

Neshaminy

School District



In 2007, Neshaminy School District embarked on an ambitious journey to deal with some stark realities facing our community. After years of study, expert consultation, hearings and planning, a multi-faceted plan to provide our students with a world-class education in safe, modern buildings that are the right size for the needs of the community has now begun.

Road Map to the Future

Plan Goals

- ▶ Reduce yearly operating expenses
- ▶ Increase building usage and efficiency
- ▶ Reduce the number of school buildings from 12 to 10 to match population trends
- ▶ Improve 7 existing buildings
- ▶ Replace 3 aging elementary school buildings with 1 new school
- ▶ Complete these projects without disrupting classes
- ▶ Re-direct building expenses toward investment in educational programs and opportunities for all students
- ▶ Restructure current debt at a lower interest rate
- ▶ Accomplish all of this **WITHOUT RAISING TAXES**

Information for
parents, students,
taxpayers and all
residents of the
Neshaminy
community

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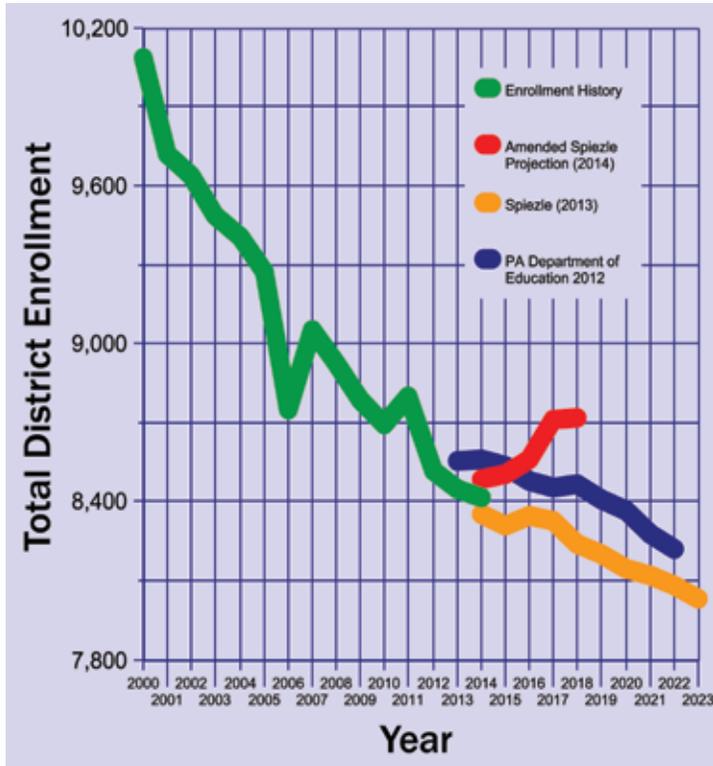
Neshaminy School District
2001 Old Lincoln Highway
Langhorne, PA 19047



Fact Sheet: Why change, and why now?

Population Changes

Neshaminy, like other school districts in the area, is facing a cultural shift toward smaller families that has greatly reduced the number of students attending our schools over the past twenty years. Demographic projections from the Pennsylvania Department of Education, as well as in studies commissioned by the District, all support the conclusion that the student population will not increase in any significant numbers any time soon.



Enrollment history and projections from the Pennsylvania Department of Education and Spiezie Architects. The 2014 amended projection is a 'high-range' projection that takes into account implementation of the full-day kindergarten program in 2014.

Even given a small spike in the number of new students with the debut of full-day kindergarten this school year, the experts agree that the student population will not increase significantly in the near future based on a number of factors including live births and similar trends in surrounding districts.

Building Conditions

Most of the school buildings in the District were constructed between 40 and 60 years ago, and were designed for the needs at that time. Currently, most are in need of significant renovations and upgrades to meet modern standards of energy efficiency, safety, access and comfort for both students and staff. Keeping these buildings operating as they are now has a cost, both in future repairs that will be required as they continue to age as well as increased energy costs from outdated and inefficient environmental systems.

The Plan

The District first undertook a feasibility study and demographic analysis in 2007, prepared by McKissick Associates. This study identified the current student population, projected growth for the next 10-20 years, and compared this with actual classroom capacity and utilization by building.

Thirty options were originally presented from that study. Such cost-saving measures as closing the former Neshaminy Middle School and removing modular classrooms were completed along the way. Between 2012 and 2014, additional studies were completed and the demographic data was updated and re-analyzed. The plans were narrowed down to four, then to one after careful consideration by a Citizens Committee. In 2014, the School Board approved a modification of that plan, which is the ROAD MAP we have today.

With an eye toward holding the budget steady while at the same time increasing funding for new educational programs, the committee recommended closing three elementary schools (Everitt, Heckman and Lower Southampton), building one new elementary school on the old Tawanka ES site, and creating a new 5-8 middle school grade format.

Like other Pennsylvania school districts, Neshaminy is facing rising costs in everything from materials and fees to health care costs and looming PSERS pension obligations. This plan builds for the future while at the same time protecting the taxpayers of Neshaminy from a fiscal shock.

A Historic Opportunity

Benefits of the current plan

More Funding for Programs: Facility restructuring will directly result in staff and operational savings of approximately \$1.9 million annually. These savings can be used to maintain and add **new educational programs** such as world language study, new STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) initiatives, a 1:1 Technology program, and enhancing the Academic Enrichment program.

Low Interest Rates: This project is taking advantage of historically low interest rates for building projects as well as for refinancing existing debt. The result is more money for facilities and programs **without increasing taxpayer burden.**

Future Savings: Energy and structure efficiency both in renovated older buildings and in the new elementary school will lower energy and maintenance costs well into the future.

Reduced Capital Costs: By reducing the number of facilities to match the student population, the District can eliminate between \$32-36 million in renovation costs.

Fact Sheet: Projects and Costs



Project Costs

GESA Phase I	\$ 20,900,000
New Tawanka Construction	\$ 33,100,000
Total construction / renovation cost	\$ 54,000,000
Re-structuring of 2006 bond issue	\$ 28,400,000
Total bond amount	\$ 82,400,000
<i>Numbers rounded to the nearest \$100,000.</i>	

Estimated Annual Savings

School	Operating Cost
Everitt Elementary	\$719,949
Heckman Elementary	\$845,840
Lower Southampton Elementary	\$868,460
Combined annual savings of closing three elementary schools	\$2,434,249
New Tawanka Elementary	\$944,551
Total annual savings including Tawanka	\$1,489,698

Cost estimates are based on 2014 - 2015 budgets. These figures include operational costs such as supplies, utilities, maintenance and the following building staff: Principal, librarian, nurse(s), secretaries and custodians. Salaries and benefits of certified teaching staff, instructional aides and cafeteria staff are not included as these costs will vary by the number of students at any school.

Fiscal Benefits to the District

GESA Savings: **\$3,000,000**

Under the Guaranteed Energy Savings Act, the District will reduce utility and operational costs in mechanical, electrical and plumbing systems on 4 elementary and 3 middle schools in Phases I-III. A total reduction of \$3.0m or greater will occur over 20 years.

Estimated PlanCon Reimbursement: **\$5,900,000**

Using a percentage formula for the Tawanka project, Pennsylvania will reimburse the District for a portion of the principal and interest paid each year. This amount is revenue and can be used to offset payments made by the District over the life of the bond.

Estimated Bond Premium: **\$9,000,000**

Due to currently low interest rates, the District can benefit from extra funds that would be paid by investors. Depending on the rate at the time of issue, this amount could be as high as \$9 million, which can be applied to the construction and GESA renovation projects.

Renovation Project Description

GESA Phase I Renovations / Upgrades Hoover ES, Schweitzer ES and Sandburg MS

- Replace inefficient window walls at Hoover and Schweitzer
- Roof replacement and repair at Hoover and Sandburg
- Replace classroom ventilation systems, rooftop fan systems, heat pumps, install a centralized computerized temperature control system, replace plumbing at all three schools
- Install efficient LED lighting or compact fluorescent lamps; perform electrical system upgrades
- New boilers for Schweitzer and Sandburg
- Asbestos abatement
- Air Conditioning at all three schools
- Security vestibules at all three schools

Phase I to be completed in summer, 2015 before the start of the 2015-2016 school year.

Plans for Phase II and III include upgrades and renovations at Ferderbar ES and Poquessing MS, including air conditioning and security vestibules, and other renovations to Miller ES, and Maple Point MS.

These phases can be completed using the Capital Projects Fund, which is already contained within the current budget.

New Tawanka Project Description

Location: Brownsville Road in Lower Southampton
Size: 73,100 square feet, 2 stories
Classrooms: 40 arranged in five pods, grades K-4
Maximum capacity: 929 students
Expected students: 810 (opens August 2016)

Building Features

- Gymnasium (2 station)
- Cafetorium
- Music classrooms (2)
- Art classroom with separate kiln room
- Media Center



Annual Cost

Including the restructuring of the 2006 bond issue, the Tawanka construction and GESA renovations, the maximum bond payment increase will not exceed \$400,000 per year over current payments. With expected operational savings, this increase can be met:

Within the current budget

Without a tax increase

With leftover funds for new educational programs

Fact Sheet: Answers to common questions

Q&A

Q: Why the urgency to implement this plan?

A: The District has been facing building issues for years, and some of these buildings are at the point that they require extensive renovation to continue operation. Instead of simply 'kicking the can down the road' with temporary repairs, this plan offers a solution for years to come by providing safe, efficient school buildings. Right now, this can be accomplished **without adding to taxpayer burden, and at the same time provide more money for educational programs.**

Q: How were the schools that are to close chosen? Will this be an inconvenience to students who currently walk to their neighborhood school?

A: All three buildings would require the highest cost to renovate and modernize. In addition, Everitt is in close proximity to other neighborhood schools including Schweitzer and Buck, which can easily accommodate those students under this plan. Some walkers will still be able to walk to school, though buses are planned for those that would need to cross busy roadways.

Lower Southampton is in close proximity to Ferderbar Elementary and the proposed new Tawanka Elementary School.

Most students attending Heckman are currently bused to school, so moving students from the northwest portion of the district to the new Tawanka Elementary School would not change their routines significantly. Though Heckman was built in 1967, it too would require expensive upgrades and renovations to meet current ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) and energy standards should it remain open.

Q: Will the new Tawanka Elementary School be a 'mega-school'?

A: The new Tawanka school will not be much larger than some of our current schools. It will have a design and staffing that will readily support group and individual instruction in a caring, friendly, community-oriented environment.

And for comparison, another District school, Herbert Hoover Elementary, currently has only about 100 fewer students than the planned Tawanka and has maintained an excellent reputation. Hoover was just named a Title 1 Distinguished School with a 'Reward High Achievement' designation, one of only 87 schools in the state to receive that honor.

Q: What will happen to the closed school buildings? Will they degrade nearby neighborhoods? What if we need them at a later time?

A: Plans are already underway to secure rental uses for some or all of the buildings. The Bucks County Intermediate Unit has already agreed to rent Everitt Elementary School for educational purposes (they were previously housed at the old Tawanka building). The District plans to retain ownership of at least two of the buildings (Heckman and Everitt) should they be needed in the future. These buildings and their grounds will be maintained by the District or those that will lease them.

Lower Southampton Elementary will either be sold or leased.

Q: Will middle school be an overwhelming experience for fifth-graders?

A: The fifth-graders will have the **same sort of elementary school experience** they had in their previous schools, and will actually benefit from new programs that are to be introduced. They will have one teacher, follow an elementary school-style schedule, and be grouped in their own section of the building.

Fifth-graders will be able to take advantage of **new educational programs** in reading, STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math), and an introductory world language course.

The District is implementing a **1:1 technology initiative** for the 2015-2016 school year that will provide an iPad, loaded with appropriate educational software, to each fifth and sixth-grader to use for educational purposes. This program will be rolled out to other middle school grades in following years.

An introductory **world language program (Symtalk)** will also be rolled out in 2015-2016 for fifth-graders. A full foreign language program will also be introduced for 8th graders at the same time.

Q: Will the younger students be exposed to adolescent issues they are not ready for?

A: The 5th-grade students will have limited contact with older students during the day. Younger students will sit at the front of school buses, they will learn in their own classrooms, they will have their own lunch period and gym class.

On the other hand, they will not be completely isolated from school life. Many activities such as orchestra, band, intramural sports, school musicals, clubs and community events will be enjoyed by all students.

Q: How will we know if transitioning fifth-graders to the middle schools is working out?

A: The first year of this plan will be extensively studied by the Bucks County Intermediate Unit three times during the school year at no cost to the district. This independent report will be made available to the public.

Want more information?

View project documents, Q&A, timelines, meeting info and more...



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