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Curriculum Corner

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Editor's Note: From left, Monmouth Beach School Superintendent Yelena Horre joins district staff Assistant Principal Ashley Thompson, Interventionist/TV and Media Teacher Nancy Pietz, and Technology Manager Randy Wilson.

Monmouth Beach Students Take the Mic: How One Small School Builds Leaders through Media

Monmouth Beach School is a Pre-K through eighth-grade learning community in the coastal town of Monmouth Beach, New Jersey. Students here are encouraged to grow academically, socially, and emotionally in an environment where every child is known, valued, and supported. One program that brings this mission to life in a particularly meaningful way is Monmouth Beach T.V. (MBTV) Media Production, the student-led broadcast program behind the school's news show, *The Beat on the Beach*.

Through MBTV, students step into the world of broadcasting while learning skills that extend far beyond the camera. They research stories, write scripts, conduct interviews, film segments, and edit the final production. In the process, they collaborate to create a program that highlights the life and energy of their school. Each episode becomes a celebration of the Monmouth Beach School community, sharing school news, student achievements, and special events with peers, staff, and families.

The program began modestly as a middle school club, created to give students an outlet for creativity and storytelling. It quickly gained attention within the school for its energy and potential. Participation grew, and the impact on students became clear. What started as an extracurricular activity was providing meaningful opportunities for communication, collaboration, and leadership.

Recognizing the value of the experience, school leadership made the decision to expand the program by transforming it into a structured middle school elective. This shift allowed for dedicated instructional time during the school day and ensured that students could build skills in a more consistent and intentional way. With a formal curriculum in place, students now develop a deeper understanding of media production, digital storytelling, and broadcast communication while continuing to produce the school's news program.

A key step in the program's growth was assigning a teacher with strong technology skills and creative expertise to lead the course. Working collaboratively with school leadership, the teacher helped design a dedicated media studio within the school. An existing space was reimaged and outfitted with cameras, microphones, and editing technology, creating a professional environment where students could plan, film, and produce their broadcasts.

Inside the studio, students take on a wide range of roles that mirror those found in professional media production. Some serve as anchors or reporters, while others work behind the scenes as scriptwriters, camera operators, or editors. Producing each episode requires careful planning, organization, and teamwork. Students learn to coordinate responsibilities, solve problems together, and rely on one another to bring each broadcast to life. These experiences foster leadership, creativity, and a sense of shared ownership in the final product.

Public speaking is another important aspect of the program. Appearing on camera can feel intimidating at first, but repeated practice and encouragement help students grow more confident in sharing their ideas. Over time, many students who initially feel hesitant become comfortable speaking clearly and expressively to an audience. The confidence developed through these experiences carries over into the classroom, strengthening students' communication skills across all academic areas.

As enthusiasm for the program grew, opportunities expanded beyond the middle school. Fourth and fifth grade students now have the opportunity to explore media production during non-academic time, gaining early exposure to broadcasting and digital storytelling. These younger learners experiment with filming, interviewing, and reporting while developing an interest that is sure to grow.

Perhaps the most meaningful impact of MBTV is the way it strengthens the connection between the school and the broader community. Through *The Beat on the Beach*, families gain a window into the daily life of Monmouth Beach School. The broadcast celebrates the accomplishments of students and staff while sharing the many moments that make the school a special place to learn and grow. It provides a meaningful bridge between the classroom and the community, allowing families to experience the pride, creativity, and energy of the school through the voices of its students.

For students, MBTV is far more than an opportunity to report the news. It is a place where they discover their voices and develop confidence in their ideas. As they plan segments, conduct interviews, collaborate with peers, and present to a real audience, they build communication, creativity, and teamwork skills that will serve them throughout their academic careers and beyond.

Just as important, the growth of MBTV demonstrates that meaningful media programs can be developed in schools without significant financial investment. What began as a small club grew into a thriving elective through thoughtful leadership, a dedicated teacher, and the willingness to leverage existing space and technology. The program offers a model that other schools can replicate, one that empowers students, strengthens community connections, and gives young people the opportunity to tell the stories that matter most to them.

The success of Monmouth Beach School's TV/Media Production class proves that when schools invest in student voice, creativity, and collaboration, even the simplest ideas can transform into programs that inspire, empower, and leave a lasting impact on the entire community.