

## **SCHOOLS PUT A TOWN ON THE MAP**

by CHARLES H. HARRISON

**S**outh Brunswick Township does not show on the map of New Jersey, but it fills forty flat square miles between New Brunswick and Princeton. It's a place where curriculum is decided by teachers—not for all time by committees, but maybe just for tomorrow by individuals for individuals. It's a place where 75 per cent of the administrators and teachers have turned themselves inside out to become better educators and better persons.

At first glance, South Brunswick seems an unlikely place to find education exciting, daring, and fun. It is not an affluent community. In fact, the township is a collection of would-be towns with such names as Monmouth Junction, Deans, and Kendall Park, and of 14,000 people from families, most of whom have incomes on the low side of middle class. The township fathers have attracted a fair number of industries to share acreage with potatoes and soybeans. But even with the revenue from big business, South Brunswick's equalized valuation per pupil, at \$29,000, is below the average in Middlesex County and in the state.

South Brunswick resembles suburbia only in a section called Kendall Park. It is the suburbia of the mid-Fifties, with that look of instant housing typical of the period. But the residents of Kendall Park are important to South Brunswick. They are mostly young families whose men are moving up, some of them through the professorial ranks at nearby Rutgers, the state university. Members of the Rutgers faculty and their wives have been well represented on the board of education.

Outside of Kendall Park it is possible to drive down a back road and discover improbable neighbors: a junior executive living in a \$30,000 house and a migrant family of seven living in a worthless trailer beyond the verge of dilapidation. And around the corner may be found a piece of either the

sprawling Princeton Nurseries or some national conglomerate.

Even the nine schools of South Brunswick Township give no hint of anything different. Both the old schools and the new look the same. An elementary school in Kendall Park was thrown together a dozen years ago by the builder of that development. It shows its age and then some.

Why is it then that each year some seventy-five families in nearby communities call Superintendent James Kimple and plead to be allowed to pay tuition to send their children to school in a place that doesn't even show on the map?

**T**he answer goes back to 1962, the year Kimple came to South Brunswick. The nine-member board of education was displeased with its school system, and as Mrs. Jeanne Reock, now president of the board, recalls, "The board was fed up with the sleepy school system we had. We had a weak superintendent, and each board member was responsible for a school. So the board went looking for a new man. Fifty or sixty candidates were interviewed; then they found Jim."

Kimple remembers 1962 this way: "South Brunswick was a highly centralized district with an extraordinarily good board of education. The principals had no authority; the teachers were scared of everybody, including themselves; all curriculum decisions were made in the central office. But it was obvious that the board was interested in good education. The members wanted to change, to meet the needs of kids. They wanted to set policy and not be nine administrators any longer. I had had interviews all over the country—big cities, small towns. I came here because of the board."

Kimple moved to South Brunswick from Fair Lawn, New Jersey, where he made waves during the Fifties as small-town Fair Lawn raced toward becoming a big town. He is now fifty-ish, but running hard and strong on a heady mixture of adrenalin, caffeine, and nicotine. A short man, Kimple has the kind of rugged coun-

tenance the American Association of School Administrators probably would not choose for an image-building poster.

Kimple's method of operation has been to avoid an extensive or lavish building program and to pour all available funds into teacher training and direct services to students. "If there's anything unique about South Brunswick," according to Kimple, "it's that we haven't picked up all the educational gimmicks but have tried to touch all the bases for kids. If a kid needs help today, that's when he gets it."

Kimple took two important steps in 1963. First, he issued an edict eliminating homogeneous grouping. "I didn't want anybody playing God with kids," he said. "I've seen kids labeled mentally retarded who weren't any more retarded than I am. Reading experts put kids aside because they have dyslexia, but nobody knows what the hell dyslexia is. Schools today place kids in categories at age five, and leave them there for the rest of their lives."

When Kimple arrived on the scene, he discovered sixteen sixth-graders in one school who had been assigned to a class for slow learners. One of the children had a functional IQ of 132, but couldn't read. It turned out that that boy and many of the others had auditory or perceptual problems or both. Kimple pounded his fist as he told the story. "I can't forgive what adults do to kids."

The other big step was Kimple's decision to send all his principals to a summer session at the National Training Laboratories in Bethel, Maine. He had already pushed the principals by giving them the autonomy they'd never had before. He told them they were running their schools, but that they would be held accountable. Either they were going to move things, he said, or he would find somebody who could. In 1967, part of the NTL program was brought to South Brunswick to reach teachers and students.

The NTL treatment makes a person work hard at two very difficult chores: examining problems and examining self. Frederick F. Nadler, principal of the Crossroads Middle School, was one of those who took "the cure" in the summer of 1963. "Most of us saw two different persons when we looked at ourselves—the one we show to others and the one behind the facade. I really learned about myself. I took a look at things I didn't want other people to see."

The two giant steps of 1963 have left only one print. The individualization that began where homogeneous grouping left off was enriched by a program that now has involved 75 per cent of

the teachers and approximately 100 high school students.

The result was clear when Kimple was asked whether the district had experimented with the Initial Teaching Alphabet. "Well, I *think* two teachers elected to try it out this year," he replied. "In South Brunswick, teachers select their own systems of instruction. A teacher isn't going to be any good unless she is enthusiastic about what she's doing."

Mrs. Jobyna Smith is a resource teacher at Cambridge Elementary School. She assists the six teachers of the nongraded primary level by working with them on curriculum, by obtaining materials, and by being their liaison with such specialists as the psychologist and social worker. A question was put to Mrs. Smith: "What happens if one of the teachers wants to try something different?"

Her answer came back: "I would first find out from the principal if we had money for a new idea. If so, I would order the materials requested. We don't buy series of books; we buy bits and pieces. It forces the teacher to fit the materials to the child."

Mrs. Ethel Klevans is the librarian at the Cambridge School. "We don't have any predetermined curriculum," she said. It keeps her on her toes. "A teacher came in the other day and said, 'Quick, what do you have on capital punishment?' I didn't have much, so I got in touch with other libraries, even the state library."

The emphasis on individualization demands attention to a different set of details. The Crossroads Middle School, for instance, is organized into heterogeneous units. There are four teachers and 100 children to each unit. For now, youngsters who would be considered sixth-graders are in their own units, but students at the seventh- and eighth-grade levels are mixed in units. An attempt is made, said Nadler, the school's principal, to match students with a teacher whose personality and talents best meet the students' needs. "The teachers have assessed their abilities and inabilities in the training lab program, and they aren't afraid to declare both. Also, I know the teachers' strengths and weaknesses."

Each of the four teachers in a unit is a specialist in one subject area: math, science, English, or social studies. He is also expected to be a specialist at helping students with their learning and study habits, and at meeting their personal and academic needs in the classroom. Each teacher is expected to spend half his time in this second specialty, designed to foster and sustain independent study on the part of students.

Nadler believes the unit system is



—Photos by Hap Stewart (Bethel).

Above, Superintendent James Kimple talks with Patricia Murphy, director of the Head Start and migrant programs; right, a child gets individual attention in a nongraded classroom; below, a teacher's performance is videotaped for later self-evaluation.



the best way to bridge the gap between elementary and high school. But, committed as he is to individualization, he has provided a self-contained classroom for those youngsters who aren't yet up to bridging the gap.

Grades—meaning both school levels and letters of the alphabet that evaluate student achievement—have nearly vanished from all schools except the high school. For instance, there are four marking periods at Crossroads. The first and third offer students and parents a basic report assessing individual progress in a number of different skills and behaviors in each subject area. In each case, the basic report is followed up with a parent conference. At the second and fourth marking periods, an essentially narrative report is given.

The school in the section of the township called Deans serves children of preschool age through the equivalent of grade two. There, Kimple said, individual student achievement and overall progress in the school program are subjects for almost continuous discussion between parents and teachers. The national office of the PTA reports dwindling participation by teachers, but at the Deans School every PTA

meeting features a candid exchange between parents and teachers. "Teachers feel much more at ease, much more free when they are not forced to give grades," said Kimple. "If a teacher is going to give a grade, everything in the curriculum has to be standardized."

Standardized achievement tests are still administered in South Brunswick. Otherwise the impression given is that such words as "standardize" and "norm" have no place in the local vocabulary.

In this day of hypersensitivity, it is not uncommon in a district with more than a classroomful of black faces for the administration to know exactly how many there are, where they are, and whether any of their relatives are card-carrying militants. To a question on the number of Negro children in the South Brunswick system, Kimple shrugged and said, "Six, eight, maybe ten per cent. Who knows? Kids are kids. Our job is to do something for each one."

South Brunswick doesn't get a lot of federal funds—only \$8,000 under Title I this year (Kimple blames this on the way Title I aid is figured)—but the school system has operated

Head Start, Follow Through, and migrant programs year 'round since there was a nickel available for such projects.

The South Brunswick Title I teachers were making \$4 an hour last summer, Kimple pointed out, while their counterparts in an adjacent school district were pulling down \$15 an hour.

On two occasions Kimple said the unique thing about South Brunswick is that the district has "tried to touch all the bases with kids." He may be right in that individualization of the learning process probably has moved ahead to a greater degree and in more directions than in most school districts. But the behavior of teachers and administrators could be the most important thing going for South Brunswick.

It is apparent, for instance, that most teachers harbor considerable good will for the board of education. In fact, some were expressing it a week or so after settling with the board on a 1970-71 contract that offers a beginning salary of \$7,400—\$300 less than requested. But perhaps the significant fact is that in the first place the teachers asked for less than their state association was pushing as rock-bottom minimum, and quite below what many of their colleagues were demanding elsewhere in New Jersey.

In turn, the teachers were pleasantly surprised a year ago when the administration and board tossed on the bargaining table a proposal guaranteeing a month's summer employment for up to 25 per cent of the staff. The only thing the teachers had to give up in return was their ideas. The condition of employment was that the selected teachers had to suggest a worthwhile project to which they would apply themselves.

Sixty teachers were engaged in nearly twenty projects last summer. It cost the taxpayers an extra \$55,000. One project included twelve elementary teachers, a school psychologist, and one of the district's learning disabilities specialists. They worked with sixty youngsters in an effort to find out more about the ways children learn.

Another project started in the summer is Organizational Development. OD is a National Training Laboratories program brought to New Brunswick and expanded under Title III of the federal government's Elementary and Secondary Education Act. It deals with human relations and self-examination; it also aims at setting organizational goals and solving organizational problems.

For six weeks the paid volunteers in the program tackle the hang-ups in the schools and in each other, sometimes working at group dynamics in small

(Continued on page 90)

## Success at the Crossroads

IT SOUNDS NICE, but does it work? The question is always asked and must be. In the case of South Brunswick, the answer is indicated by the results of two consecutive years of testing the same group of about 280 students at the Crossroads Middle School, first when they were in seventh grade and then when they were in eighth. The tests given were from the Sequential Test of Educational Progress devised by Educational Testing Service of Princeton, New Jersey, to measure basic concepts and skills. The students' raw scores were ranked from highest to lowest and then compared to national norms. The chart below shows that as a whole the Crossroads students scored above the national norms in every subject and in every group in 1968, and improved in each case a year later.

SUBJECT	NATIONAL NORMS		CROSSROADS 1968	CROSSROADS 1969
	(Percentiles)			
MATH	lower	25	33	50
	middle	50	62	74
	upper	75	85	95
SCIENCE	lower	25	29	42
	middle	50	56	69
	upper	75	83	87
READING	lower	25	31	50
	middle	50	65	82
	upper	75	91	96
SOCIAL STUDIES	lower	25	37	42
	middle	50	67	81
	upper	75	87	91



—Liaison Agency.

## Student Revolt: Italian Style

by M. L. STEIN  
and JOSEPH V. RICAPITO

**D**uring a demonstration at the University of Genoa, students scrawled on a campus wall: "We will not be satisfied until the last of the capitalists is hanged from the intestines of the last of the bureaucrats." To underscore their point, the protesters defaced a nearby bust of Giuseppe Mazzini, the famous Italian patriot and revolutionist, with this notice: "He built up this nation. We shall tear it down."

The graffiti expressed the philosophy of the extreme left wing of *Il Movimento Studentesco*, a loosely organized but potent crusade that has become, perhaps, the most important

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new force in Italian society. Not yet two years old, the student movement has, by a series of bloody riots and protests from Sicily to Milan, shaken the public and politicians to the point where long-overdue university reforms have a priority with both administrators and legislators in Rome. Very few of the changes have been initiated, but their coming is inevitable.

The question is whether the *Movimento* will halt its agitation when the reforms are achieved. The authors, after discussing the issue with a number of activists and others at several Italian universities, are convinced that the movement's violent pressure tactics will continue even if all the university wrongs are righted. Although they are a minority of the *Movimento* (estimates range from 5 to 10 per cent), the *Left-wingers* are single-minded revolutionists whose goal is to rip down the whole structure of Italian life. Their heroes are Mao Tse-tung, Ho Chi Minh, and Che Guevara. Their enemies are the state, Fiat, the church, most of the Italian press, "United States imperialism," and just about everything else that marks the Establishment.

Said one student organizer at the University of Rome: "What difference would it make if all the university reforms are granted? We would have a broken-down car with a brand new tire. It's the system that must be changed."

Still, educational improvements are the most realizable goal, and it is this issue that has given the revolutionaries the support of thousands of less ideological students, younger faculty members, and a segment of the general population. Indeed, it would be hard to find anyone in Italy, including the leaders of all political parties, who does not agree that the nation's universities need drastic overhauling and an infusion of more money to bring them into the twentieth century. This would mean a leap of about 600 years in the view of many observers who argue that the twenty-nine state-run institutions have changed little from the Middle Ages.

Even the most ossified American university would appear progressive by comparison. In addition to being overcrowded and critically lacking equipment and facilities, particularly in the sciences, the Italian universities oper-