



**EXCELLENCE
TODAY
FOR TOMORROW**

Rose Tree Media School District
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William M. Dougherty
Acting Superintendent of Schools

February 3, 2023

Dear Rose Tree Media School District Staff, Parents, and Community Members,

As we have shared with you, our School Board and Administration have serious concerns about the pending decision before Edgmont Township in approving the construction of a new elementary school at 1501 Middletown Road. I'm writing to ask for your support, as a member of our school community, in communicating with Edgmont Township Supervisors about the need for a new public school in Edgmont Township.

I hope you'll consider writing an email or letter to the [Edgmont Supervisors](#), and attending the next Supervisors meeting on February 14 at 7:30 p.m. in the Edgmont Township Building at 1000 Gradyville Road in Newtown Square.

The School District has been working on plans to construct a new elementary school since 2018, in response to growing enrollment that has been primarily centered in Edgmont Township. We have widely shared our research, rationale, and plans with our community, and I encourage you to visit the [Room to Learn, Room to Grow](#) webpage where we explain that information.

Here are some important points about why we feel it is essential that we be permitted to construct a school at the 1501 Middletown Road property that the District owns:

- Over the past five years, residential development in Edgmont has increased by 30%, more than twice that in Middletown Township, and more than 15 times greater than development in Upper Providence Township and Media Borough. That number will continue to grow with the approval of 326 units at Edgemont Preserve and Runnymede Phase VI.
- Edgmont Township is currently the only municipality in the district without a school. At this time, Edgmont students spend between 45-60 minutes a day on a bus, one way, to attend school in a neighboring municipality. This is an extremely long bus ride, particularly for elementary students. It also denies them the opportunity to attend a neighborhood elementary school.
- Our enrollment has grown even faster than projections, and each of our elementary schools is operating well beyond capacity. We've added modular trailers to accommodate that growth, but that is simply not an adequate long-term solution.
- In August of 2021, the District purchased property at 1501 Middletown Road with the understanding that the Township would grant a variance to zoning for the construction of a school. This is an extremely common practice in public education.

- Edgmont Township supervisors have told us they are concerned that if they grant our request for a variance to build a school on a property currently not zoned for one, that they will then receive requests from other developers to build schools, as well. We are not aware of the approval of a public school creating an influx of school requests for any municipality. We are also not aware of any neighboring townships denying an approval for a public school.
- The District considered several other sites in Edgmont Township. All three have significant drawbacks and would also require conditional use approval to build a school:

Edgmont Square Shopping Center – Property is far from the areas where population growth is occurring.

Ventry at Edgmont Preserve – Property was already under agreement for a housing development.

Sleighton Farm School Site – The parcel has environmental hazards and is not available.

- The benefits of approving a school at the 1501 Middletown Road site clearly outweigh any negatives. Taxpayers in Edgmont will benefit from having a neighborhood school. Historically, property values increase when an elementary school is developed in a neighborhood. Traffic generated at an elementary school is far less than that of a housing development and contains a significantly lower concrete to green space ratio than another housing development, which would likely be built on this property.

Rose Tree Media School District did not approve the construction of thousands of new homes in Edgmont Township, but we are responsible for educating the children who will come to our schools from those developments. It is highly unusual for us to reach out to our school community with an advocacy request, however, we feel approval of this school is essential. Elementary students should not have to spend an inordinate amount of time each day on a school bus, simply because a municipality does not want an elementary school to be constructed within its boundaries. All of our students deserve a neighborhood school.

We very much appreciate your support in communicating these concerns with Edgmont Township Supervisors.

Sincerely,

William M. Dougherty
Acting Superintendent of Schools