

August 26, 2006

Heights will offer pre-k program

Molly McCarthy

Staff

ELMIRA HEIGHTS — A pre-kindergarten program will be offered in the Elmira Heights Central School District this year.

To be eligible for the program, slated to begin Oct. 1, children must be 4 years old and district residents.

There will be two classes of up to 18 children each — taught by a teacher and an aide — that will meet at Cohen Elementary School.

The addition of the program in Elmira Heights means all three Chemung County school districts will have pre-kindergarten classes, which educators say are crucial in preparing children for school.

"We strongly believe that getting students off to a good start is critical to their success," said Elmira Heights Superintendent Mary Beth Fiore.

The program also coincides with the Chemung County **School Readiness Project** — in which a group of educators, health care providers, social service representatives and government officials have committed to helping children up to age 5 become ready for school, Fiore said.

Fiore said the school district recently received a \$110,000 state grant that will enable it to start a program.

Suzanne Lee, president of the Community Foundation, agrees that pre-kindergarten can be a strong indicator of a child's future success.

"Early childhood education is certainly key to developing good students and good citizens," she said.

* Time: 7 p.m.

* Date: Sept. 7.

* Location: Auditorium at the Cohen elementary and middle school complex, 100 Robinwood Ave. in Elmira Heights.

* Information: Superintendent Mary Beth Fiore, 607/734-7114 .