

**ELK TOWNSHIP**

# Testing earns school honor

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ELK TWP. — Aura School was recently named a 2007 Just for Kids New Jersey Benchmark School for its achievement in state standardized testing.

The pre-K through sixth grade school was one of 73 schools statewide to receive the designation from the Business Coalition for Educational Excellence, a non-profit program of the New Jersey Chamber of Commerce Foundation.

“It makes me feel good, because it recognizes our teachers,” Superintendent Robert Suessmuth said. “Day-to-day they’re in the trenches getting the job done, and this is a real encouragement to them.”

Using data from the state’s High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA), Grade Eight Proficiency Assessment (GEPA), and New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge (NJASK), the business coalition designates benchmark schools.

“Essentially the word benchmark, by our definition is they exhibit role model performance,” said George Koodray, vice president of communication for the NJ Chamber of Commerce Foundation. “We really want to hold them up in example for other schools around the state and show them, despite of demographics and size, that there are schools out there who are really doing a great job.”

Aura outperformed other similarly-sized schools classified by low income and limited English proficiency status.

Suessmuth credited smaller class size for helping students achieve academically. Specifically, he said, the school offers developmental classes for kindergarten through fourth-grade students who are in need of extra help. Each class has about eight or nine students who receive special instruction from a teacher and aide.

“Obviously we’re working with a student population that has some challenges, and we’re doing a good job with those students in particular,” Suessmuth said.

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