

# **St. James Early Childhood Facilities**

## **MN House Hearing on Early Childhood Facilities**

### **Tuesday January 19, 2010 2:00 – 3:30**

#### **Community Overview:**

- **Low income rural community**
- **Food processing leading industry in the county**
- **City of St. James 4,700 people**
- **Watonwan County Population 11,700**
- **High Hispanic population**
  - **Over 50% in St. James Elementary Schools**
  - **Have had the highest per capita population in the State**
- **One of the highest per capita rates of Teen Pregnancy in the State**

#### **Early Childhood Facility Issues:**

- **Lack of appropriate space for children within the community**
- **Aging Buildings within the School District**
- **Six failed bonds – with new or updated Early Childhood facilities has been a part of the former failed bonds**
- **EDA and local industry cited child care as a critical issue for St. James (In 2008-09 the Economic Development Authority (EDA) convened a Child Care Task force that researched this issue and made the recommendation for the need for new and/or remodeled space within the school as the most cost effective way to add child care spots in our community)**
- **No additional space is available in the current facility to add additional child care spots**
- **Community Ed. through the school district has collaborated to provide child care, ECFE, School Readiness, Family Literacy and teen pregnancy programming within the same school space. All programs have enhanced the quality of the offerings to families due to this collaboration.**
- **20 families are currently on our waiting list for child care**

#### **Current Situation:**

- **With a larger updated facility we could accommodate more families for child care**
- **The school is currently working with an architect for restructuring the School District. New construction added on to the current Northside Elementary School or remodeling of the Armstrong School for Early Education Services is being currently considered.**
- **With dwindling school funding from the State – there is a concern that the District will not be able to fully fund and complete this project to the Child Care specifications needed for our Early Childhood Programs. (Current school funding earmarked for this project is over \$750,000)**
- **This grant would be the impetus to move this project forward in 2010 and to be able to double the dollars that are needed to make this facility meet the licensure requirements and needs of our youngest children.**
- **This project would also support the need for added jobs in the community. It is a critical work force issue to maintain and add child care spots in our community.**

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