

Panther Pride Newsletter

Winter Recap 2026



Middle School Goes to College

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Wild Day at Preschool



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Special Delivery for Pen Pals



Panther Pride NEWS

Dear Panther Family,

I enjoy sharing our Panther Pride in these newsletters, as well as through the updates we email to you, and post on our social media accounts and website.

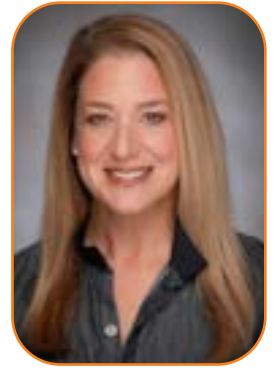
We welcome the opportunity to acknowledge students and staff for their achievements, but these updates also strengthen the sense of community that we value at Middle Township Public Schools.

Our community relationships enhance students' experiences, and we consistently consider our responsibility to the wider community in our goals and actions.

That approach continues to guide our strategic planning process, which is focused on six key areas:

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

The Middle Township Strategic Plan subcommittees are actively working to establish goals for review. We are excited about the next steps in this process to purposefully plan for enhanced student growth and success.



Sincerely,
Stephanie DeRose
Superintendent of Schools

Joelle's Guidance Corner

Students and their families recently attended the high school's College Fair & Information Session, which featured representatives from more than 50 colleges, universities, trade schools and military branches. Students had valuable opportunities to talk with representatives and learn about each institution as they consider their post-high school plans.

Now students can take the next steps to plan for college, including:

- Make a list of favorite colleges and universities from the fair
- Research colleges and universities online to learn about majors, campus life and admissions; be sure to use Naviance accounts to find colleges that line up with your criteria
- Attend a Wednesday workshop at MTHS; school counselors are available in the media center
- Visit college and university campuses to help find the right fit

- Prepare for and take the SAT; students can sign up the guidance office to take the test on April 29 during the school day

Classroom college planning sessions will begin after spring break to help students focus on application deadlines, college requirements and more.





Panther Pride NEWS

Upcoming Events

APRIL 2 All Schools **Early Dismissal**

APRIL 3-APRIL 12 **Spring Break**

APRIL 17-18 Elementary #2 Musical at the PAC

APRIL 21 MS NJHS Induction at the PAC

APRIL 28 Elementary #2 Diversity Night

APRIL 29 MTHS Panther Choice Awards at the PAC

MAY 4-15 AP Testing

MAY 11 Elementary #2 NJ4S Family Night

MAY 13 Elementary #2 Spring Concert at the PAC

MAY 20 MS Band/Choir Concert at the PAC

MAY 21 HS Band/Vocal Concert at the PAC

MAY 22 All Schools **Early Dismissal**

MAY 24 Naval Cadets Military Ball at Icona

MAY 26 Memorial Day **Schools Closed**

MAY 28 MS/HS Only **Early Dismissal**

MAY 29 HS Prom

See full calendar listings at middletownshippublicschools.org

Celebrating our Teachers and Educational Services Professionals of the Year

Congratulations to the eight Middle Township Public Schools teachers and educational services professionals who were recognized through the 2025-26 Governor's Educator of the Year Program. The recipients were honored at the December Board of Education meeting, and received state award certificates from their County Office of Education.

The statewide program acknowledges educators who have gone above and beyond in contributing to an innovative and inviting learning environment. The MTPS 2025-26 Governor's Educator of the Year and Educational Services Professionals of the Year honorees are:

Elementary #1

Educator of the Year: Kathy Wynn

Mrs. Wynn is a Basic Skills and Reading Recovery teacher who also serves as the data specialist, and building representative, and teaches at the MLK Homework Club. She co-chairs the School Wellness Committee.

ESP of the Year: Kelly Cox

A guidance counselor and HIB (Harassment Intimidation and Bullying) specialist, Mrs. Cox chairs the Multicultural Night Committee, co-chairs the School Wellness Committee, and is a founding member of Panthers in Action. She also

teamed up with the Community Food Bank of New Jersey to prepare weekly food distributions for students through her Backpack Snack program.

Elementary #2

Educator of the Year: Nicole Maloney

Third-grade teacher Ms. Maloney develops a good rapport with her students while maintaining high standards in the classroom. She shares her love of arts with students, particularly through her work with the drama club.

ESP of the Year: Celia Llaberia

An LDTC and former MTHS Spanish teacher and translator for more than 20 years, Ms. Llaberia is a liaison to Spanish-speaking members of the school community. She continues to make a positive impact in her new role as part of the Child Study Team.

Middle School

Educator of the Year: David Farrow

Mr. Farrow, a science teacher, has worked in the district for more than 30 years and provides a supportive and inclusive classroom environment. Outside the classroom, he leads extracurricular activities, volunteers at school events, and supports local initiatives.

Continued on next page



Panther Pride NEWS

ESP of the Year: Monica DeRose

Ms. DeRose has been a guidance counselor at the Middle School for more than 20 years. In addition to her responsibilities as a guidance counselor, Ms. DeRose attends many after-school events, chairs the Intervention and Referral Services team, and serves as DJ at pep rallies.

ESP of the Year: Amy Adair

Ms. Adair is the athletic trainer at Middle Township Middle School and Middle Township High School. She is deeply committed to the school community and ensures the student athletes are always safe and supported.

High School

Educator of the Year: Lisa Taylor

Mrs. Taylor is a social studies teacher who uses her in-depth knowledge to inspire and motivate her students. Mrs. Taylor supports students outside of the classroom, too, and cheers them on at games and events throughout South Jersey.



Cape May Zoo Animals Visit Preschool Classes for Interactive Lesson

Students in Mrs. Hess' and Ms. Fox's preschool classes will "fur-ever" remember a visit from residents at the Cape May County Zoo. The students were delighted to spend time with a rabbit, turtle, chinchilla and snake.

The zoo's Senior Education Keeper Nikki Freyer, who has a daughter in Mrs. Hess' class, and Education Keeper Bailey Wolf brought the animals to complement students' lesson on pets as part of the preschool's creative curriculum program. The classes were learning what animals make good pets, where they live, what they eat, how pets make them feel, and how to care for pets. Holding real-life animals made the lesson even more memorable!



Elementary #1 Students Get a Kick Out of New Sneakers

Students at Elementary #1 are putting their best foot forward this year! Subaru Burke, in partnership with Panthers in Action, donated hundreds of pairs of sneakers to the school. Each sneaker donation came with two pairs of socks. The generosity of Subaru Burke and Panthers in Action reminded students they are supported, valued and never walking alone. Thank you to all who helped with the donations, especially Nurse Patty, Nurse Karen, and Elementary #1's dedicated custodian, Mike Mitchell, for moving the boxes and supplies.



Elementary #2 Students Happy to Hear from High School Pen Pals

Mrs. Robinson's fourth-grade class excitedly read letters from their pen pals at Middle Township High School, then got to work writing replies filled with questions for their new friends.

The pen pal program offers significant educational benefits such as enhancing writing, reading and communication skills. Having a pen pal also helps the students develop patience and empathy.



Former Harlem Wizards Player Scores Points for Inspiration at Elementary #2

"Mighty" Mike Simmel, founder of the Bounce Out the Stigma Project, shared a meaningful message with Elementary #2 students during a recent visit to the school. Simmel, who was diagnosed with epilepsy at age 2, encouraged the students to find their gift and reach for the stars. Simmel explained how his epilepsy diagnosis did not inhibit him from pursuing his love of basketball. He played with the Harlem Wizards for 13 years, played in the NCAA Final Four, received numerous awards, participated in more than 800 halftime shows, and spoke at more than 300 schools throughout the country.

Simmel founded the Bounce Out the Stigma Project in 2005 to empower young people, especially those with special needs, to believe in themselves.



ELEMENTARY #2

Middle School Students Enjoy Hands-On Workshops at Career Exploration Day

Seventh and eighth graders at Middle Township Middle School participated in a Career Exploration Day at Atlantic Cape Community College's Cape May campus. The students enjoyed interactive workshops that focused on professional fields such as culinary arts, business, marketing and more. Professors from ACCC led the activities, which were designed to help middle school students explore their interests and learn about potential future careers.

Middle School stories continued on next page



MIDDLE SCHOOL



Pearl Harbor Remembrance Ceremony Honors Veterans

Middle Township Middle School students honored veterans during the school's annual Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day Ceremony. The ceremony educated students on the significance of the historic date and the role of the armed forces.

The event included remarks by Middle Township Mayor Chris Leusner and other guest speakers, school choir and band performances, and the presentation of colors by Middle Township High School Naval cadets.

Donated Haircuts Bring Smiles and Style to MTHS

Talk about shear genius: The owner of Ciccotelli's Barber Shop in Cape May Court House brought his services to Middle Township High School to make sure students looked their best.

Mike Ciccotelli, in partnership with Panthers in Action, donated \$425 worth of haircuts for the students. Each student gained the confidence that comes with a fresh cut while feeling cared for and supported. Thank you to everyone who helped make the event a success, including MTHS principal Dr. Sharon Rementer, teacher Kelley Hogg and instructional supervisor Laura Lambert.



MTHS Celebrates the AtlantiCare Winter Video/PSA Contest winners

Congratulations to the AtlantiCare Winter Video/PSA Contest winners! Two MTHS groups were recognized for their exceptional work and creativity on their videos. The first outstanding video was created by Michael Zuzulock, Nathan McMaster and Ethan Lees. The second award-winning video was produced under the direction of James Caldwell and Kennay Lopez.

MTHS thanks video production teacher Mr. Mike Frankel. His dedication, energy, and commitment to our students continue to elevate the high school's video production program.



HIGH SCHOOL



Performing Arts Highlights

ELEMENTARY #1

Kindergarten and first-grade concerts took place from Feb. 10-13, and featured Valentine's Day and friendship themes. The students delighted audiences with their singing as well as their performances of two folk dances.



ELEMENTARY #2 The Middle Township Dance and Step Team captivated guests at the "Be the Light" Black History Month performance. The students used their artistic talents to inspire the audience with messages of resilience, kindness and community.

MIDDLE SCHOOL HOLIDAY PERFORMANCES The Middle Township School District Concert performed "Bidi Bom," a song for Hannukah, "Christmas Time is Here," from a Charlie Brown Christmas, and "Christmas Kum Ba Ya," a song that includes a section of Swahili.



The Middle School Choir performed for more than 80 Cape May County residents at the Lighthouse Church's Forever Young Senior Luncheon. The choir sang pieces from their Winter Concert and then led the attendees for a round of Christmas carols. The attendees raved about the choir's performance and the students' model behavior, and asked if the group could return in the future.



The Middle School Choir visited the Complete Care Nursing Home and Rehab facility, visiting residents' rooms and singing Christmas carols. The singers took requests and encouraged the residents to sing and clap along. The choir's final performance at the facility was in the day room, where they performed their songs from the Winter Concert. Afterward, the choir had a pizza picnic in the middle school band room to celebrate a wonderful week of performances.

HIGH SCHOOL

Students in the MTHS theater program thrilled audiences with a performance of "Hairspray." The crowd returned to the 1960s as they watched the cast sing, dance and present the lively story of Tracy Turnblad.



Congratulations to the MTHS dance team and Coach Morgan Tridente for participating in the Disney Wide World of Sports Dance Competition in Orlando, Fla. The team members' dedication and hard work were showcased on the stage as they performed dances in an electric championship atmosphere. The MTHS dancers proudly represented their school as they competed with top dance teams from across the country.



Panther Pride Newsletter

Winter Athletics Recap

GIRLS BASKETBALL The team won the Cape Atlantic League Championship for the second consecutive year. The girls also took the CAL American Conference title, with an overall record of 25-5. The success was sparked by an exceptionally strong senior class: Reagen Powell, who scored 1,285 career points and grabbed 563 career rebounds, was named CAL female athlete of the winter; she and senior Abbey Cappelletti were named CAL All Stars. Abbey finished her career with 134 3-pointers. Reagen and Sarah Farrow were named First Team All South Jersey Group 2; Sarah finished her career with an astounding 638 rebounds, Reagen was named 2nd Team All South Jersey. Reagen, Abbey and Sarah plan to continue playing at the collegiate level. Seniors Mya Robinson, Alexia Davis and Essence Still also were important contributors and will be missed.



SWIMMING In the pool, boys and girls swim teams both qualified for state playoffs. The girls team, in its first playoff appearance in four years, lost a close meet to Seneca; the boys team advanced to the NJSIAA Group C semifinals before falling to Oakcrest. Both teams achieved respectable in-league records, and all swimmers got faster over the course of the season.

BOYS BASKETBALL The Panthers staged an epic upset over Camden to win the NJSIAA South Jersey Group 2 Championship. The boys were massive underdogs but pulled off a gutsy win in their fourth



consecutive finals appearance. The team fell short in the state semifinals, but can look back at a successful season led by hard-working seniors Chase Moore, Adam Bouabacche and Alex Daniel; Alex will be added to our 1,000-point scorers banner with a career total of 1,297. Playing a difficult out-of-league schedule, the Panthers lost only one in-league game to capture the Cape Atlantic League American Conference title.

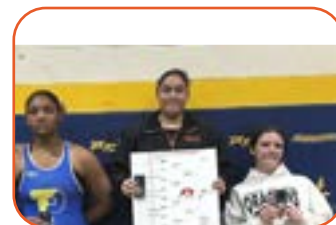
BOWLING Panthers bowling completed its first varsity season. The girls team won five matches and qualified for the state tournament, with a 150-pin team improvement from the first match of the season to the last. The boys team made great progress and ended on a high note with a win.

WRESTLING Panthers wrestling won the most ever matches in school history with 22 wins. The team pulled off an upset in the first round of the NJSIAA tournament to reach the semifinals. Junior Tyler King



became the first Panthers wrestler to win 100 matches before his senior season. He won the 150-pound District Championship and was named Most Outstanding Wrestler. Junior RJ Attenborough qualified for States at 165 pounds. The team graduates five dedicated seniors in Calvin Parke, Mike Layer, Dontae Kelly, Noah Nagle and Nate McCrone, but the future is bright.

For Panthers girls wrestling, junior Amaya Furey-Harmon made history by winning the 235-pound championship at the inaugural girls district tournament. Seeded second in her weight class, Amaya pinned her way to the championship.



CHEER The young cheerleading team was ever-present this season with its high-energy performances at all home basketball games and even traveled with teams for semifinal and championship games.

ESPORTS Esports continues to grow and improve. The Overcooked team doubled in size and qualified for states for the second year. The team finished the season fourth in its division and seventh out of 68 schools.