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For Release: October 7, 2002

Hammonton School District hosts grand opening for new high school; Received \$10.3 million under Facilities Act

HAMMONTON — High School Principal James Donoghue knew it wouldn't be an easy transition. But it's a transition that's worked nonetheless.

"I'm proud of our people," the four-year district principal said. "It takes good people willing to make things work. We have that here."

Here is the brand-new Hammonton High School in Atlantic County, which officially opened at Sept. 4. The \$28.7 million project was completed two weeks ahead of schedule in mid-August. Approved by voters in the form of a bond referendum, eligible costs came to \$25.8 million.

The state helped make plans into reality by covering 40 percent of that figure, \$10.3 million, through the Educational Facilities Construction and Financing Act.

The new 192,500 square-foot high school includes a host of other new facilities on site, such as a brand new stadium and all-weather track, two baseball fields, three softball fields and eight soccer/ all-purpose fields.

The transition to newer and safer facilities within the district included projects to refurbish the old high school and turn it into the new district middle school, where Waterford Township students begin attending in seventh grade.

The Waterford Township children formally attended classes in the former Lower Camden County School District. Now, about 700 children of the 1,200 enrolled at the high school are from Waterford.

Thus far, it's gone as good as could be expected, Donoghue said. Adjustments include learning new traffic patterns and, for the Waterford students, acclimating to a new district. Other issues include addressing lingering construction kinks, like checking on the heat come winter, the principal said.

"The kids and teachers did a great job handling the opening," Donoghue said. "You wonder how it will go until you get your schedule in your hand and (have) the pressure of getting to that next period's class on time. But I think we did a terrific job."

District officials hosted a formal dedication and grand opening ceremony on Saturday, Sept. 28 at 1 p.m. at the school, located on 566 Old Forks Road. Following the ceremony, parents and others toured the 110-acre campus.

As part of its facilities plan, the district had previously opened a pre-K thru first grade school in September 2001.

"I've been hearing nothing but positive things coming out of Hammonton," said Louis DeLosso, the project's architect and president of Design Collaborative in Cape May Courthouse.