

# Graduation: IIDT Edition

## NVOT's IIDT program graduates their first ever class of students

*By Annabelle Lee and Sofia Mangano*

Graduation marks an ending for every senior, but for the Class of 2024, it marks the beginning of the legacy of a unique new program.

The Institute of Interactive Design Technology, commonly referred to as IIDT, began with the Class of 2024. With students coming from towns all across Bergen County, the program served to develop students' skills in interface design (UX/UI design) while

simultaneously embracing a diverse community of aspiring athletes, writers, designers, and artists.

The current members of the Class of 2024 were the first ever freshmen to enter in the program (and the building) in the fall of 2020. Rather than attending the Bergen County Technical School, students take core academic courses at Northern Valley while also participating in the new IIDT curriculum. Most students had to commit to long commutes, coming from towns such as

Maywood, Bergenfield, and Rutherford, as they took on the program's new beginnings.

Assistant principal Luisella Marolda said, "Naturally, being from various towns throughout Bergen County, they were able to bring new perspectives and experiences with them."

Fourteen students within the IIDT program will graduate this year. These dedicated students quickly became meaningful members of the NVOT Community. Marolda said, "This specific cohort has

made it a mission to be proud of their unique program as well as becoming immersed in our community in a way that is nothing other than a Golden Knight."

They also left their marks on NVOT activities. For example, Cody Budinich won the New Jersey School Board Unsung Hero Award, Sam Cruz was nominated for best makeup design for The High School Theater Metro Awards, and Abigail Dennis broke school (and county) track and field records.

With success, comes challenges, but those challenges were overcome. Senior and IIDT student Haley Rodriguez said, "For us, when a lesson plan wasn't successful we worked together to make a better learning experience for ourselves, helping and teaching each other."

IIDT students have also had the opportunity to get involved in NVOT's athletics. Rodriguez said, "My favorite memory from the past four years was cheering and celebrating in the rain on the Rutgers field after winning the state championship for varsity cheerleading."



Logo of the IIDT program

Photo Courtesy of NVOT Twitter

From leading various projects to navigating challenges, these seniors have been through it all, fostering a close-knit bond among themselves. Senior Cody Budinich said, "At first, everyone was a lot more quiet and shy. Now if there is silence in that class I am scared that something bad will happen. The classroom is very lively."

Though these students may be studying far from their hometown, they have managed to make OT their home too. Assistant Principal Dr. Robert Hyman said, "I hope that these students take great pride in being Golden Knights and know that they made this school a better place. This is their school...forever."



IIDT Seniors at Prom

to win and how to lose.  
– Tyler Chiu, #8 Boys Soccer improve!”

– Rowan Leddy, XC

“I’ve spent my entire childhood and high school career playing soccer, and the memories that accompany that experience will always have a place in my heart. I don’t want to get stuck into a specific routine or habit in college and so I think I’ll leave soccer as a memory instead of something I’ll continue to pursue.”

– Heewon Kiim, #2 Boys Soccer



“Football has always meant a lot to me. I’ve been playing ever since I was a kid. I learned at a young age that the lessons and connections you make during football extend far past sports. The sport teaches you discipline, respect, routine, toughness, and countless other lessons. I’ve also met some of my best friends playing football, and those

are connections that will last forever.”

– Zac Falkenstern, #58 Football

“With high school soccer ending, it leaves behind a fun journey with a great group of boys and it taught me about teamwork, hard work, and gave me memories I will never forget.”

– Bryce Walsh, #4 Boys Soccer,  
#4 Boys Lacrosse

“After playing sports at NVOT for four years I can proudly say that I have made some of my closest friends through our sports teams and no matter what you think, there is always room to improve.”

– Sierra Lumia, Girls Tennis

“From my last year playing at NVOT, I will never forget the amount of adversity I had to overcome as a player. I was injured in the off season and all while dealing with injuries, I had a successful final year playing at NVOT. I was proud of myself and the team for where we made it although we came up short.”

– Tim Rutigliano,  
#10 Football

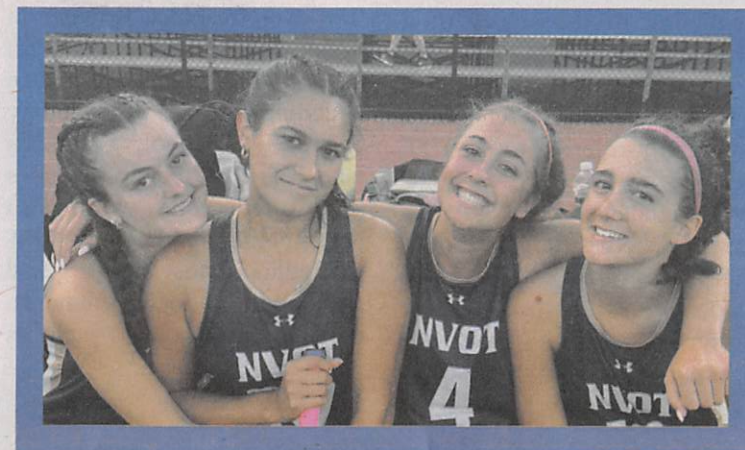


“I think two great lessons I learned from football were discipline and accountability. Both of these things are extremely important in anyone’s next step to success, so learning and applying these skills as early as freshman year have really given my athletic and academic life a great boost.”

– Evan Brooks, #8 Football, #1 Boys Basketball, T&F

“I felt like I was a part of the team and separate at the same time. It was the biggest honor getting to be a goalie for this team. The girls are my family and I’ll never forget the memories I made with them.”

– Muskan Patwa, #49 Field Hockey



“Through my experiences in field hockey, I’ve created such amazing connections with the amazing, strong, beautiful girls on my team. Field Hockey was the most meaningful part of my 4 years at Old Tappan and I would do it all over again. It taught me good sportsmanship, confidence, resilience and perseverance. #13out”

– Gretchen Restiano, #13 Field Hockey

“After playing 3 varsity sports throughout my time at NVOT, my biggest piece of advice is to cherish the relationships you make along the way and to celebrate the victories no matter how big or small!”

– Layla Giordano, #18 Girls Volleyball, #5 Girls Basketball, T&F