

SOUTH BRUNSWICK TOWNSHIP PUBLIC SCHOOLS



Joanne Kerekes
Assistant Superintendent for
Curriculum & Instruction

Gary P. McCartney, Ed. D.
Superintendent of Schools

Anthony N. Tonzini, Jr., CPA
Business Administrator/
Board Secretary

February 2014

Dear Parents,

Annually, the State of New Jersey provides a report to parents regarding the condition/status of the public schools. This year's report, entitled *New Jersey School Performance Report*, provides information in three state-designated performance areas: **Academic Achievement; College and Career Readiness; and Student Growth**. The Report provides a front page overview for each of our District Schools that details some of the changes from past state reporting efforts. The [*Brooks Crossing Elementary School Performance Report*](#) is available for review. To fully comprehend the volume of information as well as the statistical means utilized by the authors, it is highly recommended that parents access the [*New Jersey School Performance Report – Interpretive Guide*](#).

New to state reporting this year in the area of **Academic Achievement** is the use of Peer Schools. Defined by the state as “schools that have similar grade levels and students with similar demographic characteristics, such as the percentage of students qualifying for Free/Reduced Lunch, Limited English Proficiency or Special Education programs,” Peer School comparisons present thirty similar schools for use in determining statistical ranking beyond the typical statewide ranking. The charts and graphs that are associated with this area provide sub-group breakdown of the assessment data for each of our schools. The benchmarks that the state set were done apart from the District and represent a discussion point for the future in our conversations with the Department of Education.

In the performance area of **College and Career Readiness**, the state has one metric for elementary schools, two for middle schools and five for high schools. For each of our elementary schools, student attendance is the identified measurement for this performance area. Six percent absenteeism has been selected by the state as the benchmark for meeting the target. Because no distinction is made for reasons for absence, any and all absences count against the benchmark. In some of our elementary schools where parents remove youngsters for extended periods of time, our percentage of absenteeism is in excess of six percent and the school is labeled as not preparing students to be college and career ready. We are exploring a remedy for this dubious distinction that will most likely involve having such students withdraw from school to avoid having the entire school negatively labeled. Additionally, we will convey our thoughts to the Department of Education regarding the use of a single criteria that results in a target either being accorded a 0% or a 100%.

At the High School level, we have taken great pride in preparing students for life after South Brunswick, regardless of where the path may lead. To this end, we have encouraged students to take the SAT and they have responded in large numbers and scored very high. Efforts in this area resulted in our meeting the state benchmark. Unfortunately, less SBHS students paid to take the Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test (PSAT) and we were not at the state benchmark for this metric. Not reaching this **College and Career Readiness** criteria automatically reduces our school score by twenty percent (1 of 5). Likewise, the state has set the benchmark for taking Advanced Placement Tests (AP) at 35% of the total

of the junior and senior classes combined, but as an added caveat, considered only ten core AP tests. While slightly more than 42% of our Junior/Senior students took at least one AP course, a statistic that exceeds both state and peer school averages, only participation in the ten state-identified courses was utilized to determine **College and Career Readiness**. Given this state decision, only 29% of our slightly over 42% (students taking at least one AP course during grades 11 and 12) were considered for the determination that SBHS was not meeting the target. We shared our disappointment with the Department of Education in a direct discussion with the Assistant Commissioner/Chief Performance Officer.

President Abraham Lincoln once asserted that “the largest room in any organization is the room for improvement.” As a School District, we are committed to continuous improvement and pledge our efforts to that end. As our partner in this educational journey, we are hopeful that you will review your school’s Performance Report and ask questions about anything that is unclear.

Sincerely,

Gary P. McCartney, Ed. D.
Superintendent of Schools

Joanne Kerekes
Assistant Superintendent of Schools