

Schools Jo 1989

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New school will try to slow down process of growing up

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CAPITOLA — The buildings at New Brighton Middle School look the same as they always have and, in fact, they are. But that's where the resemblance to the school — which has been known as Capitola Junior High for the past 25 years — ends.

When students flock to their classrooms Tuesday it will represent a new beginning. The former junior high has been changed into a sixth, seventh and eight grade middle school.

The middle school will provide a "better transition" between elementary grades and high school, according to Principal Barry Vitcov.

"With a junior high, you're on the bottom one year and the top the next

— there is no 'being there,'" he said. "The middle school will ease students into the secondary structure better."

It also helps to alleviate concerns of the School Board, which has been worried about declining enrollment at the junior high. Many potential Capitola Junior High students had been attending other schools instead.

The middle school plan is to catch those students a year sooner, getting them involved in the middle school so they won't transfer later.

Apparently, the plan is already working. The addition of more than 200 sixth graders from the Soquel Elementary School District's three schools, as well as an unexpected surge of new seventh graders, has swelled enrollment to 525 — nearly double that of last year.

Staff has been doubled from 12 to 24. There are also six additional classrooms available from adjacent Capitola Elementary School. Plans are in the works for a new gymnasium, as well, through the cooperative efforts of the city of Capitola.

Bigger, however, isn't always better. But Vitcov has also made some changes to make it better.

Electives have been expanded to include such subjects as film-making and computer science. This complements existing electives like art, drama, music, publications, sewing, Spanish, woodshop and decision-making.

To encourage school spirit, a cheerleading squad representing students from all three grades will be selected. Many girls gathered this week to work on dance routines offered by Soquel High School cheerleaders.

They will be cheering athletes who will be competing in an after-school sports program with three times the available funding of last year. The program was cut back to \$800 due to district budget constraints, but the school Site Council made sure athletics will thrive by contributing \$5,000.

The student council will take part on many decisions and events affecting the campus, including the popular intramural sports program instituted last year. Each grade level will have a representative on the council.

"Everyone's excited," said Vitcov. "It's a dual feeling — we're very

excited about the fact we're growing so much and so fast, but we're also a lot busier preparing for that growth."

Eighth graders Chris Hill and Tina Hartin are caught up in that enthusiasm.

"I think it'll be pretty good," said Hartin. "Being so much larger will be fun and it'll give the sixth graders a chance to be with older kids."

Added Hill: "It's going to be a new experience. I'm looking forward to

the school being so much bigger. It gives us a whole new image."

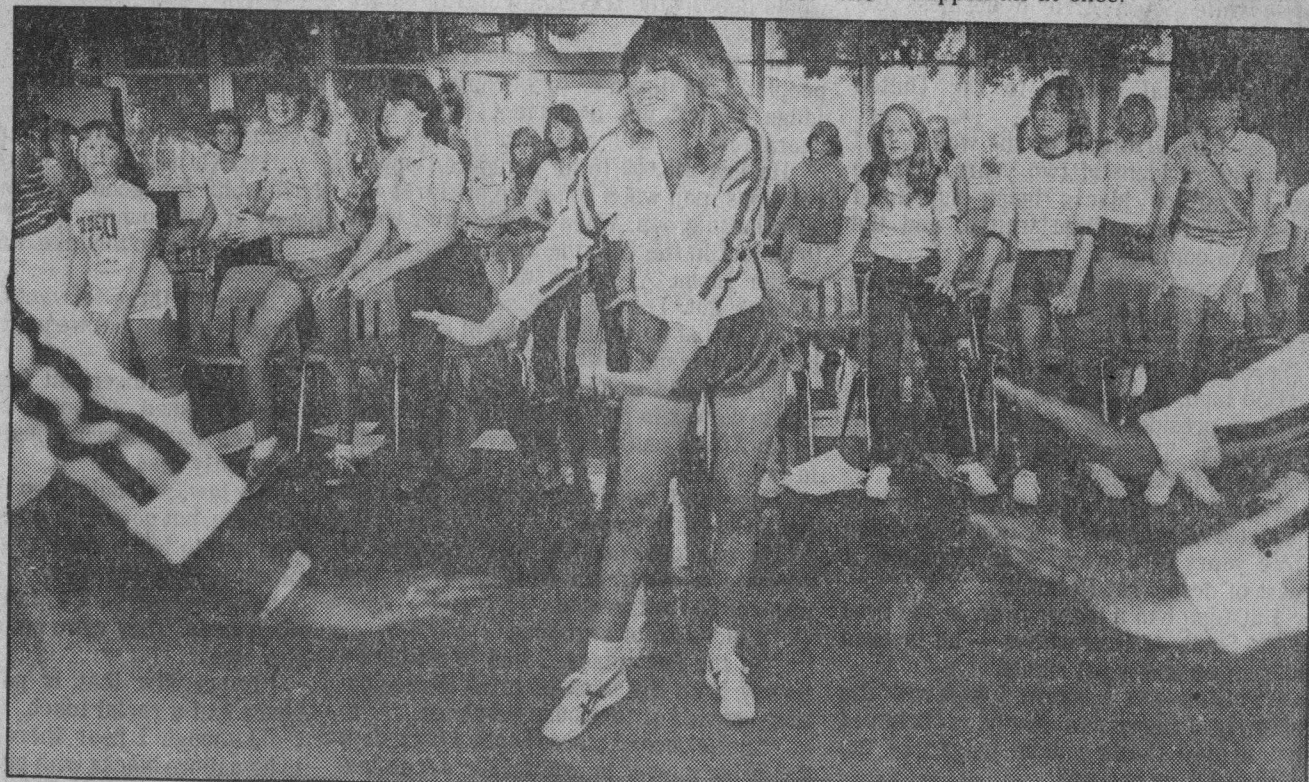
To ease the transition further, Vitcov has planned different class program structures for each grade level.

Sixth graders, for example, will have a highly organized day. A "core" teacher will teach them reading, language arts, science and social studies. They will change teachers only for math, physical education and one

elective class.

Seventh graders also will get only one elective, but will have five teachers. Eight graders should have a different teacher for each class and have a choice of two electives.

The purpose, said Vitcov, is to ease the transition to a departmentalized procedure. "We want to try to slow the pace (of growing up) down," he said. "The transition doesn't have to happen all at once."



Soquel High School cheerleader Michelle Baxer shows middle school students how

Sentinel photos by Bill Lovejoy