

Governor Phil Murphy

Press Pool Coverage: Governor Murphy Visits Brooks Crossing Elementary School at Deans Campus to Announce Preschool Funding

02/22/2023

Where: Brooks Crossing Elementary School at Deans, 848 Georges Road, in the Monmouth Junction section of South Brunswick, NJ. The school houses 5 Pre-K and 6 Kindergarten classes and is part of the South Brunswick school district.

The tour begins in the hall entrance of Brooks Crossing Elementary School at Deans School where the Governor has greeted Acting Commissioner of Education Angelica Allen-McMillan, school administration, such as Superintendent of Schools Scott Feder and Principal Jaime Maccarone, and staff members.

The Governor arrived at 11 a.m.

Setting description: The hallways are bright and cheery, reflecting current holidays such as Valentine's Day and Black History Month as well as the season of Winter. The classrooms follow suit – full of colorful decorations and themed bulletin boards. Bright rainbow colored carpets line the floors with low classroom tables and a SmartBoard up front. A greeting on Ms. Kline's door said "welcome" with a happy sun and the words to "You Are My Sunshine" on a plaque.

What is this project/funding for: South Brunswick is one school district that recently opened its full-day Pre-K program. Previously, it was a half-day, paid program. The recent funding in the fall by the Murphy Administration allowed for the district and 15 others to expand their programming by hours and students. Murphy came to South Brunswick today (Feb. 22) to tour a few classrooms at the school and see the program in action. Murphy also was announcing the availability of \$120 million in grants for preschool facility expansion and highlighted funding recently received by 16 school districts, including South Brunswick, to establish or grow their preschool programming.

The tour was led by Maccarone, who chatted with the Governor as they walked to the classrooms. The two spoke about the recent changes the Pre-K programming allowed for – from two parttime Pre-K classrooms to three full-time Pre-K classrooms, who has benefited - more students - and how long Maccarone had been at her post – 4 years. As Murphy said, "the expansion was more kids and more hours."

They stopped first at a Pre-K classroom led by teacher Karen Delcampe where the Governor said hello to the students and asked their ages – 3, 4 and some 5 years. Ms. Delcampe joked that any child that was 3 would probably not answer him. The Governor then asked what the students were currently doing and the teacher answered that they were "Play Planning" meaning "we plan before we work and play is work," and the Governor said that "he could do with some of that." She further explained that they plan all their activities throughout the day and that some children are drawing pictures and other "friends" are doing writing and sounds. The stay at this classroom was brief – about two minutes - but the Governor said it was "nice to meet you all" and the children gave him a resounding "Bye!"

Led by Maccarone, who has been at her post for four years, the Governor then headed down the hall to Rachel Kline's classroom. On the way, the Governor spoke with Maccarone about the connection between Deans campus (Pre-K – K) and Brooks Crossing (first grade to fifth grade) and quipped that "he always listens to the principal."

He stayed at Kline's classroom for about 11 minutes. A preschool paraprofessional named Grace Biondo was also in the classroom.

As the Governor entered the classroom, the children (ages 3, 4 and 5) and teachers were singing and dancing to a song with corresponding video on the SmartBoard. The song was the classroom's "Superhero Song" and after his introduction by Ms. Kline as their special guest, the Governor said "that was way cool!" to the kids referencing the song.

Ms. Kline then divided the children into two tables – Brown (6 students) and Red (5 students) – and the Governor sat at the Brown table with Ms. Biondo while Allen-McMillan sat at the Red table. Also at the Brown table were Zaid, Avih, Hunter, Ella, Divine Glory and Lokya. The children participated in some small talk with the Governor and then did an activity with him – he was in charge of scissors. He also got the bigger chair, that he joked he wouldn't be able to get out of (he was fine).

As explained by Ms. Kline, "today we are going to use our superhero powers to see color." The activity entailed cutting two strips of paper with colored transportation objects (cars, trucks, motorbikes, etc.) on it and gluing the cut-out squares onto the correct column of color on an activity sheet. There were three columns – green, red and blue. The Governor assisted a few of the children as they cut the strips, placed them in their plastic bowl, matched the squares to the colors and glued them down on the paper. Ms. Biondo reminded the children that when they use scissors, the "thumb is up."

The Governor also complimented Divine Glory on her "beautiful red sweater" to which she smiled and said "Thank you."

The same activity was being done at the Red table with Allen-McMillan, who was joined by Ms. Kline, Lily, Hannah, Kenneth, Corbin and Steli.

After they almost finished their activity, the class took a photo with the Governor. Lokya decreed that all should stand as they took the photo. Lily did not want to join them until she finished her activity sheet, but was encouraged to join them and finish later. Lily is taking this very seriously, said the Governor.

All said "Cheese" and gave big smiles for the photo and the Governor, flanked by Lokya and Ms. Kline, with a few students right in front of him, said that was "Excellent" and thanked them for having them in the class.

Back out in the hallways, after the class gave their "Goodbyes" and went back to work, the Governor comments that "that was pretty cool."

On the way to the Library where the press conference would be held, the Governor complimented the school on its "nice, bright hallways and classrooms," and Maccarone said the building was built in 1928. He then deemed it "feels young at heart."

Maccarone said she thought "it has kept its character but modernized." The Governor agreed.

On the walk, the group also peeked in at a Special Need Pre-K class in the gym and Maccarone explained that they do a lot of inclusion in the school. Both the Governor and Allen-McMillan seemed pleased at that fact.

The Governor commented that it was "very cool when I go back to school" though he always feels a little "nervous" and rethinks whether he got all his work done.

"We are all rule followers," Maccarone said.

"Yes, it's something that unites us – we've all been in school." said the Governor as they entered the library.

The tour ended around 11:14 a.m.

Cheryl Makin

The Home News Tribune & MyCentralJersey.com (<https://www.mycentraljersey.com/>)



PHOTO

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