



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**ADDITIONAL PRE-K AID AWARDED FOR JEFFERSON TOWNSHIP PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

**March 6, 2023 – LAKE HOPATCONG, NJ:** Full day public pre-K will be available to even more families in Jefferson Township through additional NJDOE Preschool Expansion Aid (PEA) funding. The Jefferson Township Board of Education received notice of PEA funding in excess of \$2.7 million which will support nine additional high-quality preschool classrooms. A high-quality preschool program is defined by a full-day program with a certificated teacher, an aide, and small classes that are inclusive of children with special needs who have an individualized education program.

The announcement of the newly awarded pre-K funds followed Governor Phil Murphy's 2024 Fiscal Year Budget Address on Tuesday of last week. This news comes amid ongoing budget challenges – Jefferson Township School District's state aid is being reduced by more than \$1.5 million dollars. This represents the sixth year of S-2 cuts totalling more than \$33 million to date. While the PEA does not address the issues with the school funding formula, the additional preschool funding is a welcome reprieve from the drastic cuts that the loss of state aid has caused.

Jefferson Township launched Phase I of its expanded preschool program in January of this year. In the fall, the district expects to accommodate more than 200 three- and four-year-olds in the program. The goal for the next two years is to offer free, high-quality, full-day early learning programming to all preschool aged children in Jefferson Township, building a strong foundation for learning and success.

"As a result of this increase in funding, we will be able to provide quality preschool education to more than 200 students of Jefferson. This will undoubtedly provide a solid foundation for our youngest learners with benefits lasting throughout their school careers," stated Jeanne Howe, Superintendent, upon learning the district will be receiving the funding.

The application process for incoming students will begin around May 1, 2023. Details outlining criteria for new student eligibility and prioritization will be communicated at that time. Students enrolled in the existing program will receive priority registration.

All pre-K classrooms will be located at Ellen T. Briggs and Cozy Lake Elementary Schools. As communicated in November, in order to accommodate the growing number of students, all first grade sections from those schools will relocate to Arthur Stanlick and White Rock Elementary Schools in the fall.

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