



QuEd up for Education

People and programs impacting our QCSD community

Renovation may mean shift for Neidig students

A one-year move to Tohickon Valley could save nearly \$1 million and reduce construction time. It could also mean longer bus rides.

By Gary Weckselblatt

A suggestion by the construction manager to have Neidig Elementary School students moved to the closed Tohickon Valley Elementary School for one year during Neidig's renovation is being considered by the Quakertown Community School Board.

Jamie Lynch of D'Huy Engineering gave two presentations in July to residents of the Neidig community, in which he addressed the construction plans and its challenges, in addition to the benefits and disadvantages of relocating students.

"I know the travails that we go through, that students, teachers and staff go through, on a renovation project," he said during the meetings at Neidig on July 9th and 23rd. "Any opportunity that I have to make it easier and not disrupt the educational process is the approach I prefer to take."

In addition to the two July meetings, Neidig parents have had an opportunity to provide feedback in a survey that requests whether they prefer students to remain at Neidig during the construction or be shifted to TVES for the 2019-20 school year.

The Facilities Committee will discuss the issue at its August 2nd meeting, 6 p.m., in the District Services Center, 100 Commerce Drive. The committee will make a recommendation to the School Board, which will make an official decision at its August 9th meeting at 7 p.m.

"Both sides have pros, both sides have cons," said Scott Godshalk, Neidig's principal. "It's a difficult decision and the community is embracing the challenge of the situation and the opportunity we have here. Either way we'll be enduring some difficult challenges, and I believe the community appreciates that. Ultimately,



Concept sketch of what Neidig Elementary School could look like after its renovation.



Jamie Lynch, senior project manager for D'Huy Engineering, advocates moving Neidig students to Tohickon Valley for safety and financial reasons.

we'll have a new 21st century learning facility for our students."

Since mid-December, a design team created by Superintendent Dr. Bill Harner has been tasked with putting the 60-year-old facility on par with Pfaff Elementary School, which was built in 2005.

Currently, Neidig, a 45,700 square-foot building, has 400 students. Pfaff, with 85,000 square feet, has 440 students, and separate rooms for a gymnasium, art and music, among other benefits. Neidig doesn't have those separate spaces. When the new Neidig opens, it will have a capacity of 600 students, equal to that of Pfaff.

The complete renovation will include a two-story classroom addition, new gymnasium, a separate bus loop and expanded parking.

According to Lynch's PowerPoint presentation, benefits from moving students to TVES include:

- Safety, as students won't have to deal with noise, dust or odors.
- Reduced construction timeframe, from 20 to 22 months down to 15 months.
- Savings of close to \$1 million.
- Reduction in areas disturbed to provide staging and separate construction from school operations.
- Less impact on neighbors.
- No need for modulares.

Disadvantages to relocating students include:

- Potentially longer bus rides.
- Moving into a different building.

Representatives from approximately 30 families attended the two meetings. Board President Steaven Klein and Facilities Committee Chairwoman Kaylyn Mitchell attended the first presentation, and Director David Ochmanowicz Jr. the second.

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