

NESHAMINY

Neshaminy Middle to close

The board, however, split on closing Tawanka Learning Center. That facility will remain open at its current location one more year.

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One's safe for now. The other goes. While Tawanka Learning Center was granted one more year in its current home, Neshaminy Middle School students have had their last days in their Middletown building. The Neshaminy school board approved 8-0 Monday night closing Neshaminy Middle School this year. Officials had planned on closing the school next year when the ninth grade level moves up to the newly renovated high school.

However, since board President Richard Eccles was not present for the meeting, the board was split 4-4 on whether or not to close Tawanka.

Board members Frank Koziol, Irene Boyle, Kim Koutsouradis, and Ritchie Webb voted for closure of the program, and William O'Connor, Susan Cummings, William Spitz and Joseph Blasch were against it.

So, for now, by default, administrators said the district's alternative program isn't going anywhere, an announcement that stirred applause from the audience filled with teachers, parents and students.

While most the people in the crowd did not speak on the topic, they previously asked that if Tawanka moved, it remain separated, especially from the high school, since many of the students cannot thrive in a traditional setting.

The administration previously recommended the Eisenhower building. But the facilities department would need to be moved from that space and it would need to be renovated for students, officials said.

Board member Frank Koziol, though, said he believes there's space at the high school for the program. Board member Irene Boyle said she thinks Tawanka is too expensive for Neshaminy to handle.

But Superintendent Paul Kadri recommended that a committee make a recommendation on where to relocate Tawanka. Also, Kadri added, in another year the facility could be entirely rented out.

"For this year, it makes no sense to move [Tawanka] to an undisclosed location," said board member William Spitz.

Meanwhile, officials had already been preparing for Neshaminy Middle School to close by planning a final day bash Wednesday, organizing a redistricting plan that would send most students to Maple Point, transitioning staff members, having counselors reach out to students most affected and planning orientation for the shift. It's not yet clear what will be done with the soon-to-be-empty building.

Parents, teachers and students from the blue ribbon school previously pleaded with the board not to close the school, which is known nationally for its health initiatives. They also expressed concern for overcrowding at Maple Point, adjusting to the merge and kids being included in activities at their new school.

"This was a very difficult decision," Spitz said, who added he was grateful for people's cooperation. "It's just impossible to sustain that facility financially."

Kadri also referred to Neshaminy Middle as an outstanding school.