THUNDERBIRD TIMES

SPRING 2026



MHS HIGHLIGHTS PAGE 5

THUNDERBIRDS TAKE FLIGHT: BUILDING A STRONGER TOMORROW TOGETHER

As another remarkable school year ends, we reflect on the growth and achievements across the district, where students and staff set new benchmarks of excellence in academics, the arts, and athletics. This season is a time to celebrate those triumphs and embrace the bright future ahead!

Shaping Our District's Future Thank you to the Mahwah community for voting in the recent referendum. Planning is underway for the projects outlined in Question One, and we will provide regular updates as facility improvements begin. We remain committed to ensuring every step of this process reflects the excellence and community trust that defines the Mahwah Standard.

This milestone could not have been reached without community support. We recognize the dedicated leadership of our Communications Committee, the Board of Education, administrative team, faculty, and business office, who kept students as our collective focus throughout this process.

Student Success and New Beginnings The Mahwah Standard shines through the outstanding achievements our students made across all schools. From state-level academic accolades and championship athletic runs to breathtaking performances in the arts, our students illustrated what it means to be a Thunderbird.

On behalf of our faculty, staff, and administration, we congratulate the Class of 2026. As you prepare to walk across the stage, know that the Mahwah community stands behind you, proud of who you are, who you are becoming, and excited for your future. Thank you to our families, staff, and residents for a phenomenal school year. To our graduates and returning students, remember: once a Thunderbird, always a Thunderbird!



Dr. Michael DeTuro
Superintendent of Schools
Mahwah Township Public Schools

RRMS HIGHLIGHTS

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ARTS & PERFORMING ARTS

The RRMS production of Aladdin, Jr. on the high school stage was a magical celebration of talent, featuring lead actors and a stage crew mentored by the MHS Audio and Visual Crew under our directors.

The RRMS Spirit Band attended the NJSMA Region 1 Concert Band Festival and was awarded a Silver rating under the direction of Mr. Fusco and Ms. VanPuttenVink.

Director Ms. Campbell and the RRMS Orchestra continued their excellence by earning a Gold rating at the NJSMA Intermediate Orchestra Festival, while the Concert Choir attended the NJSMA festival for a professional clinic.

Sixth-grade vocalists participated in the 2026 MEBCI Treble Chorus Festival held at Memorial Middle School.



RRMS Highlights Continue on Page 5

MESSAGE FROM THE BOE

A SHARED VISION FOR A STRONGER TOMORROW

The Mahwah Township Board of Education extends our appreciation to the entire community for your partnership in the recent referendum. By approving Question One, our town chose to invest in the strength and future of Mahwah Public Schools.

Building the Foundation These necessary infrastructure improvements can now be completed upfront rather than over many years through the operating budget, ensuring every facility is a safe, modern learning environment where students and staff can fully focus on excellence in instruction.

These building improvements provide a solution to long-term operational needs in all our schools. By updating roofs, windows, doors, and HVAC systems, we are protecting our classrooms from disruptions, allowing our students to focus on their growth and success.

Investing in Our Tomorrow This referendum also successfully unlocks available state aid to offset the costs of these building projects.

Together, these improvements reinforce the wings of our district and the momentum of our township. Thank you for using your voice to shape our future and for your continued partnership as we work together to build a stronger tomorrow for all Mahwah schools.

Prema C. Moorthy, Ph.D.
President, Mahwah Township Board of Education

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MAHWAH SCHOOLS FOUNDATION: MOVING SCHOOLS FORWARD

The recent success of the Mahwah Schools Foundation (MSF) is a direct reflection of the incredible generosity and spirit of the local community. Thanks to widespread participation in events like the Thunderbird Run and the “It’s A Shore Thing” spring gala fundraiser, the MSF awarded over $50,000 in teacher-driven grants for the 2026-2027 school year.

To date, the MSF has given back over $2M to the schools, providing vital resources that extend beyond the district budget and directly enrich the educational experience for students across all grade levels. For the upcoming school year, these grants will fund a variety of innovative projects, including a new Middle School Wellness Room and an Athletic Performance Center at Ramapo Ridge Middle School.

Elementary schools will also see significant enhancements through MSF funding, such as Seed to Science programs, Merge Cubes for immersive learning, and Mindfulness & Movement initiatives for all kindergarten classes. From Music Risers to Keva Planks and Art Frame displays, these resources ensure that Mahwah students have access to cutting-edge tools in every discipline.

As the foundation looks toward the future, the MSF invites community members to be a part of its next chapter; volunteers are currently being sought in all capacities.

Please reach out to **themahwahschoolsfoundation@gmail.com** to get involved, and don’t forget to Save the Date for the next Thunderbird Run on Sunday, November 22!

THUNDERBIRDS SOAR: HONORING OUR DISTINGUISHED TRAILBLAZERS

The Mahwah school community recently gathered for a celebration to recognize a group of dedicated educators: the Bergen County Teacher of the Year nominees. These staff members embody the Thunderbird spirit, demonstrating the high-level innovation, leadership, and commitment to excellence that guide our students along their unique learning paths.

During the recognition ceremony, each nominee was celebrated for their dedication to the district's mission: ensuring every child has an adult that understands the power of connection and models the behaviors for success. These educators represent the heart of Mahwah, consistently going above and beyond to ensure our students have the tools and confidence to lead and succeed.



Bethany Giuliani | *Mahwah High School*

A leader in the mathematics department since 2016, Mrs. Giuliani maintains high expectations while fostering the authentic relationships necessary for student growth. Beyond teaching advanced courses from Geometry to Multivariable Calculus, she leads the H.O.P.E. Club and coordinates the highly anticipated annual Take-Your-Child-to-Work Day, providing a valuable experience for the entire community.



Salvatore Scillieri | *Lenape Meadows School*

A teacher-leader and behavioral expert, Mr. Scillieri is celebrated for his extraordinary ability to support learners individually through tailored instruction. He intentionally models his personal mantra—"The most important ability in education is flexibility"—guiding his students to be adaptable and resilient as they navigate their educational journey.

Andrea Simini | *Ramapo Ridge Middle School*

For 31 years, Mrs. Simini has served as a dedicated special education teacher and a constant source of positivity within the middle school. She uses humor and expertise to create a supportive environment where every student feels empowered to take risks and reach new heights, both personally and academically, as they prepare for high school.



Dena Scudieri | *Joyce Kilmer School*

Passionate about physical education and wellness, Mrs. Scudieri inspires students to develop lifelong habits of health and teamwork. She is recognized as a stellar collaborator who builds strong connections with families and colleagues, ensuring every student has the robust support system they need to soar throughout their time at Joyce Kilmer.



Christina Rainey | *Betsy Ross School*

Mrs. Rainey makes a lasting impact on her first-grade students by cultivating a calm, respectful classroom. She is particularly noted for her ability to ignite a passion for reading, helping young learners see themselves as confident, engaged, and capable.



Kalli Triantafillakis *George Washington School*

Known affectionately as "Mrs. T," she plays a vital role in shaping the initial kindergarten experience through empathy and insight. She builds a nurturing foundation for the district's youngest students while serving as a trusted mentor and collaborator for her fellow staff members across the building.



EMPOWERING YOUNG MATHEMATICIANS: K–5 STUDENTS THRIVE WITH I-READY CLASSROOM MATHEMATICS

During a recent curriculum review, Mahwah educators identified a need for a more rigorous and engaging approach to mathematics instruction to better reflect our district's high expectations. In response, a Math Curriculum Committee of grades K-5 teachers, specialists, and administrators collaboratively selected i-Ready Classroom Mathematics. Following an enthusiastic early pilot by our "i-Ready Champions" during the 2024–2025 school year, teachers across all elementary schools received ongoing professional development and coaching to support this year's full rollout.

Unlike the previous program's spiraled exposure to skills, i-Ready provides students with dedicated time to deeply explore concepts through multi-day lessons. The program places a strong emphasis on conceptual understanding, mathematical discourse, and grade-level problem-solving. Students are encouraged to explain their thinking, apply multiple strategies, and engage in collaborative discussions, which deepens understanding with the goal to build lasting confidence.

Feedback from the classroom has been overwhelmingly positive. Ms. DiRienzo, a kindergarten teacher at Lenape Meadows School, shared that math has become her class's favorite subject:

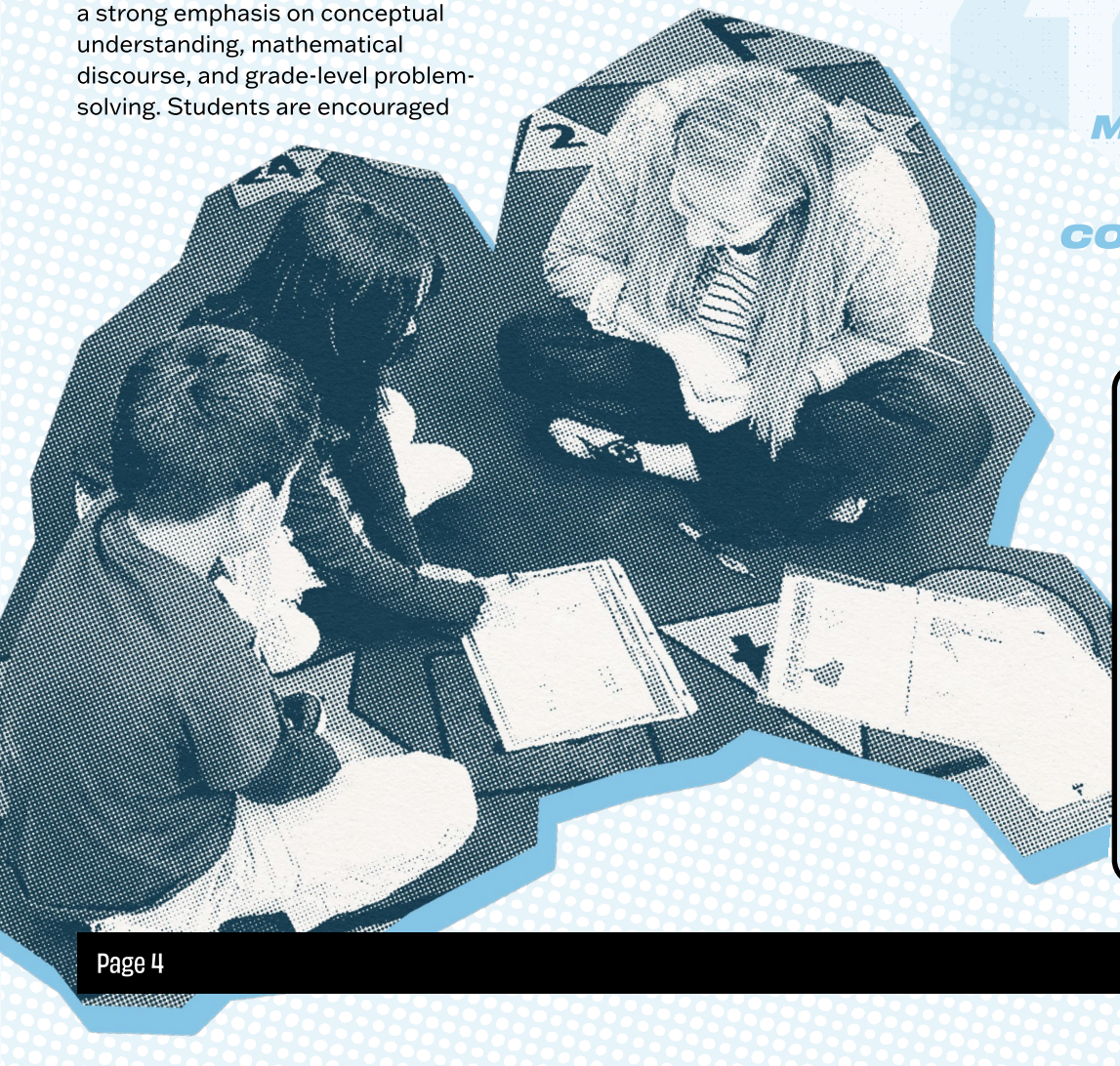
"This program has nurtured students' math literacy through 'math talks', strong visual modeling, and engaging tools. My students love the characters, Plory, Snargg, and Yoop!"

Ms. Piotrowski, a third-grade teacher at George Washington School, noted major growth in problem-solving and communication:

"Student mathematical vocabulary has improved as our young mathematicians explain their work using content-specific language."

Our students are equally enthusiastic, sharing that they enjoy the daily warm-up activities and love solving the "Try-It" problems to show the class their strategies. Through this transition, we are strengthening instruction across the district and empowering all elementary students to think, reason, and succeed as lifelong mathematicians.

> ***"STUDENT MATHEMATICAL VOCABULARY HAS IMPROVED AS OUR YOUNG MATHEMATICIANS EXPLAIN THEIR WORK USING CONTENT-SPECIFIC LANGUAGE."***



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RRMS HIGHLIGHTS



STEM & INNOVATION

Local architect Mr. Kiellar consulted with Ms. Chung's Geometry students on theme park designs using parallel lines, polygons, and scaled mapping, while a partnership with Mr. Bonner introduced eighth graders to data analytics and data mining in the healthcare field.

At the Future Problem Solving State Bowl, multiple teams secured several first-place finishes and international tournament invitations, earning recognition in Action Plan presentations and Creative Writing.

Ramapo Ridge mathematicians delivered an outstanding performance at the Perennial Math Competition against approximately 200 competitors, earning top individual placements across seventh and eighth grades and a first-place team finish to qualify for the national tournament.

GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP & HUMANITIES



The TEEEM (The Empathy, Equality, and Entrepreneurship Mission) group raised over $1,000 via a movie night and a February shoe drive to fund a fresh-water well for Burkina Faso, focusing on the impact of water scarcity on global communities and girls.

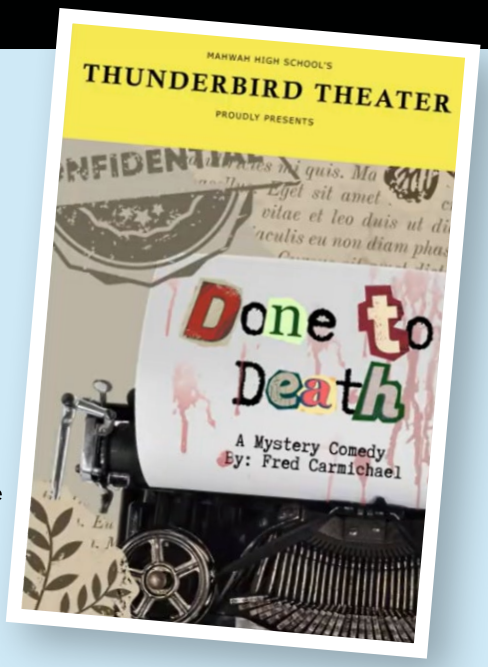
Eighth graders connected their Anne Frank unit to history at the Holocaust Museum & Center for Tolerance, exploring survivor testimonies and participating in a moral courage workshop.

Ramapo Ridge and Mahwah High School students celebrated Cultural Appreciation Day by researching their origins and sharing traditional dishes to promote diversity and inclusion across the district.

In the New Jersey State Bar Foundation's Law Adventure contest, a seventh-grade team won first place for their data privacy case, while additional seventh and eighth grade teams earned Honorable Mention for their mock trials.

Advisor Ms. Saviet and the National History Day Club competed at the Northern Regional competition, presenting compelling exhibits exploring pivotal moments of revolution, reaction, and reform throughout history.

MHS HIGHLIGHTS



ARTS & PERFORMING ARTS

The Drama Club earned four Montclair Theater Award nominations for the fall play, *Done to Death*, earning nominations for Mira Matveeva, Jillian Lalonde, Christopher Foreman, and Connor Yturregui for costume design, acting, and student directing.

Broadcast Journalism students William Nixon and Valentina Moreno were selected for the Garden State Film Festival in the high school category of NJ Hometown Documentary for their compelling storytelling and technical skills.

The Symphonic Band and Orchestra both earned Gold ratings at the NJSMA festivals, while the Jazz Band took home a Silver rating with Sebastian Miller named Best Soloist at the Livingston Festival.

Andre Lenox (Alto Sax) and Gloria Zhan (Trombone) were accepted into the NJSMA Region 1 Symphonic Band, and five students were selected for the 2026 Bergen County High School Band, representing the best of our instrumental program.

Nine students were accepted into the North Jersey Region Choruses, highlighting Elina Gaynullina's third-place finish, and eight additional students were named to the All-State Choruses to perform at NJPAC and in Atlantic City next year.

Sophomore Breckin Cole was accepted into the All–New Jersey State Orchestra and will perform at the Teachers Convention and NJPAC this November, while our Winter Guard and Indoor Percussion teams secured top-three finishes at the regional championships.

MHS Highlights continued on next page

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STEM & INNOVATION



Mahwah High School received the 2025-2026 STEM School of Excellence Award at the Virginia Beach ITEEA Conference, recognizing national leadership in engineering and technology education.

The Project HERO team won 1st place in the senior division at the NJ State Bowl, while multiple Future Problem-Solving students secured invitations to the International Competition at Indiana University this June.

The Robo T-Birds (Team 1672) competed in 12 challenging matches against teams from New Jersey, Delaware, and Pennsylvania at the District Championship held at Lehigh University.

The Academic Decathlon team earned seven state awards – the most in program history – with medals earned by Aashini Desai, Anya Patel, Keira Sarkissian, Akshat Singh, Joshua Braxton, and Clara Refaat, while Abby Murphy was named Team MVP.

ATHLETICS

Mikey Branagh made history as the first athlete at MHS to eclipse 1,000 career basketball points and 100 lacrosse goals, while Brandon Sklar and Cam Robator set new school records for career face-offs and assists for the Boys Lacrosse team.

In winter sports, the Ice Hockey team captured the Big North Silver Cup Tournament title with Gio Masi named Outstanding Player, and Lindsey Cunningham made history as the Bergen County Wrestling Champion and a State Tournament qualifier.

We celebrate our seniors committing to play at the collegiate level: Nick Maretzo (St. Thomas Aquinas), Tyler Thoelen (The College of New Jersey), and Bobby Gourley (Fairleigh Dickinson University Madison) for Baseball, and Faith Schulz (Endicott College) for Tennis, showcasing the strength of our athletic programs.

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