

School tries to ease students' transitions

NORTHAMPTON — "The transition was psychological and emotional, on top of educational, especially as a third grader going into an already cohesive group," said Yaldira Brown.

At their recent mid-year parent conference, Brown and her husband, Michael, were pleased to hear that their son, Ernesto, 9, was thriving. The Browns decided to transfer their son into the third grade at Lander-Grinspoon Academy on Prospect Street here last fall for a number of reasons, but primarily to ensure a safe learning environment.

Parents grapple with the transition question for a number of different reasons but Deb Ellis, another parent at the school, is the first to encourage others to make the leap when necessary.

"It's a difficult decision to remove your child from a socially happy situation. But, academically, my son needed more challenges," said Ellis, mother of Nathan, a fourth-grader who

made the transition in second grade.

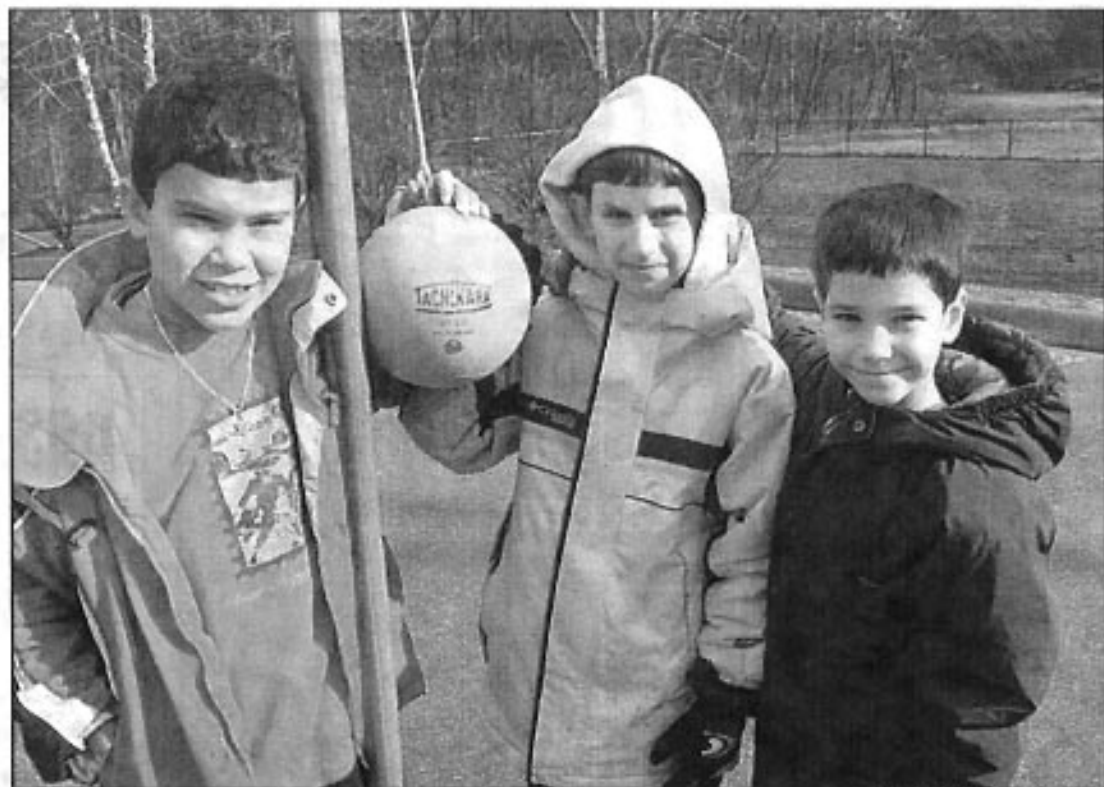
For the Ellis family, commuting from their home in Hadley to the school was also a considerable factor.

"After all the debating and wondering what to do, in the end, the reward is in my son's success," said Ellis.

There are a number of issues that prompt parents to consider making a change in their children's schooling, including the need for increased academic challenges, the emphasis on testing in public schools, students feeling overlooked in large classrooms, and lack of attention to individual strengths and talents.

There are also many reasons why parents considering a change are hesitant to do so.

Marla Shelasky, admissions director, said, "We are always fielding questions of cost, class size and diversity. The most important step to take, when debating whether or not to make a change, is to simply call, ask and see for yourself. There's no com-



Submitted by Marla Shelasky

Ernesto Brown, left, is pictured with friends Zev Bromberg Seltzer, center, and David Plotkin, all students at Lander-Grinspoon Academy.

mitment in making a phone call, but there are a lot of answers."

Ernesto, along with his younger sister, a kindergartner, began at the school in September and was immediately welcomed into his peer group. The school

also makes a point to welcome new students beginning in the summer, when current families invite new families into their homes to socialize in a relaxed atmosphere. By the time students arrive to school on the

first day, they already know several classmates.

For information about Lander-Grinspoon Academy, the Solomon Schechter School of the Pioneer Valley, contact Shelasky, (413) 584-6622.