

NESHAMINY

## Changes mean big bucks in project

*Minor modifications to the high school's construction could bring in an additional half-million in state money.*

*BY RACHEL CANELLI COURIER TIMES*

With just a few slight changes to the high school project, the Neshaminy School District could get more money — at least \$500,000 — back from the state, officials said.

Business administrator Joseph Paradise recently told the Neshaminy school board that if minor modifications were made to transform more spaces into classrooms, the Pennsylvania Department of Education's reimbursement on the \$82 million construction and renovation will increase.

For example, Paradise said, a classroom has to contain 660 square feet or more, according to the state. Several more rooms could qualify as a classroom by removing a closet to boost square footage, he said.

Administrators also said that if the art gallery's label were removed and a blackboard, desks and chairs were added, it could still be used as an art gallery but could also be categorized as a classroom.

Although it might cost the district at most \$75,000 in change orders, administrators believe it could increase the state's subsidy by halfmillion dollars.

"It's great news," Paradise said referring to the possibility of increased reimbursement.

"We're on the ball. I'm constantly amazed how ahead of the project we are."

The district borrowed \$77 million to fund the project. Officials previously said reimbursement would be around 11 percent, or \$13 million.

The school board will be asked to approve the alterations during its Nov. 27 meeting, Paradise said.

Administrators and school board members also praised the plan's overall progress.

One of the new, two-story, 34-classroom wings is on track to be finished and ready for students by January, said Damion Spahr, project executive for Reynolds, the firm directing the work.

"I think it's turning out very nicely," Spahr told the board. "I hope you're all proud of the construction process."

The project's schedule and budget remain in tact, said Paul Erickson of Armstrong Torseth Skold & Rydeen, the architectural and engineering firm hired for the construction.

"We're pleased with the contractors and management team, who are working well together," said Erickson.

After recently walking through the facility, board President Richard Eccles suggested that administrators open the building for a public tour. Officials are trying to arrange a date and time.

"It's impressive," Eccles said. "Once you see it, it will put a smile on your face and you'll fall in love."