

## *Transition to High School*

By Ellen F. Gottlieb

On Thursday evening, April 23, 2009, parents of 8<sup>th</sup> graders at South Middle School attended an informative program designed to explain the transition to South High School. The event was hosted by our wonderful Assistant Principal, Dr. Gina Cartalano. The speakers from South High School included Ms. Susan Elliott, Principal, and Dr. Tom Ganes, Director of Guidance.

Ms. Elliott stressed to the parents that SHS has much to offer its students and that there is a tremendous amount of support available. The transition is eased by offering all 8<sup>th</sup> graders the chance to visit the premises of SHS on the day before school actually begins. At that time, they can tour the campus, find and open their lockers, meet with guidance and members of student government, and just get comfortable in their new surroundings.

Students will receive their course schedule at the end of August and can meet with their respective guidance counselors on Friday, August 28, 2009 to make schedule changes. Ms. Elliott explained that while every effort is always made to meet all of child's classroom and teacher preferences, class size and schedule limitations do not allow for every course change and she asks for patience and understanding. Also, Dr. Cartalano reminded parents that course placements are determined in the middle school and that three letters will be sent in May regarding those placements for Math/Science, English, and Social Studies.

Dr. Ganes said that SHS offers many opportunities for students to try new things by joining clubs, athletic teams, theater and choral groups, debate teams, student government and a host of other wonderful activities, all of which are listed in the Planner that each student will receive on the first day of school. He also encouraged student and parents to check the SHS website, particularly the *What's Happening* section, which informs everyone of that week's events and scheduling. As Ms. Elliott said, there are so many wonderful opportunities at SHS, and she asked that parents temper the yearning for academic excellence in an effort to reduce stress and afford our kids the chance to try new things and find their true passions and interests. She reiterated resumes should not be our main focus.

Several weeks after the start of school (date to be announced), there will be an Activity Fair where the students can find out about all of the clubs available, from Robotics, ceramics, culture clubs, theater groups, and many more. All of these activities are also available to students who attend The Village School in Great Neck. Practices for fall sports begin the last week in August and athletes should check the website for this information. Parents were also reminded of the availability of Infinite Campus where the Parent Portal can be accessed using your middle school password. Ms. Elliott strongly encouraged students not to bring expensive electronics into school. They are not allowed in classrooms, although they can be used on school premises. To prevent theft, lock it up, keep it with you, or, better yet, LEAVE IT HOME!

Dr. Ganes explained that after first quarter grades are complete, parents will make individual appointments to meet with their child's guidance counselor to discuss programming. There will be an annual meeting thereafter, which by 11<sup>th</sup> grade will include college application/admission information. The Guidance Office of SHS has an open door policy. The goal of this department is to encourage autonomy in preparation for the independence of college, where parents' only right is to pay tuition!

Ms. Elliott emphasized that SHS is a wonderful, safe, caring and joyous environment. The administration wishes each student an amazing journey through high school!