

Franklin Twp. school board approves efficiency study

by [Seung Min Kim](#)/The Star-Ledger

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A reluctant Franklin Township Board of Education voted tonight to have an outside company scrutinize the district's administrative operations to ensure efficiency.

In a 6-2 vote, with one abstention, the Somerset County district authorized spending up to \$300,000 for a performance review to see where improvements could be made within its main office and among administrative personnel at its nine schools.

Some board members did not think the efficiency review was necessary but voted yes in response to public pressure.

"Let's get on with it, let's get it done, let's allow (superintendent Ed) Seto the tools to move forward," said board member Shirley Pietrucha. She said she initially opposed an outside review but changed her mind following recent public comments. "Let's get it done so the shadows would be off and everyone would get on with their regular activity."

In addition to Pietrucha, David Burns, Peter Jordan, Nancy LaCorte, Aruna Mettler and Eva Nagy voted for the performance review. Andrew Holzheimer and Eugene Unger voted against the proposal, and Bernard Siegel abstained because he said he would no longer be a school board member by the time the review is conducted.

Discussion of the review overshadowed talk about the proposed 2008-09 district budget, details of which were publicly released during tonight's special meeting. Next year's budget calls for a tax rate increase of 3 cents per \$100 of assessed value. That means school taxes will increase about \$125 a year for the average township homeowner.

Board members unanimously approved the \$136.4 million budget, which includes major increases in spending for staff training, special-education instruction and support services, energy costs, health benefits and charter school tuition.