

## NESHAMINY

## Still no agreement in talks

*No new negotiations are scheduled until November, according to the district's Web site.*

*By RACHEL CANELLI  
STAFF WRITER*

*Rachel Canelli can be reached at 215-949-4191 or .*

While bargaining continues, there is no new update in the Neshaminy teachers' contract talks, which remain centered on health care costs, officials reported this week.

Neshaminy school board members recently met again with the Neshaminy Federation of Teachers, but the sides have yet to reach an agreement, representatives said.

Although union President Louise Boyd said she preferred not to comment at this time, board spokesman Ritchie Webb said the conversations still revolve around health care. The most recent session included a presentation from Independence Blue Cross, according to the district's Web site.

The board wants the teachers to start contributing a percentage toward their insurance premiums, while the teachers have so far proposed no change to the current package. Both sides are awaiting further information from Blue Cross to assess the costs of alternative health care proposals, the district's Web site said.

"We're working together to gather information and look at options," he said. "We believe that change is not easy, but we also believe that we'll have some here in the future. The district's concern is to provide an excellent health policy for its employees, but the teachers have to come into the private sector and pay some of the cost. Hopefully, we'll get the insurance solved and move forward."

Although the teachers do not pay any percentage of their health care premiums, they do pay \$15 for co-pays and \$5 and \$20 for generic and brand-name drugs, respectively, through Personal Choice, as reported by the district's human resources department.

Boyd previously said that health care was the only topic that the board was willing to discuss. Webb responded that insurance is important because "there is no money in the budget. Without some concessions, there will be no way to fund other changes ... like salary."

In June, neither side formally accepted a fact-finder's recommended three-year teacher labor deal that called for a 3 percent salary increase but no change to the health care package, administrators said.

Almost four months later, the teachers continue to work under the contract that expired at the end of June without any salary increases. The sessions are being held under stateappointed mediator Jill Leeds-Rivera, officials said.

The next negotiation session is scheduled for Nov. 13, according to the district's Web site.