

Schools July 1989

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# Middle school gets high marks; nominated for special recognition

**CAPITOLA** —New Brighton Middle School, in only its first year of existence, has been nominated by the county Office of Education as one of California's 18 exemplary schools.

New Brighton is one of nine junior high or middle schools nominated in the state for the National Secondary Recognition Contest, sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education. The only other local school nominated was San Lorenzo Valley High School.

New Brighton, the former Capitola Junior High School, was converted into a sixth-through-eighth-grade middle school in September in an attempt by the Soquel Elementary School District to boost enrollment.

It certainly has done just that. Two portable classrooms had to be added when enrollment swelled to 571 — 71 more than expected.

Principal Barry Vitcov is pleased with the nomination. "I know the quality of what's happening in the classroom, and now some other people are recognizing what we're doing too," he said.

Vitcov lauded the fact the school has made such a turn around from the reputation the junior high had just a few years back.

"To say the least, the school was not held in the highest esteem," he said, "and now it has become an exemplary school."

One of the criteria for the contest, he added, was not necessarily high test score results for the school as a whole. Instead, the Department of Education is looking for schools "that have overcome obstacles and problems, and that are continuing to concentrate on improvement."

Today, New Brighton is seen as a role model. High academic standards have not only been set, but the school is doing something about achieving those standards too.

For example, special English, social studies and math classes have been developed specifically to serve high-achievers.

Students are taking pride in their school and spirit is at an all-time high. A lunchtime intramural sport program is threatening to get out of hand due to the enthusiasm of those involved — very nearly every student in the school.

Vitcov has even taken special precautions to ease the transition of sixth graders going to school with older

students — a concern raised by parents when the subject of a middle-school was raised.

"It's little things like the older you are, the more responsibility you get," said Vitcov. He pointed to the fact special dances are held after school for sixth graders, while seventh and eighth graders have night dances.

Nominations from throughout the country will be narrowed down by the Department of Education and finalists will be announced in June.