

INSIGHT

A MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

Our School Year Is Off to a Wonderful Start!

We have welcomed new faculty and administrators and, of course, our fabulous freshmen.

Since our last newsletter, we have graduated 500 new alumni and expect great things from them.

The district has been recognized with a Lighthouse Award by the state Department of Education for advancing educational equity through our articulation agreements allowing our students to receive college credit while in high school.

Our two academies have once again been placed among the top four public high schools in the state by U.S. News & World Report.

Our students excelled in extracurricular competitions and other activities over the summer, including the thrilling win by Sargam Mondal of Edison Academy in the national Math League competition, the first female winner ever; Woodbridge Academy's HOSA team, which won numerous awards at the International Leadership Conference in Dallas; and SkillsUSA state golds and a national silver for Mike Rizzi of East Brunswick Magnet School.

Improvements have been made in all our buildings, some more noticeable than others: new lighting and repainting in Piscataway; replacement of kitchen equipment throughout the district; a new roof and new classroom doors in East Brunswick; new desks and lab tables in Edison; upgraded air conditioning in several locations; new ceilings in Woodbridge; new carpets in Perth Amboy.

Some of the maintenance projects were accomplished by our own students working as summer interns.

This newsletter will continue to keep all our constituents up to date on the achievements of our students, staff and alumni.

Let's make 2023-2024 our best year ever!

Kind Regards,

Jorge E. Diaz

Superintendent of Schools



Board of Education

- Keith Jones II, *President*
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Quick Links

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DISTRICT ACHIEVEMENTS: LIGHTHOUSE AWARD

The New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) has announced Middlesex County Magnet Schools, formerly known as the Middlesex County Vocational and Technical Schools, as one of the distinguished recipients of the state's Lighthouse Award for its exceptional strides in increasing equity in dual enrollment programming, allowing students to earn college credit while still in high school.

The Lighthouse Awards, presented by Acting Commissioner of Education Dr. Angelica Allen-McMillan at the September meeting of the State Board of Education, applauds school districts and charter schools across New Jersey that exhibit dedication to their work in illuminating a path towards equitable educational improvements for others to follow. This recognition underscores the collective efforts of all stakeholders in the educational community, including district administrators, teachers, students, parents, and community members.

"We are thrilled to be recognized by the New Jersey Department of Education for our efforts to promote equity and increase opportunities. This important work highlights our district's commitment to equitable educational outcomes for all students," said Superintendent Jorge E. Diaz.

Middlesex County Magnet Schools has worked to ensure that every student has open access to every career and technical education program across the district, as well as the choice of school they wish to attend. The district's recent rebranding has helped advertise career pathways to underrepresented, non-traditional, and marginalized populations.

"Middlesex County is one of the most diverse counties in the country – we place a high priority on diversity, equity, and inclusion in every aspect of our programs and services," said Middlesex County Commissioner Director, Ronald G. Rios. "I commend the leadership at the Middlesex County Magnet Schools for investing in the community by attracting students that are reflective of our culturally rich population and offering every resident free access to top quality, competitive education. This well-deserved industry award is a testament to the Magnet School's commitment to our residents, and we, the Board of County Commissioners, are incredibly proud of their ongoing achievements."

➡ [Read the full article on mcmsnj.net.](https://www.mcmsnj.net)



RWJBARNABAS HEALTH WORKFORCE PARTNERSHIP

Strategic partnership to create healthcare career pathways for students at Middlesex County Magnet Schools and Middlesex College

As part of Middlesex County's \$25 million investment in the Jack & Sheryl Morris Cancer Center — New Jersey's first freestanding cancer hospital scheduled for completion in late 2024 — Middlesex County and RWJBarnabas Health unveiled the RWJBarnabas Health Workforce Partnership. This partnership aims to create unique educational pathways and curricula for the benefit of Middlesex College and Middlesex County Magnet School students, as well as meet the future workforce needs of the Jack & Sheryl Morris Cancer Center at Rutgers Cancer Institute of New Jersey and RWJBarnabas Health.

Highlights of the RWJBarnabas Health Workforce Partnership include: three educational tracks including one new one, Sterile Processing Technician, and updates to two existing curricula — Patient Care Technician and Certified Medical Assistant at Middlesex College and the Magnet Schools Internships and volunteer opportunities for College and Magnet School students throughout the RWJBarnabas Health system, job placement for College and Magnet School students who obtain a degree or certification, and additional resources for workforce development via incumbent worker training and SkillUp™ Middlesex Learning Platform to support upskilling existing RWJBarnabas Health employees.

Sharing the significance of this partnership, speakers included Middlesex County Commissioner Director Ronald G. Rios; Mark Manigan, President and Chief Executive Officer, RWJBarnabas Health; Dr. Steven K. Libutti, MD, FACS, Director of Rutgers Cancer Institute of New Jersey and Senior Vice President, Oncology Services, RWJBarnabas Health; Middlesex County Commissioner Chanelle Scott McCullum; Middlesex College President Mark McCormick; Middlesex County Magnet Schools Superintendent Jorge E. Diaz; and Middlesex County Administrator John A. Pulomena.

"When we talk about economic development, workforce development is the bedrock," said Middlesex County Magnets Schools Superintendent Jorge E. Diaz. "It assures us that the education we are providing will enable our students to become valued talent at prestigious institutions like RWJBarnabas Health and the Rutgers Cancer Institute of New Jersey. Together, we are shaping the future of our community by investing in our most precious resource – our students." [Click here to access the full article.](#)

[View the full photo gallery of the event here.](#)



SUPERINTENDENT SPOTLIGHT

Superintendent Diaz Publicly Recognized for His Efforts in Our District

Superintendent of Middlesex County Magnet Schools Jorge E. Diaz was elected president of the Middlesex County Association of School Administrators (MCASA). Diaz, who has led the district since April 2022, will assume responsibility for leading superintendents in the county to improve district educational practices and ensure the success of their students and communities.

With a long-standing commitment to educational excellence and a proven track record of leadership, Diaz brings a wealth of experience and vision to his new role. As an advocate for student success and community engagement, he has consistently demonstrated a deep understanding of the needs and challenges faced by educators, administrators, and learners within Middlesex County.

Diaz has served in education for over 24 years and earned the prestigious Middlesex County Superintendent of the Year recognition in 2022. His extensive knowledge of educational policy, instructional practices, and district governance will prove invaluable in providing strategic guidance and direction to MCASA. As president, Diaz will work closely with local district superintendents to foster collaboration, share best practices, and address common issues and concerns.

“I am deeply honored to accept the presidency of the Middlesex County Association of School Administrators,” Diaz expressed. “Collaboration is key to our success, and I eagerly anticipate working alongside superintendents from across Middlesex County to advance excellence and suggest best practices for our schools.”

Under Superintendent Diaz’s educational leadership, Middlesex County Magnet Schools has notably rebranded the county schools to better represent the high-quality programming available to Middlesex County resident students, created health and wellness programs across the district, and launched an exciting new alumni engagement initiative to reconnect graduates from over four decades.

A county affiliate of the New Jersey Association of School Administrators, MCASA strengthens the statewide superintendent’s association initiatives to deal with critical educational issues and provide informational programs that collectively communicate local administrators’ goals and accomplishments.



NEW BEGINNINGS

Five hundred students graduated from the Middlesex County Magnet Schools June 22 and 23.

There were 169 graduates of East Brunswick Magnet School in a ceremony held in the school gymnasium. The valedictorian was Prisha Shah of Sayreville, while the salutatorian was Semantha Ngo of Woodbridge. Edison Academy Magnet School graduated 43 seniors in a ceremony in West Hall of Middlesex College. The valedictorian was Adrija Kundu of Edison, and the salutatorian was Sharafa Mohammed of Edison. At Perth Amboy Magnet School, there were 67 graduates in a ceremony in the school cafeteria. Griffin Kennedy of Iselin was valedictorian, while Danissa Marte of Perth Amboy was salutatorian. There were 148 graduates of Piscataway Magnet School in a ceremony in the gym. The valedictorian was Bayane Chahine of Highland Park, and the salutatorian was Raniya Burkett of Perth Amboy. At Woodbridge Academy Magnet School, 73 seniors received their diplomas in the school gymnasium. Jasmine Wilk of Middlesex Borough was valedictorian, while Shrihith Golugula of Monroe was salutatorian.

↳ [Click here to view the full photo galleries from each graduation.](#)

↳ [Click here to view the YouTube playlist videos of each graduation.](#)



INTRODUCING: ALUMNI PORTAL

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

Congratulations to the Middlesex County Magnet Schools Class of 2023! We couldn't be prouder of all our graduates, who weathered unprecedented challenges to reach Graduation Day.

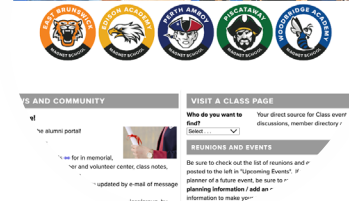
As you embark on the next phase of your lives and careers, please consider staying in contact with your alma mater and all your fellow alumni. [Click here](#) for the official announcement video.

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 to connect, and help recent graduates continue to unleash their passion.



FACILITIES NEWS

Check out the various projects and accomplishments the Facilities department has diligently worked on to keep our District up-to-date and looking great!

Summer Work Program: The facilities department was very excited to implement their Summer Work Study Program for the students of our district. Students worked five hours a day, Monday through Friday across multiple campuses in our district. Our grounds crew capped off this very successful venture with the installation of the new trees and plants in the front of the board offices with our students from the three campuses from the Summer Work Study Program.

East Brunswick Magnet School: The renovations of the auditorium are coming along with new ceilings, new carpets and chairs to follow soon. Three main hot water heaters were also replaced at this campus, along with roof replacements to the District's central office.

Peth Amboy Magnet School: A number of rooftop units have been replaced, with the most recent being the college side and the main office area. New carpets were added in the media center, main office suite and computer labs. New security fencing with an automated section has been installed.

Piscataway Magnet School: A full renovation of two science labs were completed. Roof replacements to the main office area were done. All of the interior walls have been given fresh, new paint. Currently in progress is the replacement of three main hot water heaters.

Woodbridge Academy Magnet School: New fencing was added to the transformers area.



SUMMER ACTIVITIES

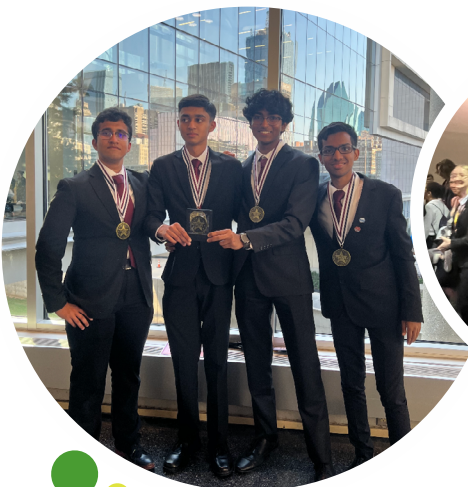
The Woodbridge Academy Magnet School excelled at the HOSA/Future Health Professionals International Leadership Conference in Dallas over four days in June.

“These students put in several sleepless nights and days to make it through the Southern Regionals and State Leadership Conference to make it to ILC,” advisor Rafael Nava said. “We are proud of each and every one of them as they have admirably not only represented Woodbridge Academy but also the entire state of New Jersey.”

The Woodbridge Academy team earned 13 finalist medals, including three first-place awards.

The medalists were: ATC—Anatomy and Physiology, 1st, Aadithiya Bharanidharan; 8th, Navneeth Murali. ATC—Physics College, 4th, Aadithiya Bharanidharan; 8th, Shrihith Golugula. Creative Problem Solving, 10th, Anoushka Banerjee, Anika Bhatnagar, Sanchi Isloor, Suja Sudhakar. HOSA Bowl, 1st: Aadithiya Bharanidharan, Pruthviraj Golvepalli, Navneeth Murali, Ravi Sangani. Behavioral Health, 5th, Arushi Bhattacharya. Human Growth and Development, 5th, Katie Fu. Dental Terminology, 8th, Rishi Mittal. Pharmacology, 1st, Sachin Aravind. Pathophysiology, 10th, Bhavesh Manne. CPR/First Aid, 2nd, Disha Garg, Shrihith Golugula. Barbara James Service Award, Bronze Affiliation, Dhanashri Balamurugan.

Elected state officers for the 2023-24 school year were Bhavesh Manne, Member-at-Large, and Aryan Garg, President-Elect.



SUMMER ACTIVITIES

Edison Academy Magnet School Student is First Female to Win National Math Competition

Sargam Mondal, a junior at Middlesex County's Edison Academy Magnet School, made history in a national high school math competition, coming in first among more than 1,600 competitors. No female had won the championship in the 40-plus years of the American Regions Mathematics League's competition. Sargam, an Edison resident, had finished second in 2022 while a freshman.

Her principal, Amro Mosaad, likened the win to becoming the first woman to be elected president of the United States. "This is the most prestigious high school math competition there is," he said. "It's a national competition competing in four regions on the same day – they compile all the scores and she was first in all the regions." Sargam's victory, held at Penn State University in June, came while she was still a sophomore, so she will have a chance to "three-peat."

"I'm very proud to say we have a trailblazer," said Mosaad, who is director of Sargam's Central Jersey Math League team, which finished in the Top 10 in the national competition. "We hope that her achievement is going to encourage more girls to participate in mathematics and in STEM in general," Mosaad said.

Sargam is doing what she can to encourage female students, starting the Lovelace Math Circle for middle-schoolers. The online group is named for Ada Lovelace, a 19th-century mathematician and writer – and daughter of Lord Byron – who did pioneering work on what would many years later become computers.

She says it wasn't until eighth grade that she became interested in math competitions. It is the fact that intuition and creativity are needed to solve the problems that appeals to her, she said.

"I think we will be hearing a lot more from Sargam in the future. We are so very proud of her," said Middlesex County Magnet Schools Superintendent Jorge E. Diaz. "This is also a testament to the rigorous programming we maintain at the nationally ranked Edison Academy Magnet School."

↳ [Read the full article on mcmsnj.net](https://www.mcmsnj.net)



SUMMER ACTIVITIES

Summer Enrichment Program Offers ‘Learning for Learning’s Sake’

Fifty Middlesex County Magnet School students attended a free summer enrichment program that offered a dozen options to enhance their learning.

The federally funded program, in its third year, was held over three weeks in July and August at Woodbridge Academy Magnet School.

“It’s not summer school,” said program coordinator Anthony Crea, a science teacher at East Brunswick Magnet School. “The kids were there to learn for learning’s sake.

“And it helps with a lot of the COVID learning losses,” he added.

The students came from all five Middlesex County Magnet Schools.

Crea said popular courses included how to write essays for college applications, taught by Woodbridge Academy English teacher Leah Hoffman; interviewing skills and resume building, taught by East Brunswick Magnet School teacher Thomas Leiberling; and exercise science and nutrition, taught by Tiahna Selby of Piscataway Magnet School.

The classes were held from 9 a.m. to noon Monday to Thursday. Each course lasts four days.

“It was well received by the students,” Crea said. “They arrived eager and left smiling. There’s no pressure – there’s no exam at the end.”



SUMMER ACTIVITIES

Eighth-Graders Get an Inside Look at the Middlesex County Magnet Schools

Rising eighth-graders from across Middlesex County were introduced to the Middlesex County Magnet Schools in July at the district's first Early Career Exploration Institute.

An average of 70 students attended each day of the free three-week program, which offered them a chance to experience a number of Magnet Schools career majors, including automotive collision and technology, culinary arts, building trades, welding, digital media, finance, dance, digital film, architecture technology, and music performance and technology.

The classes were held Monday to Thursday at East Brunswick Magnet School, and the program included field trips and demonstrations, such as a visit by Elijah's Promise, World Bank, and two members of the Middlesex County Sheriff's Department K-9 corps.

Parents were invited on the final day for a gallery walk where their students demonstrated the culmination of their learning. Deborah DeVico of Sayreville, whose son Devin attended, was enthusiastic about the opportunity. "He came home every day loving it," she said. "He wants to go to school here." "It was really fun and it taught me a lot," Devin said.

Lee Neamand, Magnet Schools Director of Career and Technical Education, said the first year of the institute was "incredibly successful." "It gave the students an opportunity to engage in our career majors," she said. "It was powerful for parents to have an opportunity to ask questions about careers majors while their students were demonstrating learning." "This is decision time for them," she added. "We want parents to understand what vocational education that is College Ready, Career Ready and Life Ready looks like." She stressed that rigorous career education is accompanied by college-prep academic classes throughout the high school years.

➔ [Click here to view the Career Exploration Institute photo album.](#)



WELCOME BACK, STUDENTS AND STAFF!

A New, Fantastic Year Begins!

In September, we kicked off a brand-new high school year.

Students and new staff arrived and filled our halls after being away all summer – and we couldn't be happier. This year will be full of academic growth and new rigorous challenges for our students to conquer.

Between earning prestigious statewide awards and welcoming exciting new teachers to our classrooms, it is clear that this year will be the best one yet.

➡ [Click here to watch the Welcome Back Video from Superintendent Diaz.](#)



BEYOND THE BOOKS

During the Middlesex County Fair held from August 8 to August 13, recent alumni Samantha G. (East Brunswick Magnet School '23) and Bayane C. (Piscataway Magnet School '23) were awarded \$1,000 college scholarships for their excellent work as students at the Middlesex County Magnet Schools. And we can't forget to celebrate the East Brunswick Magnet School's FFA chapter: they received a donation from the Middlesex County Fair Association, which will go towards growing this program and educating more students about the importance of agricultural sciences. Great work, FFA students! \$1,000 dollar scholarships were awarded by the Middlesex County Fair Board of Trustees to two of our Middlesex County Magnet School graduates. As well as to East Brunswick Magnet School's Agriscience Technology FFA (Future Farmers of America) chapter.



East Brunswick Magnet School students Mike Rizzi, Leland Pesch, Corinna Hatter and Victoria Candela won gold at the New Jersey State SkillsUSA championships in Pin Design, T-Shirt Design, and Additive Manufacturing. They also competed at the National Leadership and Skills Conference in Atlanta, where Mike Rizzi won a silver medal in Pin Design -- the first person from our district to win a national medal! Joining them, Natalie Evans was named head delegate for New Jersey and was elected president of the New Jersey state chapter. This year she will represent our chapter and SkillsUSA in counties all over New Jersey.



The Spanish Honor Society at Edison Academy Magnet School hosted the 9/11 Remembrance Ceremony to honor the sacrifice of Port Authority Officer Richard Rodriguez and all first responders that tragic day. Officer Rodriguez was a graduate of our school district. His parents and sister attended the ceremony, which was organized by the club's advisor, Mr. Ocker.



BEYOND THE BOOKS

Magnet Schools Coordinator Raises Money to Equip Police Dogs

A report of a police dog killed in the line of duty inspired an employee of the Middlesex County Magnet Schools to launch a foundation to fund safety equipment for K9 officers.

James Wiater, a cooperative education coordinator based at Piscataway Magnet School, started the Friends of Solo Foundation to honor K9 Solo, a German shepherd in the Monmouth County Sheriff's Department shot to death during a 22-hour police standoff with an armed man.

The foundation provides body armor, field trauma kits and other safety equipment to police departments that use dogs. Wiater said he began raising funds by selling a book he wrote and self-published based on stories he told to his two young daughters. "The Adventures of Solo, the Big Dog" was followed by a second book, "The Adventures of Solo, Military Training."

"The first vest was delivered in March of 2017," Wiater said. "And right now we're ready to order number 23." The vests can cost as much as \$3,400. Police departments that request them are placed on a waiting list and served on a first-come basis, he said. The vests are designed to stop bullets from handguns.

The foundation, a registered nonprofit, has a number of corporate, business and individual sponsors and is supported by dozens of PBA and FOP chapters around New Jersey. Recently, K9 Bolt of the Point Pleasant police received a field trauma kit, K9 Mako of the Ocean County Sheriff's Department received a ballistic vest, and K9 Harley of the Phillipsburg police will soon receive a vest. Equipment has been donated to departments in Connecticut, Pennsylvania, Louisiana, Oklahoma and Tennessee.

"We've really gone across the country," Wiater said. "We've got a good number of sponsors." Wiater, a 1981 graduate of East Brunswick Magnet School, had his own carpentry business before becoming a carpentry teacher for 23 years at Piscataway Magnet School. He began his new job, in which he places students in part-time jobs in their career majors, in September. "It was Solo's sacrifice that made this happen and has now helped other dogs," he said.

More information is available at [friendsofsolofoundation.org](https://www.friendsofsolofoundation.org).



MIDDLESEX COUNTY BUSINESS SUMMIT

Middlesex County Hosts Seventh Annual Business Summit, Gathering Major Business Leaders in New Brunswick.

On September 26, Middlesex County welcomed leaders in business and government to its Seventh Annual Business Summit. The event served as a platform for networking, knowledge-sharing, and the exchange of best practices across businesses of all sizes. Middlesex County Magnet Schools were represented by Superintendent Jorge E. Diaz, External Affairs, and the Central Office. This year's summit theme, The Future Belongs to Those Who Build It, celebrated Middlesex County's rich legacy as a cutting-edge life sciences hub while providing insights into the unique challenges and opportunities within the business community.

The Middlesex County Business Summit commenced with a morning session featuring Stephanie Ruhle, host of MSNBC's The 11th Hour and Senior Business Analyst for NBC News. During her session, she delved into various critical aspects of the current business landscape. Ruhle explored the profound impact of public investments in infrastructure, education, and workforce development on the economy, emphasizing that investing in education is the key to a strong economic future. She also underscored the significance of not only providing resources but also offering competitive pay to attract and retain good educators.

Adding to the summit's prestige, Governor Philip D. Murphy was also present as a featured speaker.

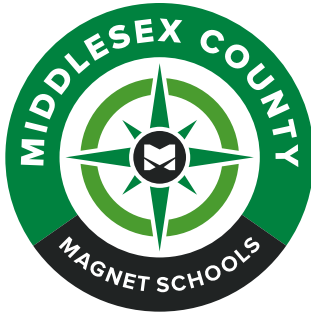
"From its humble beginnings, the Middlesex County Business Summit has grown to be one of the pre-eminent business events in New Jersey, as evidenced by the impressive lineup of speakers and esteemed guests we've welcomed each year," said Middlesex County Commissioner Director Ronald G. Rios. "Businesses of every size can find their path to success here. We've embraced a strategy called Thrive Here that identifies core areas of support services including economic development, workforce, education, arts and culture, and transportation. Existing businesses and new prospects should take advantage of these incredible resources to build or grow their footprint in our County."

"From the small businesses lining its main streets to the companies and academic institutions anchoring its communities, Middlesex County continues to serve as a formidable economic engine," said New Jersey Governor Philip D. Murphy.

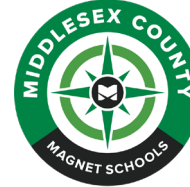
For more information about the event, including key takeaways, please visit middlesexcountynj.gov/businesssummit.



FOLLOW US!

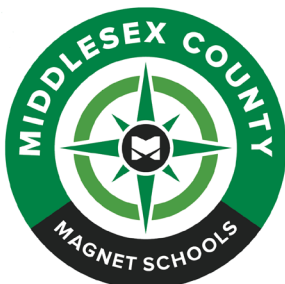


**COLLEGE READY.
CAREER READY.
LIFE READY.**



**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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NEWS RECOGNITION

Featured Articles About Us:

- **NJ.com**

- [Edison Magnet Plays First-Ever Girls Tennis Match](#)

- **TapInto East Brunswick**

- [Middlesex County Magnet Schools Now Accepting Applications for the 2024-25 School Year](#)
- [Middlesex County Magnet Schools recognized with prestigious Lighthouse Award for advancing educational equity](#)

- **TapInto South Brunswick**

- [Middlesex County's Garden Arts and Music Festival](#)

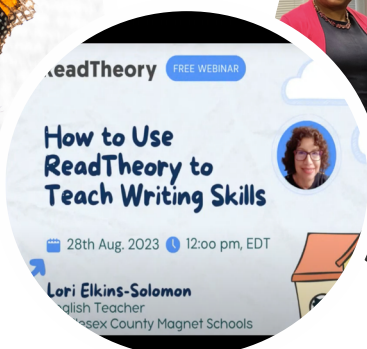
- **ReadTheory**

- [East Brunswick Magnet School English Teacher Lori Elkins-Solomon proudly represented our district by delivering a webinar titled "How to Use ReadTheory to Teach Writing Skills."](#)



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

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



STUDENT AWARDS AND ACHIEVEMENTS



With an incredible start to the brand-new school year, The College Board has honored Matteo G., an outstanding East Brunswick Magnet School student, for achieving academic excellence. Matteo is among the 72,000 students nationwide who have been recognized by the College Board's National Recognition Programs, a prestigious accolade celebrating the academic achievements of underrepresented students. Matteo received the National Hispanic Recognition Award, a testament to his dedication and hard work throughout high school. This recognition highlights the significance of these programs in providing a platform for students like Matteo to showcase their talents and achievements. The National Recognition Programs were established to acknowledge the outstanding accomplishments of students who may only sometimes receive the recognition they deserve. These programs benefit the students and assist colleges and universities in identifying and recruiting diverse and highly talented individuals. Matteo's success reminds us of our educational system's incredible diversity and talent. [↪ Read Matteo's full story here.](#)

East Brunswick Magnet School junior Mari Hakobyan saw what the future of sustainability might look like during a three-week visit to Denmark over the summer. "I decided I'm getting close to graduating and I should spend my summers more wisely," she said, explaining why she applied for a scholarship to attend the Council on International Educational Exchange (CIEE) High School Summer Abroad program "Taking Climate Action." Mari, an Old Bridge resident, said "the stars aligned" and she found herself in Copenhagen, which aims to become the world's first carbon-neutral capital by 2025. "I'm passionate about climate advocacy," she said, adding that the program in Denmark "was about how you get community involvement, how you organize politically." "It was incredible," she said. A multimedia art and design major, she sees art as a pathway to achieving climate sustainability. Multimedia art and design teacher Joseph Tiedemann calls Mari "one of the most tenacious students I've ever had." "She's so talented in so many ways," he said. "The world is open to her." [↪ Read Mari's full story here.](#)



HEALTH AND WELLBEING

From Stress to Success: Creating a Supportive Classroom Environment

Teachers feel overwhelmed and pressured to cover all of the standards and materials to reach benchmarks. But students who are experiencing emotional or psychological distress, mild or otherwise, are unable to engage in learning effectively, despite your efforts.

Taking time out of instruction to help students regulate can seem counterintuitive, but it's actually quite the opposite. One of the most impactful practices teachers can employ is creating an environment conducive to genuine learning.

As the old saying goes: An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. Below are some strategies to help build resilience and connection in your classroom.

Learn their names. This sounds very basic, but according to polyvagal theory, when we hear our name, our brains light up in the areas that support connection and regulation. This could help students (and teachers) feel connected and supported.

Smile. When you smile, it releases endorphins, the brain chemicals associated with happiness. When you smile and make eye contact with someone, it is difficult for them not to smile back, thus creating endorphins for them, too.

Model emotional regulation. Everyone has bad days, and it's important for young people to know this is normal. When you are having a difficult day, acknowledge it and explain to students how you are going to deal with it. For example: "I woke up late and didn't have time for my regular routine this morning. I'm feeling not quite ready to jump in, and I'm sure some of you are right there with me. Let's take a 'mindfulness moment' and get ourselves ready to go."

↳ [Click here](#) to access the full article by Tracy Clementes, Pear Deck Inc.



ADULT EDUCATION

A practical nursing student at Piscataway Magnet School has received a special scholarship award from the Preferred Healthcare Staffing agency, in North Brunswick.

Jennifer Coleman, a senior student in the practical nursing program, received a scholarship check in the amount of \$500 for her academic excellence. She was selected after applying for the scholarship last spring and submitting her academic records as well as an essay detailing her aspirations for a career in nursing.



Richard Shine, Sr. has been teaching IBEW apprentices since 1968. In 2016, he received national recognition as the IBEW Hour Power Instructor of the Year. He became an instructor because he enjoys teaching apprentices. He wants his apprentices to become good electricians and well rounded individuals. Richard Shine's first year IBEW apprenticeship students spent their time this week preparing for their introductory test. This test includes the introduction to safety on the job site, use of different tools and the installation of conductors and fasteners. Mr. Shine is beloved by students and faculty alike.



Students in William Evans' HVAC second-year apprentice class learned the proper way to use an electrical meter.

These meters measure the energy usage of a home or other device, that way the users of the electricity are properly billed. Along with being an Adult Education teacher for the apprenticeship program, Mr. Evans also works during the day as a high school career and technical education instructor at East Brunswick Magnet School.



ATHLETICS NEWS

Edison Academy Magnet School Senior Wins District's First-Ever GMC Championship

Manasi Vartak, a senior member of the tennis team at Edison Academy Magnet School, won the first Greater Middlesex Conference individual championship in the history of the Middlesex County Magnet Schools Oct. 2 in Hamilton.

"It's a huge thrill for the district," Magnet School Director of Athletics Michael Pede said. "I'm so proud of her, all the hard work she put into it. She has dedication I've never seen before in a high school senior."

Her coach, Edison Academy physical education teacher Wallace Smith, said Manasi has been "an unbelievable teammate" and "a dream to coach."

"Her peers unanimously voted her to be captain very early on and she has been tremendous in not only leading but helping others with both advice and technical tips," he said.

"All the girls on the team revere and love her, and it is so easy to see why."

"Her shoes will be impossible to fill, but I am so grateful that she was here for our inaugural season."

Manasi was victorious in straight sets in both the semifinals and finals of the first-singles championship. Her team, in its first year of competition, finished fifth out of 28 schools.

"It's definitely nice to have that first win come representing the school," she said.

Manasi and her teammates had pressured the Magnet Schools administration to start a girls' team after a boys' team was started two years ago, she said.

"It definitely helps me be productive in everything I do," she said, adding that she hopes to hear from college recruiters now that she is GMC champion.

➔ [Click here to read the full article on mcmsnj.net.](https://mcmsnj.net)



CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION

Middlesex County Magnet Schools' Culinary staff and the Office of Career and Technical Education attended the Driscoll Fall Expo at Driscoll Foods in Wayne. Driscoll provided guided behind-the-scenes tours of their facility, and a host of vendors shared culinary samples and related products and technology. Highlights included meeting Plato, the service robot, taste testing vegan dairy substitutes, and sampling from Driscoll's butcher counter. A big thank you to Joe Mastrella, who helped organize our visit.

The Office of Career and Technical Education is working behind the scenes with PathwayOS (formerly Transeo) on creating a web-based portal that will allow our cooperative education coordinators to process all employer and employee paperwork online. This database will also allow us to catalog advisory board members, industry partners, and student certifications among many other capabilities. While there is still a great deal of work to do behind the scenes before this is up and running; we will keep you informed as we begin to use this exciting new tool.

The Office of Career and Technical Education collaborated with Paul Hiler of CMC Steel, New Jersey's only functioning steel mill, in Sayreville, for a tour of the CMC facility. CMC Steel creates and distributes rebar used in construction sites around the world. We are looking forward to partnering with CMC for potential student site visits and cooperative education placements in the future.



CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION NEWS

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



Our school district is dedicated to enhancing the educational experience for our students through various initiatives. One of these is the Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI), which enables students in grades 10-12 to earn college credit. The initial assessment takes place during two weeks. In addition, ninth-grade students completed the LinkIt! Benchmark testing for ELA on September 29. We are also implementing Data Teams in each school to improve student achievement by using data-driven decision-making.

LinkIt!, an academic measuring tool, has undergone significant improvements, making it more effective and easier to use for enhancing student outcomes. NJSLA Individual Student Reports have also been received, and they will be distributed to students and parents and stored in student files.

We continue to focus on professional development, including social studies engagement, Response to Intervention (RTI), and curriculum updates in ELA and Spanish. Our Summer Enrichment program was successful, offering new courses and promoting student learning and interaction.

We have introduced Classwize, a powerful Classroom Management Chromebook solution, and provided support for using Chalk. We have also standardized instruction across the district by selecting new US History I & II textbooks from McGraw Hill.

In World Language, we have developed universal rubrics and a placement plan for student advancement, with all resources updated and available in Chalk.

We commend Ms. Elkins-Solomon for her excellent webinar on using ReadTheory to teach writing skills. Our science and math curriculum teams have been complex at work, creating resources and making updates to improve the learning experience for our students.

We hosted a successful New Staff Orientation and have been actively engaging with Accuplacer and placement data to support our students.

The implementation of Incident IQ will help streamline system help and error reporting. We are excited about the opportunities this platform offers. Lastly, please follow the instructions in the email from Daniel Gallant regarding our Screencastify licensing agreement.

We appreciate your continued dedication to our students' success.



TECHNOLOGY NEWS

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

Take a look at the many improvements they've rolled out for our students and teachers.



Incident IQ: Rolled out a new ticketing and inventory system for District Technology and Facilities work orders. A brief introduction video and explanation of the system can be found [here](#). Customization of the platform is ongoing to enhance and streamline the end user experience.

TalkingPoints: Setup Google SSO and Data integration with Genesis for TalkingPoints. TalkingPoints is a multilingual technology platform that connects and empowers families and teachers by using human and AI-powered two-way translated communication and personal content.

PathwaysOS: Setup Google SSO and Data integration for PathwaysOS. PathwaysOS is the leading platform for connecting work-based learning opportunities to K-12 schools.

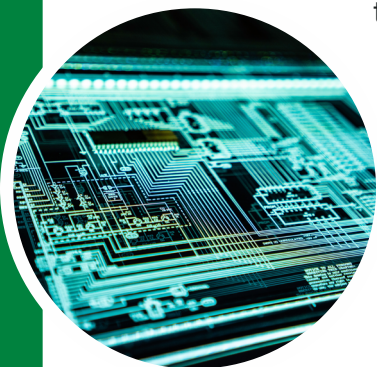
Clever: Setup Google SSO and Data integration with Genesis and connected supported District applications with Clever. Clever automates the secure transfer of student rosters to authorized parties and applications, such as PathwaysOS, Naviance, and TalkingPoints.

FinalSite: Started the onboarding process of FinalSite with a kickoff meeting. FinalSite will be replacing Blackboard as our District Website and Content Management Solution.

PaperCut: Implemented PaperCut at East Brunswick, Perth Amboy, Edison Academy and Woodbridge Academy Magnet Schools. PaperCut is a print management software that allows for a secure printing solution to a centralized location.

Implementation at Piscataway Magnet School is scheduled for later in the school year.

KnowBe4: The Security Awareness Training Program installation was completed. Phishing exercises were sent to all staff and training related to cybersecurity will be scheduled at a later date.



COLLEGE READY. CAREER READY. LIFE READY.

A team from Edison Academy Magnet School was invited to Kennedy Space Center in Florida to participate in the International Space Settlement Competition over the summer.

The team consisted of seniors Pranav J., Saadhika P., Vaghesan S., Sarvagna M., Benjamin L., Sushant C., Alan S., Sara B., Harshil V, and junior Nishi A. Out of 300 students present, Saadhika P. was one of four students chosen for the Dick Edwards Award for Excellence in Leadership.

In 2023, the young filmmakers of East Brunswick Magnet School made an impact on the digital film festival world. The EB Indie Film Festival celebrated the Official Selections of three films: "A Case of You" by Gabriel Werts (class of '23), "Subjective Worlds" by Euridice Sagastume (senior), and "A Tale of Two Idiots" by Louis Turco (junior). We extend our congratulations to all the Official Selections and Award Winners. At the New Jersey Horror Con and Film Festival, Nate Green (class of '23) received recognition for his film "Paranormal Log" among 200 submissions. Our students' talents were also showcased at the All-American High School Film Festival in NYC. Three of our student short films were given Official Selection status. Gabriel Werts (class of '23) with "A Case of You," Jordlyn DeLeon (class of '23) with "Candy Heart" (Animation), and Lamont Harris (junior) with "Flashbacks" displayed their skills at the world's largest student film festival. Lastly, at NJSBA's Workshop 2023, we celebrated the inclusion of Jordlyn DeLeon (class of '23) and Nate Green (class of '23) in the Student Film Showcase.

Our students' films continue to shine on bigger stages, and we couldn't be prouder.



COLLEGE READY. CAREER READY. LIFE READY.

Students from Piscataway Magnet School's Architecture Technology and Construction Technology programs are planning and designing a new space for the Construction Technology program's refurbished CNC machine. A great opportunity for interprogram collaboration to apply skills by creating functional and attractive spaces to learn. Overcoming project challenges together offers students the chance to work on positive outcomes with their peers.



Edison Academy Magnet School junior Sanjay R. won the Grand Prize in FMCSA Road Safety Art Contest. His artwork will be published in the 2024 calendar as well as displayed in the US Department of Transportation Building in Washington, DC.

➡ [Click here](#) to view the announcement article and video.



Students from the East Brunswick Magnet School theatre program, Aileen Espino, Katelen Estrada, Summer Hipper, Layla Kuya, and Gianna Martinez were recently accepted into a scholars theater program. This year-long program offers a unique opportunity for high school juniors from across New Jersey to learn about professional theater and contribute to the work at Two Rivers Theatre. Participants take workshops with professional artists, assist staff in a variety of departments throughout the organization and see every show in their season for free.



Student P. Rajamuthiah of Woodbridge Academy Magnet School recently completed a research program at Sri Ramachandra Medical College and Research Institute in Chennai, India.

As a result of the program, they are submitting a research article to the Indian Heart Journal.



COLLEGE READY. CAREER READY. LIFE READY.

Perth Amboy Magnet School's Ms. Karas won a Classroom Makeover donation funded by Mr. Eric LeGrand and Schoolfundr. From Perth Amboy administration: "Ms. Karas is a very important member of our school community; she not only teaches our students but also advocates for them. She goes above and beyond each year to give her students the best learning experience they could receive. We are so proud of Ms. Karas and we appreciate everything she does. This donation is very well deserved and will surely make a difference."

Students in the Graphic Design program at Piscataway Magnet School visited Grounds For Sculpture. Nestled in a beautiful property in Hamilton, Grounds For Sculpture is a wonderland for artists and students who are interested in the art of sculpture. Students got a chance to walk in the Sculpture Garden and learn about the artists and their work. The beautiful space and the sculptures inspired them to take several photographs. They are currently creating a digital flipbook with their photographs that they can showcase in their portfolio.

Arnuv Batra of Edison Academy Magnet School and Anika Bhatnagar of Woodbridge Academy Magnet School are co-founders of [Fall Vision, LLC](#). The two students have taken the initiative to design and develop a low-cost solution that helps detect fatal falls and send automatic alerts — a great tool that can help save lives, especially for senior citizens living alone or within assisted living facilities within the community. They were also recently awarded "Young Entrepreneur of the Year" by the Edison Township Chamber of Commerce on October 10. [➡ Read the full article on Patch.com.](#)



ALUMNI NEWS

Magnet Schools Graduate Sees Value In Giving Back

As owner of Ultimate Collision Repair in Edison, Jerry McNee does what he can to help students from the Middlesex County Magnet Schools to see the opportunities in his industry that are out there for them.

Entering high school, he had a couple of possible career majors in mind and started with welding before switching to automotive. “It was a great career path and start,” he said. “I’ve done well.”

That might be a slight understatement. McNee’s shop on Route 1 South has between 90 and 100 vehicles awaiting repair at any given time, ranging from family compacts to high-end collector cars. Recently, there was a Maserati and a Lotus on the floor, while an \$800,000 electric Ferrari was parked out front.



“Estimates are not a 15-minute job anymore.” McNee tries to keep students up on the changes in the industry as a member of a Magnet Schools advisory committee and by inviting them to visit. He also hires Magnet School graduates.

“The success of our career programs depends in large part on keeping up with trends and needs in the marketplace,” said Superintendent of Schools Jorge E. Diaz. “Alumni who are willing to engage with our students and to join our advisory committees are an invaluable asset.”

“He’s a graduate who know the needs of the kids,” Piscataway Magnet School teacher Sam Lopez said. “He’s seen the industry change. His shop represents the 21st century of collision repair.”

Automotive Collision Technology is taught at Piscataway Magnet School. Automotive Repair Technology is available at Piscataway, Perth Amboy and East Brunswick Magnet Schools.

ALUMNI NEWS

Two East Brunswick Magnet School Dancers Make Good in the Big Apple

Two graduates of the Dance program in the School of the Arts at East Brunswick Magnet School have found success in New York City and beyond.

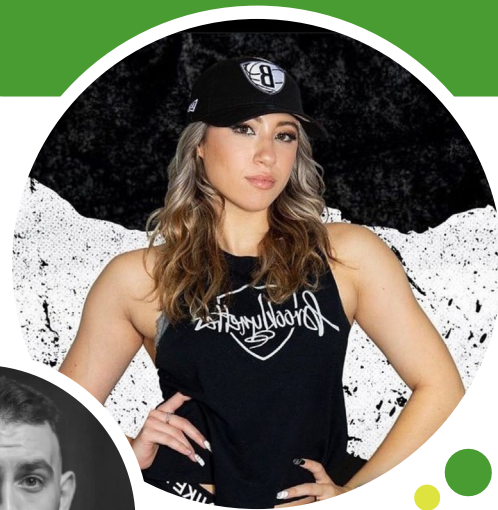
Eileen Salvato, Class of 2019, is a dancer for the Brooklyn Nets of the NBA and the New York Liberty of the WNBA. She also has been a guest artist in the Magnet Schools Dance program for this school year.

Another guest artist this year, Spencer Grossman, Class of 2014, is in the cast of Off-Broadway's "Sleep No More," an interactive show that is a "film noir" take on "Macbeth." Salvato, from Edison, said she "couldn't have chosen a better school for myself," praising dance teacher Cleo Mack and others at East Brunswick Magnet School.

She said she has enjoyed returning to East Brunswick Magnet School as a guest artist.

"It's exciting to see how things have evolved," she said, adding that Ms. Mack "is probably the most diligent and hard-working person I know."

"She is absolutely amazing – she wants to see all her students succeed."



In addition to dancing for the professional basketball teams, she is a dance teacher and has performed with such hip-hop and R&B artists as Busta Rhymes, Method Man, Lil' Kim and Lola Brooke. In August she is going to Abu Dhabi to perform at the USA Basketball Showcase in advance of the 2023 FIBA World Cup.

Grossman, from East Brunswick, credits Ms. Mack with being "really integral in preparing me for college" and introducing him to his current show, "Sleep No More," as a student.

"She organized a trip to the show, otherwise I might not even have known about it," he said. Grossman said Ms. Mack was "awesome" as a teacher. "She solidified my thought" about dancing and college, he added. Both are graduates of Mason Gross School of the Arts in New Brunswick.

(continued on next page)

ALUMNI NEWS

After two years with a touring dance company, he has been performing in “Sleep No More” since January. Another East Brunswick Magnet School Dance graduate, Elias Rosa, Class of 2013, also is in the cast.

Grossman said returning to East Brunswick Magnet School as a guest artist has been “really fun.”

“The kids are so talented,” he said “It’s nice to give back. It’s full circle for me.”

“We, of course, are always happy to learn of our graduates’ success, but we are especially happy when they return to our schools to inspire our current students” said Superintendent of Schools Jorge E. Diaz.

“It has been one of my greatest joys to be able to bring these former students back to the studio and have them share their talents with our current students,” Ms. Mack said.

“I can’t think of a more satisfying scenario as an educator than to be able to celebrate my former students’ success and connect my current students to their alumni network.



“Our Magnet Schools Dance community is a strong, tight knit group of talented people and I am so grateful to be a part of it. Eileen and Spencer are just two of many successful alumni contributing to the world.”

The School of the Arts, at East Brunswick Magnet School, offers career majors in Theater, Dance, Digital Filmmaking, Graphic Design/ Commercial Art and Illustration, Multimedia Art and Design, Arts Technology, and Music Performance and Technology.

↳ [Follow Eileen on Instagram](#)

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The HVAC second year apprentice class is mastering their skills with electrical meters. [#quickclicks](#)

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This school year looks so bright we needed sunglasses. [#quickclicks](#)

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Class is back in session in the Piscataway Magnet School's cosmetology classrooms. [#quickclicks](#)

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Woof woof! We had some adorable visitors during the Early Career Exploration Institute. [#quickclicks](#)

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Who needs AAA when you have auto tech students?! Rising 8th graders' had hands-on experience during the Early Career Exploration Institute. [#quickclicks](#)

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We had the best cheerleaders at Edison Academy Magnet School's GMC Tennis Tournament. [#quickclicks](#)

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How sweet it is! Tasty treats made by the East Brunswick Magnet School baking students. [#quickclicks](#)

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Insightful, inspiring, incredible— just a few words to describe our teachers. [#quickclicks](#)

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Woodbridge Academy Magnet School's freshman orientation reminded us that parachutes aren't just for kids. [#quickclicks](#)

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Look who flew into the E.A.R.T.H. Center Garden, Arts, and Music Festival. [#quickclicks](#)

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We're ready for a rockin' new school year. [#quickclicks](#)

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Artsy at work, please don't disturb. [#quickclicks](#)

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Professional cupcakes from East Brunswick Magnet School's professional baking students. [#quickclicks](#)

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Thank you to our summer work program students for beautifying our schools. [#quickclicks](#)

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Perth Amboy Magnet School construction students showing us what "team work" truly means. [#quickclicks](#)

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Edison Academy Magnet School seniors led the way during freshman orientation. [#quickclicks](#)

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Score! Piscataway Magnet School's boys soccer team is unstoppable. [#quickclicks](#)

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A scholar AND a scholarship winner: congrats to practical nursing student Jennifer C. for earning a prestigious academic scholarship [#quickclicks](#)

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Chop chop, don't be late for culinary class!
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We're "diggin'" the Fall weather! [#quickclicks](#)

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A rising sunset for the rising Woodbridge Academy Magnet School seniors. [#quickclicks](#)

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Quiet on the set- we have a future director filming at East Brunswick Magnet School. [#quickclicks](#)

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Will we see Edison Academy Magnet School at the next US Open? We think so. [#quickclicks](#)

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From school counselors to administrators and teachers, everyone sharpened their skills during Professional Development Day. [#quickclicks](#)

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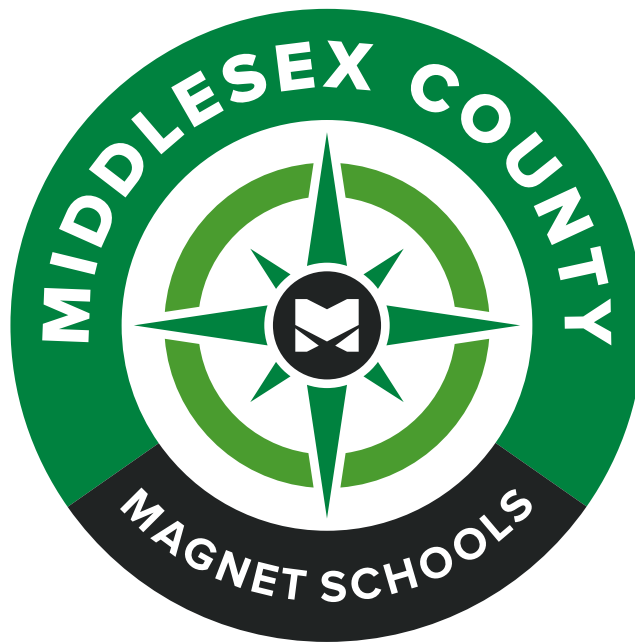


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