

POTTSTOWN CITIZENS FOR Enlightened LEADERSHIP

Edgewood misconceptions

There are so many misconceptions about the former Edgewood Elementary School it's hard to know where to begin correcting them.

Contrary to a misleading headline that appeared recently, the use of Edgewood is not changing.

Head Start

Shortly after Edgewood was closed as an elementary school in 2014, about 60 percent of its floor space was leased to the Montgomery County Intermediate Unit for Head Start.

That is not changing. The Edgewood building will continue to be used primarily for pre-school classes.

In 2017, the rest of the space was leased to Cottage Seven Academy, a state-approved private special education provider for grades k-8.

Head Start and Cottage Seven classrooms are physically separated, with different entrances and exits.

However, Cottage Seven is vacating the building this summer. In the upcoming school year, the Pottstown School District will operate its own special education program in the Cottage Seven space, starting with three classrooms.

Special education

Like virtually all school districts, Pottstown has special education students who are educated by private providers outside the district.

As of this spring, about 550 special education students were taught in Pottstown schools and 130 were bused to various private providers outside the district.

In an effort to bring back some of these out-of-district students, the district reclaimed the former PCTV space at Pottstown High School in January and set up several special education classrooms for older students.

Now, the district will set up class-

rooms in the former Cottage Seven space for younger special education students.

This is a win-win for students and taxpayers.

The district believes it can save money by operating the programs itself rather than pay private school tuition.

Students will benefit by staying in the district and avoiding long bus rides to special schools.

Maintenance

The Edgewood building has been, and continues to be, well-maintained. During renovations in 2012-2014, Pottstown's four elementary schools were retrofitted with elevators and air conditioning.

As a one-story building, Edgewood does not need an elevator, and it had air conditioning installed when it was built.

The district has a multi-year facilities plan for all its buildings, including Edgewood.

Last year, \$30,000 in drainage repairs were made. This year, four deteriorated modularitys were removed.

The district has earmarked \$364,000 to put a new roof on Edgewood in 2024 and perform exterior repairs.

Edgewood meets all code requirements.

The building does not need, nor can taxpayers afford, the multi-million-dollar "shut and gut" renovations performed at the other elementary schools.

With the seventh highest taxes of Pennsylvania's 500 school districts, and the borough facing the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression, the district must maximize its resources.

Tom Hylton is a member of the Pottstown School Board. However, the views expressed are his alone and not necessarily the board's.



Commentary by
Thomas Hylton



THE FORMER EDGEWOOD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL is primarily a pre-school center operated by the Montgomery County Intermediate Unit. A small portion of the building will be used for younger special education students who are currently bused to out-of-district private schools.