

ing on-site classes of 10 students will reach out to more kids and serve them closer to home.

Students will have access to school libraries and shop equipment, he said. The after-school program — which calls for the hiring of 10 teachers at 100 hours each — will encourage kids to make and market products. Students in similar programs make candy and greeting cards, he said.

"I don't think the physical place is the cause of student failure. It is more likely the instructional format where a kid is one of 34

members in a classroom," said Camerlengo.

Students and staff at ELITE said they were saddened by the imminent closing of the tiny school.

"As a group of teachers who put a lot of time into this program, we would hate to see it die," said ELITE director Ken Christiansen. Student Diane Scaduto said ELITE changed her academic life. Before she enrolled, she was in constant trouble, fought with other kids, cut classes and failed courses, she said.

"It was such a big school; you

didn't get to know each other," she said of her former intermediate school. "When kids goofed off, you couldn't learn. Here, if someone goofs off, then the counselor can look out for them and you could still learn."

Diane said she gets As and Bs now and is looking forward to entering New Dorp High School this fall.

"They shouldn't close this school. Kids who are failing have a better opportunity of graduating when they're here," she said.

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