



ELK TOWNSHIP SCHOOL DISTRICT
Aura Elementary School
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Dr. Piera Gravenor, Superintendent • Dr. Anthony Fitzpatrick, Assistant Superintendent • Joseph Collins, Business Administrator
Wayne Murschell, Principal • Jackie Scerbo, Director of Special Services/CST

June 5, 2023

Dear Aura Parents and Community,

As you may have heard recently, Aura School is applying for a federal grant that will fund a full day Pre-K for Elk Township 3 and 4 year old children. The district currently has a half-day Pre-K program but, over the years, we have heard the many requests from parents and community members to broaden that. It is to that end that we are applying for the **NJDOE Pre-School Expansion Grant**. Please allow me to give you some of the details surrounding that process.

1. The window to apply for the grant does not open until the governor signs his budget which usually occurs in early July.
2. When the grant opens, we will submit our application immediately as we are already working on it. Once the paperwork is submitted we should hear from the state within a month or less about approval. While there are no guarantees, based upon the available funding and what we have seen in other districts, we are extremely confident that our proposal will be successful.
3. When the grant is awarded, we must adhere to a very tight timeframe for getting our Pre-School program up and running. The state requires the district to have classrooms for double the number of students that are currently enrolled in first grade. For Aura that means six classrooms. Clearly there are not enough available classrooms in Aura school to house this program, so we have contacted the Pitman School District to lease a building that will be empty at the end of this school year. This "Aura Early Learning Center" will be the location for all preschool learning.
4. Transportation will be provided for students to the building. Before and After Care will continue to be provided at Aura School; the students who participate in those programs will be bussed to Pitman from Aura and vice versa at the end of the day so parents will still drop them off and pick them up at Aura School.
5. We anticipate fully opening the Aura Early Learning Center in October 2023.
6. One of the best things we can do together as a community is spread the word to friends and neighbors of preschool-age children so we can plan in earnest to provide a high quality program to as many children in Elk Township as possible.

There is much to be done but we are very excited about the educational opportunities that a full-day Pre-K program can provide for our children. It is an academic advantage that they will carry with them throughout their educational journey. We will continue to keep you informed as new information arises.

Sincerely,

Dr. Piera Gravenor
Superintendent