

# Spotlight ON SCHOOLS

FEBRUARY 2003

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*South Brunswick Schools Newsletter*

PO Box 181 ■ FOUR EXECUTIVE DRIVE ■ MONMOUTH JUNCTION, NJ 08852 ■ (732) 297-7800 ■ FAX: (732) 422-8054

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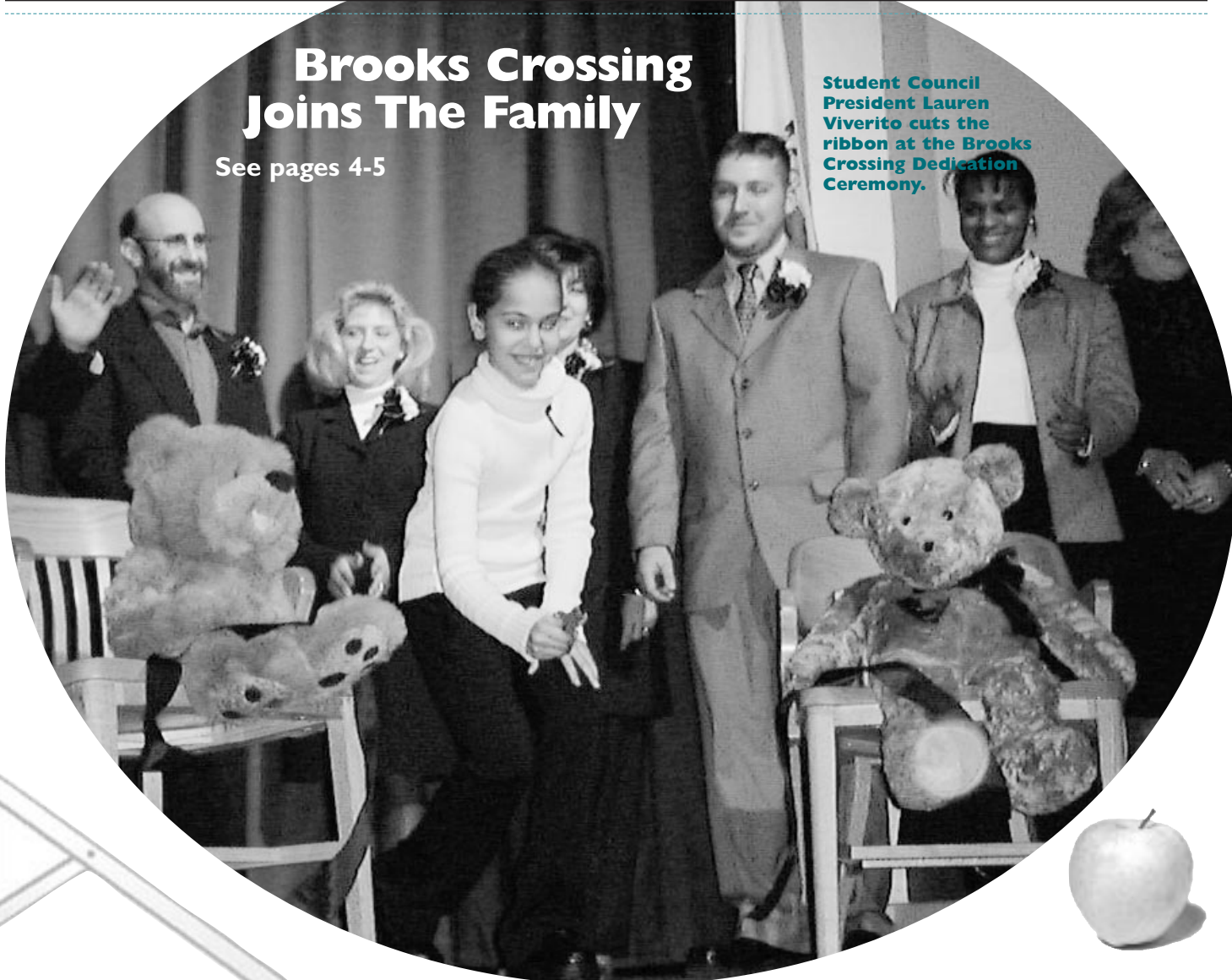
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Crossing Dedication  
Ceremony.



## District Names Director of Technology



Aaron Bryan

**THE DISTRICT HAS ANNOUNCED THE APPOINTMENT OF MR. AARON BRYAN** as its new Director of Technology.

Mr. Bryan came to the Board's attention through his fine troubleshooting work in rebuilding the networking infrastructure for the new high school. Working under contract to TransNet at the time, he identified difficulties in the school's access to the district's outside network, a job that took almost two years.

Prior to the appointment, Mr. Bryan implemented accounting systems in both private industry and government agencies

primarily in New York. He specialized in adapting existing systems from manual to automated. Recognizing that "a good market existed here," he moved to New Jersey. Soon he was performing his first work in public schools, with a client list that included Toms River, Bishop AHR in Edison and Rockaway/Hibernia.

For the last two years Mr. Bryan has served as the district's Manager of Information Systems. He doesn't discount the awesome nature of his new assignment.

"This is more than a full-time job," he said. "My responsibility is the management, monitoring and maintenance of every operating system in our district. Fortunately we have a staff that is highly skilled and completely accountable."

Basically, Mr. Bryan sees himself as responsible for "anything that gets plugged in, and many other things that do not."

He believes the difference between

industry and the public schools is the level of involvement. Breakdowns can disrupt an entire day of learning for students and teachers. For that reason technical support must be actively involved in all aspects of the curriculum with a full understanding of teacher/student needs and program delivery.

"Technology helps students learn with a new level of involvement," he said. "These challenges must be constantly available to them. It must be reliable and it must perform."

His ongoing goal is to continue to increase the use of technology in the curriculum in a teacher-friendly way.

"I'm surrounded by a uniquely qualified support group," said Mr. Bryan. "We operate as a department where all individuals are empowered to act, learn and make decisions. This kind of attitude reflects the district's commitment to efficiency, accountability and success."

## Making a Big School Smaller



New wing at SBHS set to open in September 2003.

**IN SEPTEMBER OF 2003, THE NEW WING AT SBHS WILL MAKE THE HUGE SCHOOL EVEN BIGGER.** But now, administrators, teachers and the Board of Education have worked to decide on a new organizational scheme to begin in the fall.

Helped by a \$48,000 Government Planning and Implementation Grant, the high school has created a Planning Team to study ways to turn a large school into a smaller community.

"Our school must be a place where all students feel they are a unique part of our community," said Assistant Principal Christine Chrabaszcz, who chairs the Planning Team.

"We want every student to know they have an adult advocate, and that they are never going to get lost in the crowd."

On Tuesday, January 21,

the Board voted on this critical plan. The unanimous vote includes the following key elements in a structure that will maintain a Foundation School for grades 9 and 10 and an Upper House for grades 11 and 12:

- 1) In the Foundation School, there will be three house leaders for Foundation School affairs consistent with the job description approved by the Board of Education in June 1999.
- 2) There shall be three deans for the Upper School subject to the approval of a job description by the Board of Education.
- 3) There will be an increase of 2 guidance counselors to a total of 12.
- 4) Teachers will be assigned to the Foundation School or the Upper School in 2003-2004 and 2004-2005.
- 5) In 2004-2005, the Board will review the need for an Ad Hoc Committee to explore implementation for 2005-2006:
  - a) Interest Clusters, b) A Fourth Assistant Principal, c) Teacher Assignments and
  - d) The need for an assistant to an activities coordinator.

"This is a large facility and growing larger," said Ms. Chrabaszcz. "We cannot have students becoming faceless and nameless. Students must experience a long-term connection to at least one adult in addition to

their counselor." The Board of Education will review and vote on suggestions for increasing personalization at the high school sometime in February.

### Residents To Aid Students In College Interview Process

**SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENT DR. SAMUEL B. STEWART HAS ANNOUNCED A NEW PROGRAM**

designed to help students improve their chances for landing acceptances at the colleges of their choice. The program, "The College Interview," pairs seniors and their families with local residents and teachers who interview for colleges. The ultimate purpose is to help students develop better skills for the upcoming interview component of their college acceptance process.

Mrs. Mariann Long, chairperson for the monthly meeting of school PTO presidents, is coordinating the program. Those interested may contact Mrs. Long at 732-422-4819. Interested families may also call Madeline Daniels at the Board Office at 732-297-7800, ext. 3103.



## Laptops Expand Technology At Brunswick Acres

**COMPUTER INSTRUCTION HAS TAKEN A LEAP FORWARD** for Brunswick Acres second graders with the arrival of two new cows. “Cows” of course, stands for Computers On Wheels. Fifteen laptops are placed on a cart that can be moved from room to room. And those “Cows” are doing some serious “grazing” throughout the school.

“The laptops are wireless and can be moved to any classroom,” said Resource Teacher/Computer Coordinator Maryanne Adamcik. “It means entire classes can work from them at the same time right at their desks.”

The Cows are in the hands of the second graders for a simple reason. Their hands are the first in the school to become big enough to negotiate the new track pad (in place of the mouse), and stretch across the keys. The real objective is to develop computer literacy as early as possible. It’s hoped that by fourth grade, teachers will soon focus less on computer skills, concentrating instead on lesson content even when it’s technology driven.

Second graders receive two lessons per week with the laptops. They work mostly at word processing and sharpen spelling skills by learning to apply the spell check feature. Yet some classes have moved beyond that.

Sherri Mayle’s students are working on their own slide shows using digital cameras. The students will import images into their original stories and present them to the class. It’s all being done with laptops right at their desks.



At work on their laptops at Brunswick Acres are Jessica Bach, Andrew Woller, Krystal Murphy, Robert Puzio, Kunal Shah, Deanna Johnson, Griffin O’Neill and Quincey Schenck.

“It’s like giving the entire class independent computer experience right in the classroom,” said Ms. Mayle. “These are skills they must learn and the sooner the better. These machines are also great confidence builders.”

Just ask second grader Jessica Bach.

“It makes me feel grown up,” she said. “The laptop is lots of fun to use, and it makes everything we do fun.”

Teachers are using the new tool in an endless number of ways. One called the sight of her entire class using their laptops on the writing process

a “total teacher moment.”

Ms. Mayle sees no limit to the expansion of technology instruction through use of the laptops. She’s already used the “Cows” to communicate with her “buddy class” in Switzerland.

“We’ve seen how the laptops can make the world a little smaller,” she said. “But we’re also seeing how they make our classroom a whole lot bigger.”

## Greenbrook Students Tune In “Channel X”



Students Korryn Gerenza, Gobie Kumarasamy, Lauren Lally and Abby Weingarten at work on “Channel X” program schedule.

**THE NEXT TIME GREENBROOK FOURTH AND FIFTH GRADERS CHECK THE TV LISTINGS,** they’ll have a new respect for the work it takes to schedule a TV show.

As part of a unique math project, students programmed 360 minutes of shows and commercials for the mythical “Channel X.” The project supported their study of elapsed time and scheduling.

In teams of two, students had to schedule and name 325 minutes of shows and movies and 15 minutes of commercials. It wasn’t always that simple.

“They had to place commercials at the beginning and in the middle,” said College of New Jersey student teacher Lauren Jennings, who ran the project in Thea Dahlberg’s class. “Some shows were 26 minutes long, and some were 88 minutes long. It got confusing at times.”

The project took about a week, and was the culmination of units on multiplication and division facts, bringing all the learned concepts together. It took all their math skills to make it work. Sometimes it didn’t.

“If you made a mistake anywhere, you had to go all the way back and start over,” said Danielle Bartolotta who, with her partner Danna Gomez, had to re-schedule an entire evening’s telecast when they went a minute over.

“It was kind of cool making a TV

schedule and seeing it all work out,” said Michael Senna. “I never knew it could be so hard to make time work out the way you want it to.”

Teacher Fatima Caneja’s students also “went to work” for Channel X. She felt they did an “awesome” job.

“They learned about elapsed time in an engaging way that they will easily recall whenever they need to,” said Mrs. Caneja. “The cooperative aspect of the project was also important. Partners had to make decisions and come to quick agreement to get the job done. It was fun to watch.”

And for a student teacher it was a special pleasure.

“I was very impressed with these children,” said Miss Jennings. “Their ability to work independently just amazed me. I interfered very little once they got going.”



# Brooks Crossing



Principal Gary Abbamont, Secretary Sue Rausch, and Assistant Principal Scott McCue.



Music Teacher Bonnie Capes and student flutists.



Board President Harry J. Delgado and South Brunswick Mayor Frank Gambatese.

## THE DISTRICT'S BEAUTIFUL NEW FACILITY HAS BEEN WELCOMED INTO THE SOUTH BRUNSWICK COMMUNITY.

December 8, Brooks Crossing families and community members gathered for the new facility's official Dedication Ceremony.

Principal Gary Abbamont served as the emcee, joined by Superintendent Dr. Samuel B. Stewart, Board President Harry J. Delgado and a variety of township dignitaries, including Mayor Frank Gambatese and Councilman Greenstein.

"Our community can expect a first class education at this wonderful new facility," said Mr. Abbamont. "The rich program in technology, performing arts, and physical education that has made the district a recognized leader statewide is fully intact and ready to go."

In addition to the traditional "cutting the ribbon" ceremony, there were several musical performances by the Brooks Crossing Chorus and a procession of students from other elementary schools. A student poetry recital, "What School Means To Me," were on display throughout the ceremony.

"We are a new school with great promise and potential. Our parents say they feel as though we've been a part of the district's tradition and school partnership, a clear and coherent vision of excellence leading to an outstanding school experience for our students and a tradition of success."

## Brooks Crossing Mission Statement

"Brooks Crossing Elementary School is committed to ensuring that all students achieve educational excellence. We are a caring community, a rich curricular program, a commitment to character education, and a commitment to character education. We are committed to its students to become strong participants in the global community."

# Joins The Family

## BY BROOKS CROSSING SCHOOL HAS

**THE BRUNSWICK FAMILY.** On Sunday, and community members gathered for the ceremony.

Mr. Abbamont as Master of Ceremonies welcoming the Board of Education President Harry J. Delgado, and other dignitaries, including Assemblywoman Linda Greenstein.

quality education for the children who attend Brooks Crossing. Mr. Abbamont. "The strong academic foundation and visual arts which makes our district unique and established at Brooks Crossing."

During the ribbon-cutting ceremonies included the Chorus, Violin Ensemble and the Flutists. A group of elementary schools now attending Brooks Crossing. The students presented essays on "What Brooks Crossing means to me" and essays on "What Brooks Crossing means to me."

Mr. Abbamont said, "Students and staff have been together for a long time. A strong homecoming program of studies and a staff dedicated to providing the best for our students have already initiated a new chapter in the history of Brooks Crossing."

## Crossing statement

Brooks Crossing School will work to ensure that all students receive a quality education. Through a strong sense of community, an inspiring learning atmosphere, and a strong character, Brooks Crossing will prepare students to become participants and leaders in the world.



Assemblywoman Linda Greenstein with Gary Abbamont, Dr. Samuel B. Stewart, Superintendent of Schools, Harry J. Delgado, Board President and Gary's son, William Abbamont.



Gary Abbamont, Dr. Samuel B. Stewart, and Architect Scott Spiegle.



Harry J. Delgado, Dr. Samuel B. Stewart, Assistant Superintendents Jeffrey R. Scott and Willa Spicer, Mayor Frank Gambatese, Architect Scott Spiegle, and Student Council President Lauren Viverito.

Photos By Maribeth Edmunds



## Indian Fields Fourth Graders True Hands-On Learners



Debbie Rosenblum's fourth graders with their amazing creation. At right is Ms. Rosenblum, at left is art teacher Katina Ewaskiewicz.

### INDIAN FIELDS FOURTH GRADERS HAVE GIVEN NEW MEANING TO THE PHRASE "HANDS-ON LEARNING."

After a two-month study of New Jersey's Lenape Indians, teacher Debbie Rosenblum approached art teacher Katina Ewaskiewicz with an idea.

"I wanted to build a life sized replica of a Lenape village," said Ms.

Rosenblum. "Ms. Ewaskiewicz brought me down to earth."

Yet "down to earth" was amazing enough. During five weeks of their art resource time, the class constructed a miniature village, the detail of which is simply astounding. The students used the same materials as the Lenape's might have employed. Not a drop of glue was used, and all pieces were tied meticulously by hand. The students used waxed thread as "sinew." Twigs, gravel, clay pots on wooden platforms, real corn hanging inside bark huts, corn cooking in pots, and beds of skins over twigs are part of the astounding detail.

"We wanted this to be as realistic as possible," said Ms. Ewaskiewicz. "It made Lenape life come alive for them."

"They exceeded my wildest expectations," said Ms. Rosenblum. "The materials were not sophisticated but their technique had to be. They rose to the

occasion."

It was clearly a truelife experience for the class.

"The Lenapes were very creative and skilled people," said Sara Aanestad. "They had to be to build a village like this."

"This was only a model," said Bret Robinson. "They had to use just what they had and do it for real. What a hard life it was."

Jeanine Petralia's class added their creativity to the study with the building of Lenape musical instruments. Spirit flutes made from real sumac and magnolia branches, paddles covered in skins, felt, feathers and shells, beaded drums and rattles were just some of their remarkable creations.

"It was a challenge and it was fun," said student Christopher Shackelford of the Lenape village. "It was the real thing."

## From Classroom To Assistant Principal At Constable

**FOR THE PAST SEVEN YEARS, SUZANNE BORN TAUGHT FIRST AND SECOND GRADE AT CONSTABLE SCHOOL.** She loved the classroom, yet felt a special joy in the leadership roles she experienced throughout those years. Her work on the Snowby Committee, a community outreach initiative, as well as Parents As Partners and assembly programs gave her a taste of the world beyond the classroom. She shared her views with former Constable Principal Gary Abbamont who encouraged her to pursue her credentials in administration.

Having obtained her certification at Rider University, she acted as Administrative Intern during last year's transition period as Mr. Abbamont moved over to Brooks Crossing. Slated to move to Brooks Crossing herself, she had literally moved into her new classroom when Constable Principal Rick Chromey sought her out.

Today, just a few months after saying goodbye to last year's second grade class, she is Assistant Principal at her former school. She finds the change unique and exciting.



"I was apprehensive about leaving the classroom," she said. "You move through so many milestones with the children. I feared I would lose that connection. But at Constable it's just not like that."

Ms. Born has learned to "take the whole building more personally." Her sense of ownership at Constable is more intense than ever before. When she drives up in the morning she sees the whole facility differently. While last year she saw her fellow teachers as "teammates," today they are "the heart and soul of our school community," and a source of "great personal pride" to her.

Perhaps the greatest test was her first classroom observations.

"I realized I was to critique consummate professionals, master teachers with more experience than I have," she said. "It might have been awkward someplace else."

But once again, "Constable is not like that." Teachers embraced their former colleague's new role, offering her support and an eager willingness to discuss her suggestions.

Ms. Born's office connects with Principal Rick Chromey's, which makes it easy for her to regularly run things by her boss. It's an opportunity she seldom misses, calling Mr. Chromey "a wonderful mentor



Constable Assistant Principal Suzanne Born observes Liz Cross's second graders in what was once her own classroom.

whose insight and input I could never be without."

"It's a huge step from that private wonderful classroom world you share with your students," she said. "Now I have 18 classrooms to think about. Yet I have lots of new opportunities to get out and connect with our children."

So welcome back Ms. Born, to the home you never really left.

# Joy Of Reading A "PATTERN" At North and South

**ALL SCHOOLS WISH TO INSTILL IN CHILDREN A JOY OF READING FOR ITS OWN SAKE.** For the last five years the PATTERNS Program has been making that happen for seventh and eighth graders. This year at Crossroads North and South, sixth graders have been added to the mix.

The program utilizes a variety of incentives to motivate students to read books of their own choice. More than the incentives, it's the freedom of choice that has captured the students' enthusiasm.

"This is great because I know what I like to read," said student Neha Mittal. "It's more fun. Assigned books can be boring. When you choose your own book, it's exciting."

"I never thought I'd get to read books like this for school," said Nick Siano who is plowing through the entire "Lord of the Rings" series. "You don't think of exciting adventure stories as a school assignment."

"PATTERNS" stands for "Parents and Teachers Together Encouraging Reading Novels." The parent component is critical. Students present completed PATTERN forms to their parents after each reading. On the forms they answer questions about main characters, setting, central conflict and so forth. Forms are then used to determine how many books each class has read. North and South class units as well as individual readers compete for prizes and awards to be presented at a huge school-wide assembly.

"As adults, we read for fun and relaxation," said teacher Rebecca Lindsay. "That's the way we want children to think of reading. Not as something they have to do."

Research has proven conclusively that students learn faster when permitted, within reason, and with teacher guidance, to read what they like. John Viotto, in the midst of a book on the "Ten Greatest Sports Teams," couldn't agree more.

"This is a book I would never just pick up and read," he said. "But since I chose it as a 'PATTERNS' book, I'm more likely to pick up another book and read it to find out what's in it."

"I never cared for adventure books, but this one grabbed my attention," said Tyasha Edwards about "The Watsons Go To Birmingham." "Now if someone suggested this type of book, I'd certainly give it a try."

Thanks to the generous support of the PTO, North and South students look forward to some wonderful incentives at the final assembly. Sports and movie tickets, gift certificates, stuffed animals and, of course, the coveted "Platinum Plaque" for the unit that reads the most books.

"The program is reintroducing children to a lost art," said teacher Sheila Tartaglia. "The chance to read what they like offers an excuse to read for pleasure. It's only natural that it lead them to seek out and explore new areas of interest."

Most students agreed that while the prizes and the opportunity to help their unit win the Platinum Plaque motivated them at first, the chance to read what they like for school is really something special.

"It's a win/win situation," said Evan Nathanson. "No one forces you to read. You read what you like, and it really feels good."

"Once you're into the book, that's what you focus on. It's the fun you have reading that counts."

## Top Units In PATTERNS Competition

**Note:** To compensate for different class sizes, standings are based on *average books read per student*, not total books

NORTH	
Unit	Books Read
Sigma	381
Rho	369
Neptune	323
SOUTH	
Unit	Books Read
Beta	440
Gemini	240
Delta	432
Chi	426

## "Dramatic" Start To Immigration Study At Cambridge

**AS A UNIQUE INTRODUCTION TO THEIR UNIT ON IMMIGRATION,** Cambridge students put on a series of short plays about the real life experiences of family members.

Guided by Artist In Residence Anne Pasquale, third grade classes rehearsed skits and short vignettes based on stories they collected from their families, friends and relatives. Children played the parts of real people, acting out true stories of arrival in America.

"This is a wonderful support to our ethnic heritage study," said teacher

Heather Desiderio. "The students are already excited about gathering research and learning more about immigration."

To a realistic background of ocean noises and seagulls provided by Ms. Desiderio's third graders, students Sara Barsky and Julian Pino "lounged sadly on a beach in Jamaica" as they prepared to leave their "native land" for a new home. Arrivals by boat and by plane from Sri Lanka, South America and Asia were also portrayed. In one scene straight from real life, the "pilot" announced "we have landed, welcome

to America," and the "passengers" cheered.

All plays were performed before a school-wide audience to kick off the Immigration and Ethnic heritage study.

"It's a chance to really get in touch with the problems and emotions immigrants to this country experienced," said Ms. Desiderio. "I can't think of a better way to gear up for a major study like this one."



## Kindergarten Registration February 26

Kindergarten registration will take place at individual schools on Wednesday, **February 26, 2003** at the following times:

**9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.**

**1:30 p.m. to 2:30 p.m.**

**6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.**

(Snow date is March 12, at same times)

Please note that Indian Fields and Brooks Crossing will hold registration in the larger buildings.

For more information visit the district web site at: **www.sbschools.org**

Click on Board of Education and locate information on Kindergarten Registration.

## Monmouth Junction Sets “Smart Goals”

**IT'S GOOD TO SET GOALS, AND EVEN BETTER TO SET “SMART GOALS.”**

At Monmouth Junction, grade level teams are meeting weekly to help students improve in identified content areas. Formulated in September, their Smart Goal Action Plans are based on standardized test results, literacy portfolios and student writing samples.

Smart Goals stands for specific, measurable, accountable, results-oriented and timed. These criteria control how Smart Goals are written. Goals vary from grade to grade. For example, kindergarteners will be proficient on their Early Childhood Portfolio by June 2003, while first graders will be able to write, illustrate and solve story problems (word problems) in math. In the upper grades, inferencing, the ability to pick up things implied but not directly explained in a story, is a major focus in literacy.

“A lot of these things we normally do anyway,” said fifth grade teacher Debbie Buonocore. “Smart Goals just make us more focused. We commit to a common goal and keep it in front of us.”

Measurement skills have been targeted pretty much across the board for grades 2-5. According to Principal Jan Bozowski, standardized tests have shown that students need the practice.

“We will incorporate this skill into all subject areas and build on it as children move through their grade levels,” she said. “For instance, there will be measurement of animal growth and distances in space during science, and building projects in social studies.”

There is also a good deal of parental partnership built into the school’s Smart Goals. Kindergarten teacher Debbie Miller sees this as critical.

“Making parents part of the team is what makes our action plan most valuable,” she said. “This has always been and always will remain a priority at Monmouth Junction.”

### South Brunswick Township Board of Education

PO BOX 181 ■ FOUR EXECUTIVE DRIVE ■ MONMOUTH JUNCTION, NJ 08852

Board meetings are normally held the 2nd and 3rd Mondays of each month at South Brunswick High School, and are televised on Channel 28.

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### Board Members

#### MARTIN ABSCHUTZ

18 Pullman Loop  
Dayton, NJ 08810  
(732) 329-0018 mabschutz@sbschools.org

#### HARRY J. DELGADO, *President*

36 Wetherhill Way  
Dayton, NJ 08810  
(732) 329-3453 hjdelgado@sbschools.org

#### ROBERT F. LONG

23 Adams Road  
Kendall Park, NJ 08824  
(732) 422-4819 rlong@sbschools.org

#### BARRY NATHANSON

40 Dunston Lane  
Monmouth Junction, NJ 08852  
(732) 329-2618 bnathanson@sbschools.org

#### CAROLE O'BRIEN, *Vice President*

37 Waverly Place  
Monmouth Junction, NJ 08852  
(732) 329-0813 cobrien@sbschools.org

#### PAUL PRODROMO

15 Nancy Street  
Kendall Park, NJ 08824  
(732) 821-4905 pprodromo@sbschools.org

#### MATTHEW SPEESLER

7 Kathy Street  
Kendall Park, NJ 08824  
(732) 422-4167 mspeesler@sbschools.org

#### ANNA TUPE

40 Anderson Way  
Monmouth Junction, NJ 08852  
(732) 355-1219 atupe@sbschools.org

#### DANIEL WATTS

24 Essex Drive  
Monmouth Junction, NJ 08852  
(732) 274-3420 dwatts@sbschools.org

## Postal Patron



**Dr. Samuel B. Stewart** sbstewart@sbschools.org  
*Superintendent Of Schools*

**Mr. Jeffrey R. Scott** jscott@sbschools.org  
*Assistant Superintendent — Business/Board Secretary*

**Mrs. Willa Spicer** wspicer@sbschools.org  
*Assistant Superintendent — Curriculum and Instruction*