

# Egg Harbor Township Schools

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## **VIRTUAL SUMMER CAMP BOOSTS KNOWLEDGE AND BUILDS CHARACTER IN EHT**

EGG HARBOR TOWNSHIP - Traditional summer camp with an online twist is moving full steam ahead in Egg Harbor Township -- and the kids are loving it!

Enrolled on a first-come-first-served basis, the Virtual A.S.P.I.R.E. Summer Camp program serves approximately 150 fourth and fifth graders from Dr. Joyanne D. Miller Elementary School who crave face-to-face time with their classmates, exploring new places through virtual day trips, working up a sweat during physical education activities, dabbling in arts and crafts, playing games, and sharing during show-and-tell.

Under the direction of Kristen Boyd, Egg Harbor Township School District's director of Extended Enrichment, the Virtual A.S.P.I.R.E. Summer Camp is focused on reducing summer learning loss by offering enrichment activities that sharpen skills in English Language Arts, math and science.

Egg Harbor Township Schools converted to 100% virtual instruction in March when the coronavirus pandemic clobbered in-person instruction with state-mandated school closings. The six-week summer program encourages students to keep their minds and bodies active through live enrichment classes led by certified teachers and support staff. In addition to language arts, math and science, students participate in weekly health and fitness classes, art, technology, show and tell (public speaking), academic trivia challenges, and conversational Spanish. A new addition to the schedule of classes is Lemonade and Sweet Tea, a class designed

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to strengthen character education and social emotional learning.

“When my team and I were thinking about a comprehensive virtual summer program and what that would entail, it was clear that we needed to address the learning loss that occurs over the summer months in math and reading. However, we also knew that the Covid-19 health crisis brought on other concerns such as equity of participation as well as social and emotional concerns for students and families. In order to overcome those concerns, we conducted a no-contact equitable distribution of all supplies and materials needed to participate and we offered a loaner chrome book, if needed. Then we intentionally incorporated time in the schedule for students to simply socialize with their peers under the facilitation of caring and nurturing staff. Thus, Lemonade and Sweet Tea was born. It is a scheduled time for students to connect with one another, share ideas, or just enjoy each other's company while sipping on summer favorites of lemonade and sweet tea,” said Boyd, who oversees A.S.P.I.R.E (After School Program for Instruction, Recreation & Enrichment) and TALONS (Talent and Learning of Next-Gen Students) before- and after-care programs in the school district.

“Ms. Boyd and her staff really took the time to develop a program that included enrichment activities across the curriculum, including supply kits delivered to the students’ homes prior to the start of the program, and staff-created STEAM-infused Flipgrid videos that can be utilized across grade levels and academic disciplines to help facilitate student-led learning, encourage student voice, extend learning, and promote out-of-the-box thinking. It also allows students to practice and build their social skills and connect with one another, fostering an all-inclusive virtual community,” added Assistant Superintendent of Schools Stephen Santilli.

The Virtual A.S.P.I.R.E. Summer Camp started July 6 and runs through August 13. Held live Monday - Thursday from 8 am to noon, the program is part of A.S.P.I.R.E. and funded through a five-year, \$500,000-per-year Nita M. Lowey 21st Century Community Learning Centers grant received by the district in 2017. Grant funds are used to deliver a broad array of after-school and summer programming that complements and reinforces the regular academic school day through programs offering literacy, STEM, nutrition, physical activity, career exploration and other enrichment programs for students and their family members.

For more information, please contact Kristen Boyd via email to [boydk@eht.k12.nj.us](mailto:boydk@eht.k12.nj.us) or by calling (609) 407-2500 x2325.