
Scrambling to reopen Maple Point

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Since the 1970s, Bowman explained, conventional, self-contained classrooms have regained acceptance. Therefore, many of the large, open spaces in Maple Point will need to be permanently divided into smaller classrooms. That not only means building walls, it also means dividing the lighting, heating, air conditioning, audio, video and electrical wiring into separate zones for each classroom.

Furthermore, athletic practice fields and an outdoor track will need to be constructed. However, Bowman said the district will use the Neshaminy High School football stadium for both schools.

Since the school will be 17 years old when it is reopened, other items such as ceiling tiles, flooring materials, cafeteria equipment and the furnace may have to be replaced or updated. The air conditioning unit was replaced last summer, business administrator Joseph Paradise said.

In addition, Maple Point will have meet current electrical, plumbing and fire codes.

Overall, the revamped school will be state-of-the-art in the world of educational institutions, Bowman said.

"The classrooms will be wired for video, data and voice. New schools are being built to reflect technology that will be with us in the 21st century, not the old technology, which is just a straight intercom system," he said.

But students at Neshaminy West Campus will not be left in the 20th century, he said.

"If we have a new physics lab that is high tech at the East Campus, we must make some similar opportunities available at the West Campus," Bowman said. To do that, the current Neshaminy High School will be evaluated by a facilities study that will be conducted at all district schools except Maple Point and Eisenhower Elementary this summer.

The first step in renovating the former Maple Point High School will be for the architect, the Ray Group Inc. of Lebanon, to come up with a schedule for design and construction.

Each step will require administration, school board and state Department of Education approvals. With state approval, the district should be able to recoup 30 to 60 percent of the cost of the project, Bowman said. The rest, he said, will likely be financed with a bond issue.

Preliminary estimates circulated by the administration earlier this year projected that renovations would cost about \$7.9 million. A \$4.8 million, 418-seat addition also is planned for 2000, when a large group of students, now in elementary school, will reach the high school, according to the district's enrollment projections.

Cost estimates are expected to be updated and refined as the architect draws detailed plans of the renovation with the help of educators.

"Those players will be coordinating all their efforts and energies to bring about what we believe will be a high school curriculum ready for the 21st century," Bowman said.