

## NESHAMINY

## Overhaul project going well

*The renovations and construction are on budget and in some places ahead of schedule, officials said.*

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STAFF WRITER

When they return Sept. 3, Neshaminy High School students will find another piece of their Middletown building's puzzle completed.

A brand new two-story, 40-plus classroom wing with new desks and flatscreen TVs will be open for business, math and social studies, according to Rick Marotto, liaison between school officials and construction crews.

Pupils will sit at desks that face the front of the classroom but will have to turn around to use a computer. That way, a teacher can always see what's on the students' screens. Since January, a similar two-story classroom wing has been occupied by language courses, administrators said during a recent tour of the facility.

Also ready this fall will be two newly renovated gyms, which both received new lighting, bleachers, flooring, lockers and paint, Marotto said.

Later in September, the updated circular library will open its doors with new air conditioning and heating, ceilings and carpets, officials said.

"The crews have been fun to work with and the teachers and students have sacrificed to make it work," said Marotto.

The weight and wrestling rooms also were updated with paint, electricity, lighting, flooring and ventilation, administrators said.

The former coaches' area is being turned into a nurses suite. But since that part won't be attached to the rest of the building yet, it won't be used until January.

Several offices located behind that portion, though, should be occupied by administrators this school year. Workers are still assembling a new career and guidance center and reception space for one of the four public entrances.

Crews are also working on a mini auditorium for theater classes and an industrial arts section. Both will connect to Main Street, the nickname for a long hallway joining the whole project together, and should be done by January, officials said.

By March, a two-story science wing should be up and running with new labs and equipment. At that time, workers will start demolishing a classroom wing and small auditorium to make way for a road that will lead up to the main student entrance at the back of the edifice, Marotto said.

Although many people wanted the district to build a whole new school, the school board settled on 60 percent new space and the rest renovated, administrators said.

However, business administrator Joseph Paradise pointed out that the 40 percent being updated looks brand new. Instead of being built from the ground up, it's still on the old, but solid, foundation, said Paradise.

The project is adding more than 250,000 square feet to accommodate 2,800 students, including ninth-graders who will move there from the middle schools next year, officials said.

The whole \$82 million project, which remains on budget and, in some places, a few weeks ahead of schedule, is expected to be finished in September 2009. The district borrowed \$77 million to fund it, Paradise said.





Math teacher Lisa Schmidt gets settled in for the school year at Neshaminy High School in Middletown. A renovation and construction project has allowed Schmidt to move into the new classroom after spending last year teaching in a trailer. KIM WEIMER / **STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER**