

NESHAMINY

Superintendent praises efforts on PSSAs

A few board members, though, were still not pleased with the results, one calling them “the darkest day” for the district.

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Even though he said there's still room for improvement, Superintendent Paul Kadri Tuesday night praised high school students, teachers and administrators for their efforts on recent state tests.

The Pennsylvania System of School Assessment results were released last week and Neshaminy is in warning mostly because of special education groups not meeting reading targets, officials said.

But while Neshaminy High School's economically disadvantaged subgroup missed reading goals, that Middletown school's overall scores improved by double digits, administrators said.

“You did absolutely phenomenally last year,” Kadri said as he thanked several high school students with candy-filled mugs Tuesday night during a board meeting. “You took the district to a new level.”

Carl Sandburg and Neshaminy middle schools' special education scores were off the mark in math and reading. Samuel Everitt, Oliver Heckman Walter S. Miller and Albert Schweitzer elementary schools missed special education reading targets, according to the state Department of Education.

To address the elementary schools' special education reading issue, administrators are reorganizing the reading coaches and increasing resources to that area, including adding another reading coach, said Kadri.

Neshaminy has also implemented a kindergarten through 12th-grade writing program to help ensure that reading is consistent throughout the district, according to district spokeswoman Sandra Costanzo.

Kadri also asked for the board's help in creating goals for the district.

Board members Frank Koziol, Ritchie Webb and Rick Eccles, though, all referred to Neshaminy's results as failing.

“This is the darkest day in Neshaminy's history,” said Eccles, school board president. “We ought to be ashamed of ourselves. We've spent an awful lot of money on the educational system in this community and I don't think we're getting our money's worth.”

Webb and Koziol also complained about not getting the data in June when they claim to have requested it.

Kadri said that the Department of Education asks districts not to publicize their own data until the state releases the information because there are often premature errors. He claims that he offered to meet with board members, but Webb, Eccles and Koziol refused.

“How does that change what's going on and where we're at?” board member Susan Cummings asked Koziol and Webb. “It's a disservice to the students. [They] did not fail.”

Although a newspaper headline described the district as flunking its PSSA scholastic goals, Kadri called that coverage confusing.

“AYP is not a measure of achievement. It's a flag,” he said. “It's not meant to indicate pass or fail. If we focused [solely] on AYP, there would be no opportunities for growth.”

School board members William Spitz and Joseph Blasch asked their fellow directors to help Kadri establish a data warehouse that he's requested to help track student progress and improve scores.

“Some board members obviously do not support where [Kadri] is steering the district,” said Spitz.

“We should not let the minority dictate how and in what manor the district moves forward.”

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