

NESHAMINY

Passing PSSA could be graduation requisite

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By RACHEL CANELLI COURIER TIMES

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Neshaminy commencement checklist: pass gym, complete graduation project ... and state standardized tests?

Passing the 11th grade Pennsylvania System of School Assessment a graduation requirement is just one of several ideas district administrators recently presented in the Neshaminy High School improvement plan.

The plan is mandated by the state Department of Education because the Middletown high school's test scores didn't meet state or federal guidelines, Principal Alex Menio recently told the Neshaminy school board.

Students would have to score proficient or advanced to pass. Administrators hoped mandating passage would motivate students to do better on the test.

Earlier this year, the Bristol Township school board entertained a similar motion, joining Bensalem, Centennial and other neighboring districts that have imposed similar initiatives to improve test scores, officials said.

Neshaminy administrators also suggested curriculum and teaching strategy changes, including co-teaching between regular and special education teachers and adding a reading specialist at the Middletown high school.

Although the Neshaminy board approved the improvement plan, several board members were disappointed they didn't have more time to review it.

"Something like this is important ... but it's just plopped in front of us," said board member William Spitz. "It's unfair to bring it to [us] at the last minute and ask us to approve it blindly."

Board member Jason Bowman said while he understood some members' concerns, he thanked the administrators and teachers for their efforts.

Superintendent Paul Kadri apologized for the delay. He said administrators worked on the plan during the summer, when the board didn't meet. The first draft was finalized at the beginning of the school year, but it was reviewed by the administrators and revamped, Kadri said.

He added that before implementing anything, officials would review some suggestions with the board and students, including adding the reading specialist and the PSSA graduation requirement.