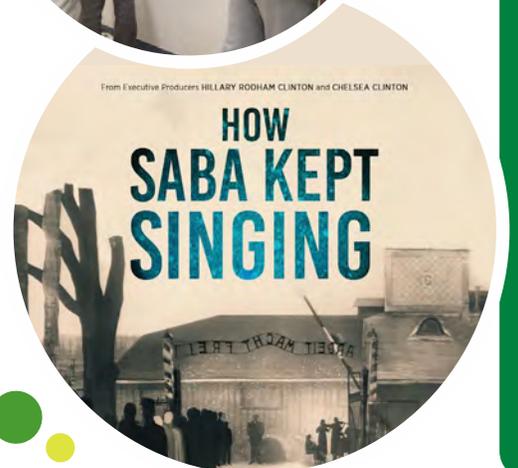


# STUDENT ACTIVITIES

Piscataway Magnet School Culinary Arts students learned about the food truck business during a field trip to Donaldson Farms in Hackettstown, coordinated by Chef Mastrella and Chef Rios. They learned how to start and operate a food truck business and much more. The owner spoke about his professional experiences in the culinary industry. The students learned about the culinary arts field and had a fun time exploring the attractions at the farm.

Ms. Dlugosz's Art Time students are working hard on a massive Culinary Mural. Students researched common ingredients around the world, projected and traced reference images, and began using various acrylic painting techniques to block in colors and add details and textures. They are excited for Chef Moir to see their progress.

Students in East Brunswick Magnet School's English 11 Honors / Middlesex College Dual Credit class have formed literature circles in which they read and discuss memoirs written by young people who survived wars and other historical events involving mass violence. The class also attended a film screening of a documentary entitled How Saba Kept Singing, which tells the life story of a teenage boy who survived Auschwitz by singing for the Nazis. These activities are part of a curriculum unit entitled "Children of War" for which Mrs. Solomon received a grant from the Joan Lavine Keats Social Justice Institute at Rider University. Funding for the field trip was made possible by Rutgers University's Bildner Center for the Study of Jewish Life.



# STUDENT AWARDS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

Edison Academy Magnet School and Woodbridge Academy Magnet School were named as Advanced Placement School Honor Roll with Platinum Distinction and was recognized for student success in the Advanced Placement program while broadening access. This honor was announced by CollegeBoard who recognizes schools whose AP programs are delivering results for students while broadening access. Schools can earn this recognition annually based on criteria that reflect a commitment to increasing college-going culture, providing opportunities for students to earn college credit, and maximizing college readiness. Congratulations to the students and staff at both schools for this achievement.

Edison Academy Magnet School and Woodbridge Academy Magnet School both attended what is considered one of the most prestigious high school Model UN Conferences in the nation, the Princeton Model UN Conference. This conference is run by Princeton University students of the Princeton International Relations Council and focuses on issues that are currently debated internationally. Students from Edison Academy and Woodbridge Academy Magnet Schools worked within groups of their schools to participate in crisis committees that simulate historical and hypothetical scenarios. Many individuals from each school won notable awards. Congratulations to all students who had an exceptional performance. Special thanks go to the Model United Nations advisor Mr. Price and Model United Nations Secretary-General Archisa Arora.



AP School Honor Roll

2024



# DISTRICT NEWS

*Read all about the happenings  
within our district*

# DISTRICT NEWS

## Extending Our Gratitude to Our School Board Members, in Recognition of School Board Appreciation Month

January 2025 was the 23rd annual School Board Recognition Month in New Jersey, a time to raise public awareness of the role and responsibilities of local boards of education and to thank school board members throughout the state.

Since the first School Board Recognition Month in New Jersey in 2002, the State Board of Education, the state-level public body that regulates public education, has approved resolutions to honor the work done by local school board members.

School board members in New Jersey receive no pay for their service. More than 5,000 men and women serve on New Jersey's local boards of education, making them the largest group of public officials in the state.

Karen Cortellino, M.D., president of the New Jersey School Boards Association, said School Board Recognition Month is “an important way to thank current and former school board members for their dedication and service on behalf of their communities.”

“The state’s local boards of education and boards of trustees set the goals and provide oversight for the entire school district and school. School boards and boards of trustees engage in hard work that has a direct impact on the classroom, and their efforts have helped make New Jersey’s public schools a national leader in student achievement.”

Thank you to the Middlesex County Magnet Schools Board of Education for their dedication and commitment to the students and families of our school district.



# ADULT EDUCATION

Middlesex County Adult Education staff participated in Middlesex County's Age Out Youth Conference. Young adults between the ages 16-21 who are currently in foster care in Middlesex County attended the 2024 Aging Out Youth Conference. The conference was organized by the Middlesex County Family Courts and other local community agencies. The purpose of this "teen friendly" event was to help educate and prepare youngsters who have been in and out of home placements to navigate their transition out of foster care. The conference focused on the empowerment of youths to allow them to focus on building a bright future. Dawn Lystad, Director of Adult Education, and Nancy Giacalone provided information about adult education program offerings. The Middlesex County Magnet Schools' Adult Education programs include: Adult Evening School, certificate programs, apprenticeship training and customized training. Programs that lead to obtaining a license are offered in adult cosmetology and practical nursing.

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Students in the Electrical Technology Certificate Program learned about the basics of residential wiring. It ensures safe and efficient electrical installations. Students learned how to wire a room and add switches and outlets. They allow appliances, lighting fixtures, and other electrical devices to be connected to the wiring system. Switches are used to control the flow of electricity to lighting fixtures and other devices. They allow users to turn lights on and off, providing convenience and energy efficiency. Switches are used to control the flow of electricity to lighting fixtures and other devices. They allow users to turn lights on and off, providing convenience and energy efficiency.



# ATHLETICS NEWS

East Brunswick Magnet School Girls Soccer team and Perth Amboy Magnet School Girls Soccer team broke through a barrier. These ladies had the vision of creating a girls soccer team and they did just that. Congratulations to the ladies of East Brunswick Magnet School Girls Soccer team and the Perth Amboy Magnet School Girls Soccer team. You played this season with insurmountable passion and teamwork and have inspired many. Go Tigers and Lady Patriots!

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Coach Kathy McNulty and the 2024 Edison Academy Magnet School Boys Soccer team have been awarded the 2024 Team Ethics and Sportsmanship Award from the United Soccer Coaches Organization. This award recognizes the team on a Platinum level meaning the Edison Academy Boys Soccer team competed the entire 2024 season without receiving a yellow or red card. This achievement was awarded to only eleven high school boys or girls teams throughout the nation. Congratulations to Coach McNulty and the boys soccer team for demonstrating superior sportsmanship behavior in such a competitive game. Read more about their accomplishment [here](#).

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A force to be reckoned with, the East Brunswick Magnet School Competition Cheer Team started their season strong winning 1st place in the Large All Music All Girl Intermediate Division at the Barron X-Treme. This competition was held at Woodbridge Township High School and was the first of eight scheduled competitions. The Team consists of 17 girls, 6 of whom are celebrating their senior year. Be sure to support the girls at their home competition on Saturday, March 1st at East Brunswick Magnet School.



# ATHLETICS NEWS

Syna Goyal, sophomore at Edison Academy Magnet School, has been selected as All White Division in girls tennis for the 2024 season. Congratulations on this tremendous accomplishment!

Piscataway Magnet School Soccer team had an impressive season and were named Gold Division Champions.

The following players achieved Gold Division status this season:

## East Brunswick Magnet School

- Jared Pelaez

## Piscataway Magnet School

- Vincents Godinez DeJesus (Player of the Year)
- Daniel Cerdas Elizondo
- Josh Garcia
- Allan Xelhua
- Nick Ochs
- Kenny Palacios

The following players achieved All Silver Division status this season:

## Edison Academy Magnet School

- Martin Zhang
- Rahil Patel

## Perth Amboy Magnet School

- Byron Escalante

## Woodbridge Academy Magnet School

- Krish Batule
- Sujal Dhoka
- Maxwell Bouffard



# CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION

Supervisor of Career and Technical Education Adam Recktenwald and Construction Maintenance and Design instructor E.J. Leahy represented Middlesex County Magnet Schools at the Association of Career and Technical Education's 2024 Career Tech Vision Conference in San Antonio, Texas. Representatives from across the country networked, attended workshops, and got to see cutting edge advancements in CTE technology, curriculum, and certifications. Whether it was familiar vendors or something brand new, there were exciting possibilities around every corner of the Henry B. Gonzalez Convention Center. By demonstrating equipment in person or learning about pilot programs that employ thousands in other states, the resources and strategies from this conference will enhance opportunities for our students and staff in a variety of ways.

The Office of Career and Technical Education attended the NJ Board of Public Utilities', NJ Division of Labor and New Jersey Institute of Technology's 2nd Business and Industry Leadership Team meeting. The goal of BILT-2 was to help align the state's energy efficiency (EE) efforts and build decarbonization (BD) goals by bolstering the state's workforce capacity within the sector. We discussed key initiatives and heard about Triennium 2 Programs. Triennium 2 is the largest EE initiative in the state, presenting significant equitable clean energy economic growth opportunities for the state and its workforce.



# CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION NEWS

## Read About Our Students' Latest Assessments, Programs, and How Our Faculty is Leading Students Towards Success



The Curriculum and Instruction department and many others throughout the Middlesex County Magnet Schools District do their best to stay informed on the ever-changing landscape of education. Part of that includes attendance to various professional development seminars, conferences, and certification programs. We value the time and effort of all our educators who strive to bring our schools to a higher level of learning. Here are a few professional development sessions the Curriculum department has participated in recently.

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Mr. Eugene Catanzaro attended a virtual conference hosted by the National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships (NACEP). The conference offered valuable insights into the vital role of concurrent and dual enrollment programs in bridging high school and college education.

Mr. Catanzaro learned about NACEP's commitment to program quality through rigorous accreditation standards that uphold the integrity of college courses taught by high school educators. The focus on evidence-informed policy highlighted the significance of advocacy and data in shaping effective practices that enhance access and equity for all students. Overall, the conference emphasized the importance of maintaining high standards while adapting to the evolving educational landscape.

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Math teachers Ivan Garcia Luciano, Katherine Gao, Sonny Gottstine, Shrouk Khalil, Jihyun Kim, Laura Kufta, Jurgita Naikelis, and Caitlin Sime, along with administrators Rhonda Baskerville and Sarah Rubin, attended a workshop held by Rutgers University on Transforming and Sustaining a Thinking Classroom. This was the first of a two-part session that focused on how to establish a classroom with a culture of deep thinking and problem-solving.

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Mrs. Katherine Dennison attended a Literacy Chat hosted by Renaissance focusing on accelerating literacy in a multi-tiered system of support framework. Mrs. Dennison learned how to best use the Renaissance comprehensive assessment system: frequency of assessments, types of assessments, when to strengthen tier 1, how to identify students that need tiers 2 and 3 supports and the importance of screening as it directly impacts classification accuracy.

# HEALTH AND WELLBEING

## 2025 can be the Year of Self Reflection and a Positive Mindset

Practicing gratitude towards parents as an educator is essential because it strengthens the importance of the partnership between home and school. This practice fosters a positive learning environment for students and demonstrates appreciation for the critical role parents play in their child's education. Ultimately, it leads to better student outcomes and creates a more supportive school community.

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Alayna Ruby, East Brunswick Magnet School Social Worker, and Grace DiMarco, Middlesex County Magnet School's District Social Worker, recently completed Nurtured Heart Institute's Certification Training Intensive in order to weave this approach into our school district. The Nurtured Heart Approach (NHA) is a philosophy for creating healthy relationships with others and consists of strategies that assist students in further developing self-regulation.

The approach focuses on transforming how students perceive themselves, their caregivers, and their world. Students learn to understand that they will receive endless amounts of praise, energy, recognition, and reward through the positive behavior they display and this supports students to build a positive portfolio of themselves, which is referred to as "Inner Wealth".

NHA developed "The Inner Wealth Initiative AI", a bot informed by the Nurtured Heart Approach. The Nurtured Heart Institute hopes their bot removes the typical barriers to seeking answers and support.

[Click here](#) to create an account and use the suggested prompts to incorporate a quick SEL lesson in the classroom or to promote this platform as an additional resource for staff and students, outcomes and stress.



# TECHNOLOGY NEWS

## The Heroes Behind the Screens: Middlesex County Magnet Schools' Technology Department.

### Samsung Visit

Technology Department members joined Superintendent Diaz in visiting the Samsung Executive Briefing Center to tour their display rooms. The main purpose of the visit was to see large format display options for the Boardroom and future District projects in person.

### Web Performance

- The Middlesex County Magnet School website saw nearly 25,000 clicks in December 2024!

### District Needs Assessment

- Conducted the annual needs assessment for the 2025-2026 school year to identify areas of technology based needs throughout the District.
- A follow up meeting with the Career and Technical Education Department will be held to further specify the technology needs of the Career and Technical Programs which are funded under the Perkins grant.

### Technical Upgrades and Installations

- Installed a new projector in the Multimedia Art and Design Shop and the Automotive Maintenance and Light Repair shops at the East Brunswick Campus.
- Updated AnyDesk to the latest version which allows remote assistance and troubleshooting via an emailed link to the end user.
- Built out a PaperCut package to install on iPads to enable end user printing.



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Dr. Colaizzi, who studied at the Rutgers University Department of Materials Science and Engineering, invited Professor Ryan Sills to meet with the entire junior class of Edison Academy Magnet School's physical science laboratory. Dr. Sills and the students discussed what scientific materials are, and everyone took part in web-based atomic and neural network simulations. The students were excited to see how their Advanced Placement academic classes in Physics, Chemistry, and Calculus all came together, along with their technical experience in engineering courses.



Culinary Arts students from Perth Amboy Magnet School visited the Institute of Culinary Education in Manhattan. Students toured the facilities of the culinary arts, pastry arts, and restaurant management programs and participated in a Q&A with their Dean of Enrollment and Head Chef. The Institute of Culinary Education provides an alternative to college for students wishing to pursue a future in culinary arts with commitments of less than a year.

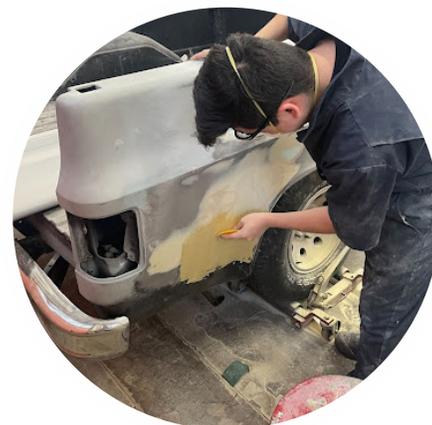


Piscataway Magnet School welcomed Ms. Jessica Sanchez from the Higher Education Student Assistance Authority (HESAA) for an informative financial aid workshop. Ms. Sanchez provided students with comprehensive guidance on financial aid opportunities available to New Jersey residents pursuing higher education. During the session, she walked students through various resources and the application process, offering hands-on assistance as students began completing their Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). This valuable workshop empowered students to take concrete steps toward planning their post-secondary education while receiving expert guidance throughout the process.

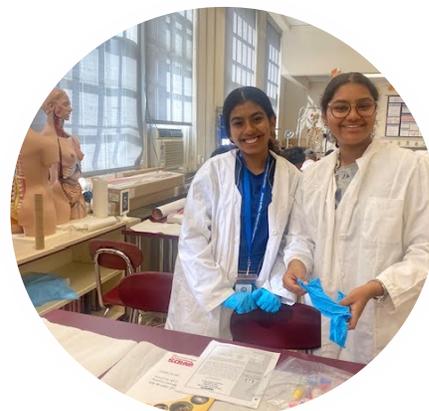


# COLLEGE READY. CAREER READY. LIFE READY.

Mr. Williams' Piscataway Magnet School Automotive Body Repair and Refinishing class students have been engaged in hands-on learning, mastering the important techniques of vehicle restoration and refinishing. Students diligently refined their skills, including precision sanding and the expert application of body filler to smooth out imperfections and create smooth surfaces. Through practice in the shop, they have been working on various body repair techniques, carefully preparing vehicles for the crucial stages of priming and painting. Mr. Williams has been helpful in guiding their learning, demonstrating industry-standard skills and professional methods that transform these students into skilled automotive technicians.



Juniors from Woodbridge Academy Magnet School in the Medical Terminology class concluded the Cardiology/Hematology unit with blood typing simulations, Doppler testing, blood pressure screening and heart sound assessments. Students reinforced didactic content through practical application for greater understanding of concepts taught.



Students in Mr. Kapcsos' Carpentry and Construction Trades classes at East Brunswick Magnet School gained valuable skills by learning how to install vinyl siding. This hands-on project allowed them to understand the fundamentals of exterior home construction. They learned to measure cut and attach the siding properly. By working together the students developed teamwork skills and improved their communication. Overall this experience helped them prepare for future careers in carpentry and construction.



# COLLEGE READY. CAREER READY. LIFE READY.

East Brunswick Magnet School's Manufacturing Engineering and Automation program welcomed representatives from Sun Pharma to see what they are working on, and to review job opportunities at the nation's fourth largest (and India's largest) generic pharmaceutical manufacturer. Students had the opportunity to showcase their skills, share their resumes, and consider a range of potential entry level positions. Thank you to Sun Pharma, and Cooperative Education Coordinator Jenn Rastelli and instructor Stephen Mercadante for setting up this excellent presentation.

Piscataway Magnet School's Ms. Selby and Ms. Campos collaborated with Mr. Joyner's Kinesiology/Physical Therapy class for an engaging homeostasis lab, where students explored how the body maintains balance during exercise. The students learned about homeostasis and how the body responds to physical activity. Mr. Joyner's students measured vital signs like blood pressure, heart rate, temperature, and pulse oximetry, while Ms. Selby and Ms. Campos' students observed how these indicators changed during exercise. Each group performed jumping jacks and recorded data on how the body adapts to physical exertion, bringing the concept of homeostasis to life in a practical way.

Katrina David, Edison Academy Magnet School Class of 2015, visited Ms. McNulty's Junior health classes to share her experiences as a member of the Implant Product Development team in Stryker's Joint Replacement Department. Students learned the intricacies of knee replacement surgery and how robot assisted technology is impacting the procedure. One student noted, "Oh man, I better take care of my knees!"



# ALUMNI FEATURE

## Tracing a Path of Inspiration: Woodbridge Academy Magnet School teacher of Allied Health and Biomedical Sciences, Mrs. Marie Bowen

Marie Bowen's story is a testament to the transformative power of dedicated educators and vocational training. A 1982 graduate of East Brunswick Vocational and Technical School's Health Occupations program, Marie has come full circle, now teaching Allied Health and Biomedical Science at Woodbridge Academy Magnet School.

During her time at East Brunswick, Marie was profoundly influenced by her teacher, Mrs. MaryAnn Opanowicz, a nurse who brought real-world experience into the classroom. With a small class of just 10 students, learning was intentional, personal, and rigorous. This intimate setting allowed Marie to deeply explore her potential career path, receiving extensive, individualized attention that proved instrumental in her professional development. Mrs. Opanowicz's approach went beyond textbook learning, providing students with invaluable insights into acute and long term patient care.

After high school, Marie continued her medical education, attending Rutgers/UMDNJ to earn her Nursing degree. She later went on to earn her Master's degree graduating Summa Cum Laude and continued her educational journey earning teaching certification and supervisory certification. Her professional nursing career was diverse and extensive, spanning critical areas including Intensive Care, Critical Care, and Telemetry. She later transitioned to academia, becoming an adjunct instructor at both Kean University and Rutgers. Marie also maintained the position of coordinator of the RN to BSN program between Middlesex College and Kean- School of Nursing. Marie has also been published in the *Journal of Addictions - Nursing*.

↳ [Read Ms. Bowen's full story on mcmsnj.net.](https://www.mcmsnj.net)



# QUICK CLICKS

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Crepes made by Culinary Arts students—what could be better?! Thanks to the Piscataway Magnet School culinary students for making these delicious treats! [#quickclicks](#)

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Dance like you're in a Bollywood movie! Woodbridge Academy Magnet School seniors danced the night away during their Senior Culture Dance. [#quickclicks](#)

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Picasso, is that you?! Art Time students at Perth Amboy Magnet School are sharing their talents while painting a mural in the Culinary Arts classroom. [#quickclicks](#)

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The make-up teams are ready! Adult Education Cosmetology students practiced their skills in applying everyday make up for women and men. [#quickclicks](#)

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East Brunswick Magnet School's Tigers put the "pep" into Pep Rally! [#quickclicks](#)

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Wrapping up presents – and students – for the fun-filled Winter Fair Extravaganza at Edison Academy Magnet School. [#quickclicks](#)

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Dressed in style for the Holiday Spirit Week at Woodbridge Academy Magnet School. [#quickclicks](#)

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Let's go, Patriots! Celebrating the boys Varsity and J.V. basketball teams at Perth Amboy Magnet School's pep rally. [#quickclicks](#)

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Taking care of business each and every day in the Piscataway Magnet School Construction Maintenance and Design career program. [#quickclicks](#)

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What are we thankful for? The Edison Academy Magnet School students who helped donate over 1,000 pounds of food to REPLENISH this past Thanksgiving. [#quickclicks](#)

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Put your hands in the air if you love Agriscience! Celebrating the new Piscataway Magnet School FFA chapter and members. [#quickclicks](#)

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Celebrating cultures through dance during the Multicultural Festival at East Brunswick Magnet School. [#quickclicks](#)

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# QUICK CLICKS

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Showing the true spirit of the holiday season: Perth Amboy Magnet School students & staff donated gifts for the Salvation Army Angel Tree program. [#quickclicks](#)

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Singing our hearts out. The incredible East Brunswick Magnet School Music Performance & Technology students took their talents to the stage. [#quickclicks](#)

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The Adult Education HVAC Certificate program is so cool, it's ice cold! Students learned how to recover and charge refers in cooling systems. [#quickclicks](#)

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Once upon a time there was a talent show in an academy not too far away. The 2024 Edison Academy Magnet School talent show was unforgettable! [#quickclicks](#)

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And the winner is...the Class of 2026. Woodbridge Academy Magnet School's pep rally was one for the books! [#quickclicks](#)

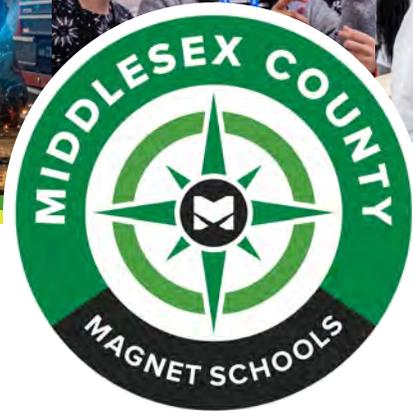
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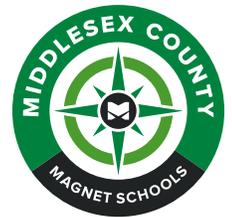
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Cirque de Soleil has nothing on the East Brunswick Magnet School Dance students' "Coppélia" performance. [#quickclicks](#)

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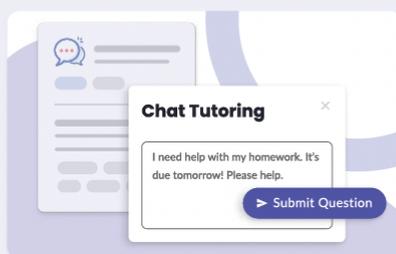
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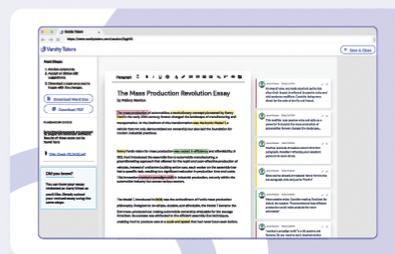
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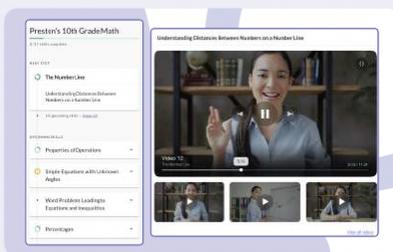
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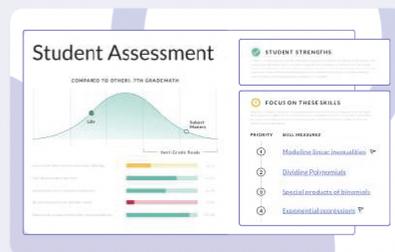
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THROUGH

DECEMBER 31, 2025

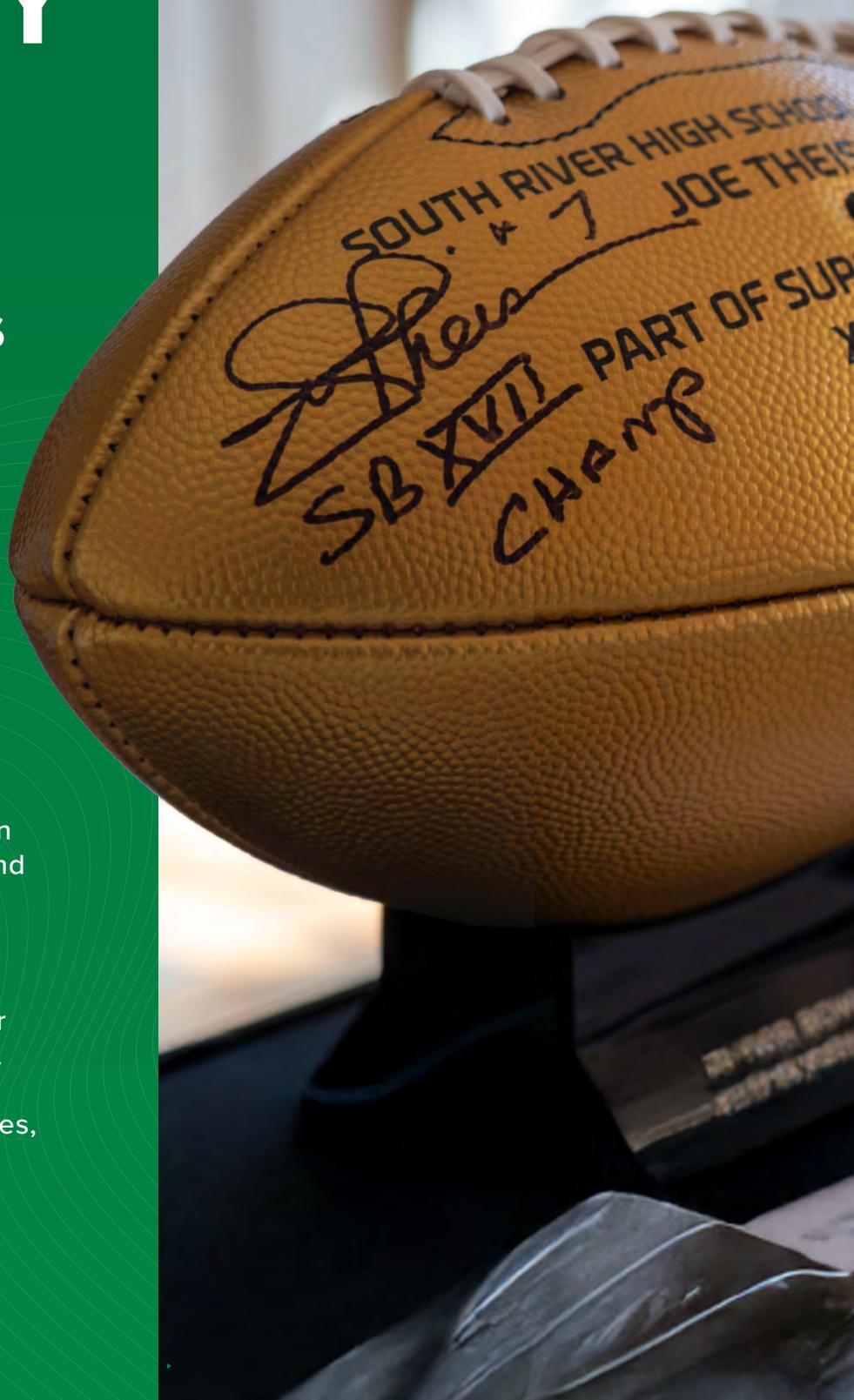
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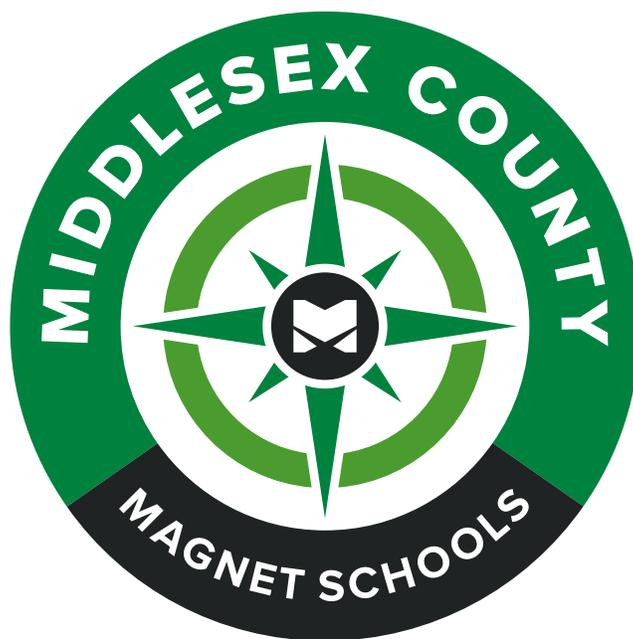
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