

Panther Pride Newsletter

Fall 2025



See the Band in the Middle Township Holiday Parade!

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Family Reading Night



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Creative Clubs and Performing Panthers!





Panther Pride NEWS

Dear Panther Family,

I have been touched by the community's warm welcome to Middle Township Public Schools. This month, I had the chance to return the favor, welcoming community members for a Town Hall on the district's strategic planning process.

Feedback from that meeting and a community survey revealed just how much residents care about our schools. They appreciate our dedicated teachers and staff, admire our strong school spirit, and acknowledge our efforts to expand opportunities for all students.

During the Town Hall, we focused on six key areas essential to the future of Middle Township Schools:

- Student Well-Being and Mental Health
- Efficient Resource Allocation and Budget Priorities
- Family & Community Engagement and Communication
- Teaching & Curriculum Excellence
- Staff Recruitment, Retention, and Development
- Facilities, Safety, and Technology Modernization

I will review all feedback from the Town Hall and share updates on these topics in the coming weeks.

As we collaborate on the continuous improvement of our district, it's also an appropriate time to think about the

many reasons to be thankful for Middle Township Public Schools.

Here are just a few:

- Our caring and collaborative staff, students and teachers exemplify Panther Pride.
- We are a tight-knit community that celebrates wins and looks out for one another in times of need.
- We produce students who are prepared to thrive – in careers, college and life.



I am thankful to be a part of the MTPS family, and wish all of you a season filled with joy and warmth.

Sincerely,
Stephanie DeRose
Superintendent of Schools

Upcoming Events

NOV. 26 All Schools
Early Dismissal

NOV. 27-28
Schools Closed

DEC. 5 Staff Development,
Schools Closed

DEC. 9 District Holiday Concert, 6 p.m. at PAC

DEC. 17 High School Band/Choir Holiday Show, 6 p.m. at PAC

DEC. 23 Start of Winter Break, **Early Dismissal**

DEC. 24-JAN. 2
Winter Break

Joelle's Guidance Corner

The Guidance Department has had a busy fall, hosting a series of parent information sessions to help families navigate the college process. The college planning events have been well-received, with a great turnout at each session.

Parents and students learned how to complete the common application and heard tips about applying to colleges. Guest speakers such as John Iacovelli from the Higher Education Student Assistance Authority (HESAA) and Grace Hind from Stockton University offered guidance and answered questions.

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In addition, representatives from Atlantic Cape Community College (ACCC) recently visited to meet with seniors interested in the Jumpstart program, which helps smooth the transition from Middle Township High School to ACCC. The representatives helped about 25 of our students apply to ACCC.

On Nov. 24, we held a FASFA Night to assist families as they begin the process of applying for college financial aid. A representative of NJ's Higher Education Student Assistance Authority presented information. **Please see our website for additional guidance resources and events.**

Joelle Tenaglia, Director of Guidance



Partnering to Help Families In Need

Middle Township Public Schools teamed up with community partners this fall to help families who faced additional challenges during the government shutdown.

Brian Valois and Robert Villani, franchise owners of Jersey Mike's in Cape May Court House, held a fundraiser for the MTPS community as part of the restaurant's grand opening events in November. Customers who received a special fundraising coupon could make a minimum \$3 donation to Middle Township Public Schools in exchange for a regular-size sub.

MTPS also partnered with the Community Food Bank of

New Jersey, Lower Township, Middle Township and Cape May County Commissioners to host a food distribution event earlier this month. The event was held specifically to support district families.



If your family is experiencing difficulty or anticipates needing assistance, please reach out to our Student Support Services team.

Community resources also are available.

Week of Respect Activities and Speakers Reinforce Message of Kindness

Middle Township Schools observed the Week of Respect with a series of activities and events that encouraged empathy. Students also learned the importance of inclusion and preventing bullying, intimidation, and harassment.

The week of activities included wearing blue to spread kindness and support the HurriKanen Kids Foundation, in honor of Kanen Keating-Wear, a Middle Township boy who lost his battle to cancer in 2019; orange and black to show Panther Pride and school respect; mismatched clothes to remember diversity is strength; a favorite sports jersey to team up against



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bullying; and tie-dye to tie together for kindness.

The week concluded at the Middle Township Performing Arts Center, where students gathered to hear motivational speakers Preston Centuolo and Christopher Hollyfield talk about constructive ways to counter bullying. At the event, hosted by The Youth Alliance, Hollyfield inspired the crowd to love themselves, use their voices and not hands, and not judge others for their differences. He also challenged the students to say or do 10 kind things to 10 different people, with the goal of creating a ripple effect of kindness.



Students Receive Cool Donation From Burke Subaru and Panthers in Action

MTPS students are toting water bottles that show off their Panther Pride, thanks to a generous donation from Burke Subaru and Panthers in Action. The Middle Township-based car dealership teamed up with Panthers in Action to provide 250 reusable, sustainable water bottles to the school district.

Francey Kanengiser Burke, Director of Communications at Burke Subaru, designed the water bottles featuring the district mascot. Burke, along with the Panthers in Action President Kelly Cox, Vice President Jenn Heun and Treasurer Alicia Woodrow, visited the school to present the bottles to the students.

Panthers in Action Inc. is a non-profit organization that supports Middle Township students through forming partnerships with local businesses and private donors, and by holding fundraisers. By providing basic items, the group hopes to reduce students' stress so they can focus on learning. Panthers in Action can be reached at panthersinaction@gmail.com.





Festive Fun for Families at Elementary #1's Boo Bazaar

Elementary #1 students, families and friends had a blast at the Boo Bazaar, presented by Middle Township Schools United Young Generation Club. Attendees explored interactive stations, participated in mini presentations, and enjoyed a delicious meal.

The performing arts class at Middle Township Middle School kicked off the evening with a reenactment of Michael Jackson's "Thriller."

Visitors were invited to shop for free Halloween costumes, decorations, hair dye spray and more. They also received a candy bag and made tasty treats at a cupcake decorating station.

The event was co-sponsored by MTPS, the Middle Township Education Association and the Concerned Citizens of Whitesboro. The Education Association provided the food for the event.

Students Were Bound to Have Fun at Elementary #1's Family Reading Night

Elementary #1 was fully booked on Family Reading Night, as some students dressed as their favorite characters and participated in a variety of activities.

During the special night, families connected as they joined a sing-along, entered raffles, listened to stories with guest speakers, played games, made

crafts and searched for beloved book characters during a hallway hunt.

Family Reading Night is held in conjunction with the school's Scholastic Book Fair, and many shopped for books at the event. Those who attended also received a goodie bag and refreshments.



Elementary #2 Serves Up Gratitude During Pre-Thanksgiving Celebrations

Students and staff celebrate Thanksgiving with their Elementary #2 family each year.

The “Attitude of Gratitude Week” started by celebrating our staff. Elementary #2 encouraged community members to share words of thanks for teachers, custodians, and security, front office, and support staff. The messages were submitted through an online form, printed out, and hung outside teachers’ doors to brighten their day.

The heartfelt messages included:

“Thanks for being a calming and supportive presence for the students you work with.” (for Mrs. Belali)

“I love the way you love all our children and know all the names at parent pickup.” (for Mrs. Brown)

“You were my 3rd grade teacher, around 2001, when I went through Middle Township Elementary #2. Your patience, compassion, and love for learning helped inspire me to become a teacher.” (for Mrs. DeLollis)

The week of Thanksgiving-related activities at Elementary #2 culminates with a holiday feast prepared by cafeteria workers.



Students Take a Panther Power Walk to Fight Cancer at Elementary #2

Elementary #2 students participated in the Third Annual Panther Power Cancer Walk, showing their support for all who are battling the disease. Some students dressed in pink for breast cancer awareness.

Ms. Hines organized the activity, and students added a personal touch by holding artwork and inspirational signs they created.



MTMS 'Latin Night Out' Celebrates Culture and Heritage

The school community came together to discover more about Latin culture at Middle Township Middle School's Latin Night Out. Guests explored Latin heritage through various activities, including dance, entertainment and a trivia game show.

The MTMS performing arts class performed a scene from "Hamilton." All attendees received door prizes.

Thanks to the Middle Township Education Association, which provided food for the event, Concerned Citizens of Whitesboro and the Middle Township Board of Education for making the night a success!



NJHS Members Were Halloween Heroes!

Members of Middle Township Middle School's National Junior Honor Society were superheroes for Halloween, and not just because of their costumes. NJHS members helped run the truck or treat event at Elementary #2 to make sure younger students had a fun holiday.





Under New Leadership, NNDCC Cadets Continue to Serve Community

Middle Township High School's Navy National Defense Cadet Corps (NNDCC) represents the district with distinction throughout the community.

The cadets recently took part in the renaming ceremony of the Rio Grande Post Office. They put on a Color Guard performance, then joined U.S. Rep. Jeff Van Drew, USPS New Jersey District Manager Marcellina Del Pizzo-Wisniewski and Steelworker 1st Class Guillory Bryant, USN (Ret.) for the Pledge of Allegiance.

The NNDCC also played a role in a ceremony for veterans held at the Performing Arts Center. A cadet read her essay submission from last year's VFW Patriots Pen contest at the event. On Veterans Day, the cadets were at the Cape May County Veterans Cemetery to participate in Color Guard and assist with usher duties.

An NNDCC unit also participated in its first drill competition in more than two years at Kingsway Regional High School in Swedesboro.

The NNDCC is under the direction of the high school's new Naval Science Instructor, Commander Stephen Kosloski, a Middle Township High School alumnus. Kosloski went on to graduate from the U.S. Naval Academy and U.S. Naval War College, and had a distinguished Naval career, including multiple deployments in the Middle East.



Three MTHS Teachers Receive NJ Exemplary Educator Recognition Award

Congratulations to Middle Township High School teachers Matt Wolf, physical education; Keirsten McPherson, Language Arts; and Celia Llaberia, Spanish; for receiving the 2025 New Jersey Exemplary Educator Recognition Award.

MTHS Principal Dr. Sharon Rementer nominated the teachers for the honor, which is presented by the New Jersey Department of Education.

The Exemplary Educators Award recognizes teachers who exhibit strong knowledge and skills, have an inspiring presence, and a positive impact on students, colleagues, and the school community. Only 120 educators across the state earned this distinguished honor.

Wolf, McPherson, and Llaberia were acknowledged for receiving the award at the November Board of Education meeting.



High School Highlights



JUNIOR CLASS GOES TO FINANCIAL REALITY FAIR: Our junior class had a fantastic time participating in Crest Savings Bank's Financial Reality Fair at the Wildwood Convention Center. Students experienced making real-world financial decisions in a fun and engaging way — from budgeting and managing expenses to planning for goals. Thank you to Crest Savings Bank organizers and volunteers who made this experience possible. In addition, thank you to Mr. Frankel for capturing the event on video.

SEE MIDDLETONES PERFORM: The group will sing at Christmas in Courthouse on Dec. 5 before the parade on the steps of the library.



RENAISSANCE PROGRAM RECEIVES A DONATION:

Thank you, Sturdy Savings Bank, for donating \$1,000 to our Renaissance program. The donation supports the Panthers Choice Awards and other student and staff incentives to build a positive climate and culture.



INTERACT CLUB: Middle Township High School Interact Club would like to thank the Avalon Lions Club for its \$1,500 donation. The money will be used to supplement the club's toiletry pantry and help with other initiatives. We are so grateful for their support.

MTHS GOES ABROAD: It was an unforgettable Fall Break for 28 students who went abroad with the MTHS Italian-American Club. The group had incredible experiences while visiting Spain, France, and Italy.

WARM WELCOME FROM NHS: We proudly welcomed more than 50 new inductees into the National Honor Society on Oct. 30. It was a wonderful evening recognizing the achievements, character, leadership, and service of our outstanding students.



Panther Pride NEWS

Crowning Moments at Homecoming



Homecoming king Jack McGarr and queen Jayda Torres are crowned at the big game at Middle Township High School.



Homecoming queen Jayda Torres (from left), Nova Simon, Mya Matthews, Adam Bouabbache, Maya Jurusz, homecoming king Jack McGarr, Josephine Bryan and Kenny Martin, all seniors



Freshmen Sasha Atalla (from left), Owen Ostrander, Emma Beasley and Kaleb Lombardo; sophomores Jasmine Shiek, Ty'Shon Bryant, Sofia Avetisyan and Dante Duca; juniors Kyla Bechtler, Juan Avila Escudero, Peyton DeVecchis and Jerome Booth

Performing Arts Highlights

ELEMENTARY #2:

This year, students can choose a club experience focused on sports, life skills or arts as part of the Panther Block. Those participating in the Mural Painting Club are brightening the school by creating murals and ceiling tiles. Students who joined the Bucket Drumming Club have spent the season learning rhythm skills.



ELEMENTARY #2: Students performed musical salutes this fall. In October, Charles Mathis (from left), Yuxi Lian and Samantha Aguilar De La O played a military march during morning announcements. Students in Mrs. Maloney's third grade class proudly sang in honor of those who have served our country during a Veterans Day concert.



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MIDDLE SCHOOL/HIGH SCHOOL: The Middle Township Marching Panther Band, under the direction of Band Director Mike Saul, made its triumphant return to the football field this fall with the show “Let’s Get the Band Back Together,” featuring songs by The Jackson 5 and Kelly Clarkson. Students from grades 7-12 participate in the band.

The Marching Panthers had a great season, placing second out of six bands in the New Jersey Firefighters Memorial Parade in Wildwood. The Navy National Defense Cadet Corps also made us proud as they represented our school in the parade. Check out the band’s final performance of the year at the Middle Township Holiday Parade on Dec. 5 at 6 p.m.!

HIGH SCHOOL: The MTHS Voice Program participated in a master class led by Madeline Larrimore, Youth-in-Harmony Coordinator for the Mid-Atlantic District of the Barbershop Harmony Society at the Middle Township

Performing Arts Center. Secret Best Friends, the current Mid-Atlantic champions, performed and helped lead an “Introduction to Barbershop” session and workshop. We are so thankful for our guests’ time and talent.

2025 Fall Athletics Season Highlights

The Panthers had a fantastic fall sports season, with seven out of eight teams qualifying for the NJSIAA State Tournament. The volleyball team had its strongest season yet, and the girls and boys cross country teams were the Cape Atlantic League National Conference champions. A school record was set for football, and many athletes achieved personal records.



GIRLS TENNIS: Girls tennis reached the Group 2 final for the second consecutive year and faced perennial group champion Haddonfield. Senior Maria Sakoulas and junior Ella Leahy eclipsed the 50-win milestone and ended the season with 60 and 61 wins, respectively. Their achievements helped the team finish 16-8 this season.

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CROSS COUNTRY: Both boys and girls cross country teams were Cape Atlantic League National Conference champions with undefeated conference records; the teams also won the Big 5 Meet. The girls team qualified for the state Group 2 Championship, and junior Jamar Mack represented the boys team, finishing 20th in the state for Group 2. Senior team captain Olivia Orton is exploring opportunities to continue running in college.



VOLLEYBALL: The volleyball team had its most successful season ever, notching 10 wins and qualifying for both the CAL and state tournaments. Addison Campbell, who surpassed 400 career assists, was among numerous players recording personal milestones.



GIRLS SOCCER:

The relatively young girls soccer team achieved a respectable presence in the tough CAL American Conference. The season highlight was a 2-1 win over powerhouse Ocean City, the first in 13 years. Senior captain Riley Odom is exploring continuing her soccer career in college.



FIELD HOCKEY:

Field hockey tackled a rigorous schedule, playing with some of the top teams in the state and qualifying for the state playoffs.

FOOTBALL: Football, fielding an extremely young team, powered through a rebuilding season and expects to return nine starters on each side of the ball. In the last game and only win, sophomore Colin Prokson set a school record for having eight sacks in a season. The fall cheer team was there to support the players at all home and away games.



BOYS SOCCER: The boys soccer team reached the Group 2 quarterfinal after an 11-6 season that included the first home playoff win in nine years. The soccer team will miss the contributions of 13 seniors who played this year.