



## **The Kids Are Alright:**

Creative Solutions for District Childcare Services

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# Agenda

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## Hear From Four Districts Managing Childcare Programs:

- Alexandria Public Schools
- Big Lake Public Schools
- Dawson-Boyd Public Schools
- The City of Floodwood & Floodwood Public Schools

## Question & Answer Session

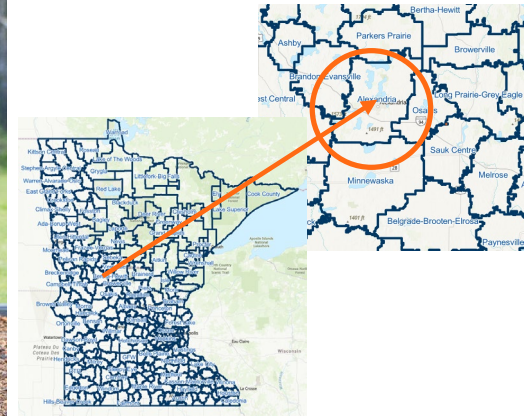
- Governance & Operations
- Licensing & Regulatory Compliance
- Financial Sustainability
- Staffing & Workforce Challenges
- Facilities & Space Use
- Enrollment Demand & District Impact



# Alexandria Public Schools

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# Community Education



**Lynn Jenc**

**Director of Community Education**

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# Alexandria Public Schools: Option 1

## Compass, School Age Childcare

- School Year; 6 Elementary Schools & Early Education Center
  - ✓ PreK-5th Grade
  - ✓ 6:30am-5:30pm
  - ✓ 496 students
- Summer; 2 locations
  - ✓ PreK-3 Grade and 4-6th Grade
  - ✓ 560 students+
- Staffing SY vs Summer
  - ✓ HS, College, Para, Teacher, Social Workers



# Alexandria Public Schools: Option 1

## Compass, School Age Childcare

- Fee-based, optional program
- Accredited & licensed through the MN Department of Children's Youth and Families
  - ✓ Child Care Assistance (CCAP) through Douglas, Pope and Todd Counties
- School age childcare guidelines & statutes defined by MDE
  - ✓ SACC Levy



# Alexandria Public Schools: Option 2

## Wrap-Around Child Care

- School Year, Early Education Center
  - ✓ 3 & 4-year-olds
  - ✓ Full day care of days off from preschool
  - ✓ 9-month + SACC
  - ✓ Staffing = adults
  - ✓ Purpose
    - Parent need
    - Facility
    - Budget



# Alexandria Public Schools: Option 3

## Family-Licensed Childcare

- Sowing Roots Childcare, Early Education Center
  - ✓ Leased space
  - ✓ Alexandria Public Schools' employees are 1<sup>st</sup> priority
  - ✓ Family license
  - ✓ Move-in ready



# Alexandria Public Schools

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## Needs Assessment: 2022

- Rural Child Care Innovation Program
- Internal Needs
  - ✓ 1-year childcare leaves
  - ✓ Resignation
- Kaitlyn's Story



# Alexandria Public Schools

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**Ashlyn & Austin  
Center-Based**



**Non-Licensed Exempt  
33 Months +**

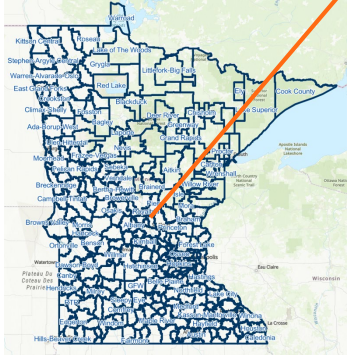


**Family- Based**

- Intent
  - ✓ Retention tool
  - ✓ Increase slots within Alexandria
  - ✓ Entice a new provider outside their home

# Big Lake

COMMUNITY  
EDUCATION



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# Big Lake Schools

## Hive Time:

- Ages 3-5 (92 Students)
- Wrap-around childcare
- Summer and Non-School Days
- Staffing
  - ✓ Adults with HS Student Supports
- Partnership with Preschool Staff
- Purpose: Access & Exploration



# Big Lake Schools

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## Kids Club

- School Age Care
- Hours: 6am-6pm
- School Year, 2 Sites
  - ✓ K-2: 204 Students
  - ✓ 3-5: 118 Student
- Summer, 1 Site
  - ✓ 378 Students



# Big Lake Schools

## Scholarships

- Pathway I, Pathway II, CCAP (3 Counties), MCCYN (Military Children in Your Neighborhood), Internal (Ed. Benefits)

## Partnerships

- Special Education, Mental Health Specialists, Teachers, Administration

## Goals

- Family Support & Access, Student Relationships, Exploration



## Consideration

- Internal vs. External Programs

# Dawson-Boyd Public Schools



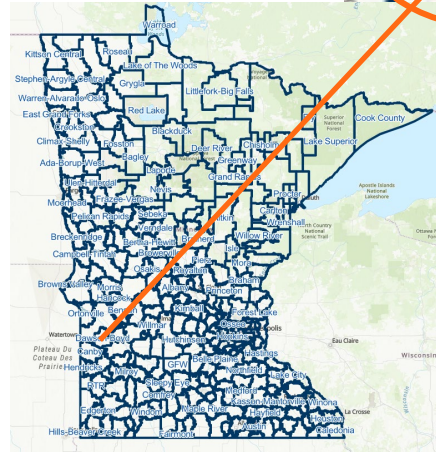
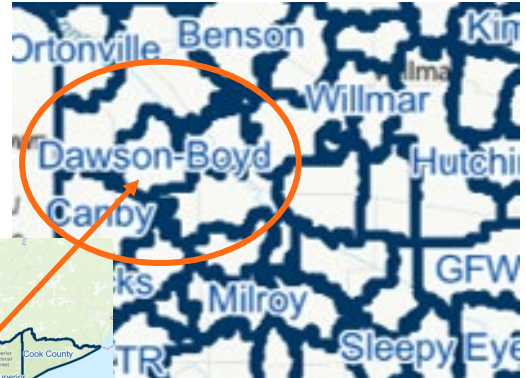
*Small School. Big Opportunities.*

**Holly Ward**

Superintendent

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# Blackjack Babies & Junior Jacks: Details

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- Two Locations (In School Building)
  - ✓ Infants & Junior Jacks
  - ✓ Toddler & Little Jacks
- Capacity
  - ✓ 24 Infants
  - ✓ 21 Toddlers
  - ✓ 1/10 Ratio for Little Jacks
  - ✓ 1/15 Ratio for Junior Jacks



# Blackjack Babies & Junior Jacks: Details

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- Hours of Operation
  - ✓ Monday – Friday
  - ✓ 7:00am – 5:30pm
  - ✓ Open Year-Round
- Weekly Rates
  - ✓ Range from \$165 - \$190



# Blackjack Babies & Junior Jacks: Highlights

- **Birth to School Continuum**
  - ✓ A connected system of care and education that supports children from infancy through kindergarten, creating strong transitions and early success
- **Family-Centered Approach**
  - ✓ Programs are designed to support working families with reliable care, consistent communication, and a welcoming environment



# Blackjack Babies & Junior Jacks: Highlights

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- **Strong Community Impact**
  - ✓ Expanded childcare access helps stabilize the local workforce, attract families, and support economic growth in the region
- **High-Quality Early Learning**
  - ✓ Focus on play-based learning, social-emotional development, and early literacy to build a strong foundation for school readiness.

# Blackjack Babies & Junior Jacks: Highlights

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## Staffing with Purpose

- Team members are trained, supported, and valued. Leadership often steps in alongside staff to ensure quality care and continuity for children

## Alignment with K-12 System

- Early childhood programs are intentionally connected to district goals, curriculum, and student support systems.

## Responsive & Adaptive

- The program continues to grow and adjust based on family needs, staffing realities, and community feedback.

# City of FLOODWOOD

**Tad Farrel**

Mayor

The City of Floodwood

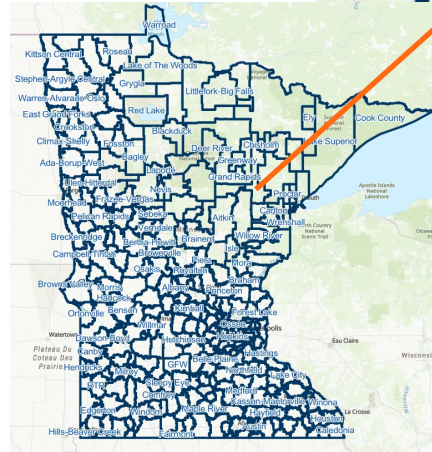
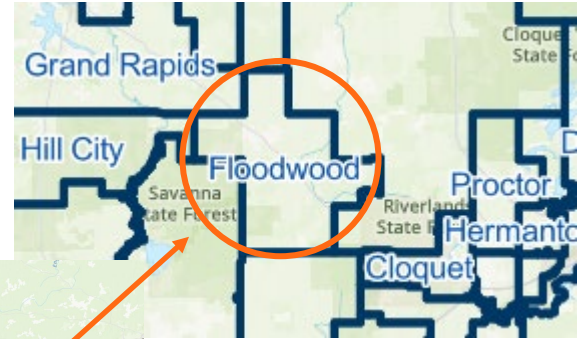
[mayor@ci.floodwood.mn.us](mailto:mayor@ci.floodwood.mn.us)

**Cory Suonvieri**

Deputy Clerk

The City of Floodwood

[csuonvieri@ci.floodwood.mn.us](mailto:csuonvieri@ci.floodwood.mn.us)



# Polar Cubs Childcare Center: Background

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- Prior to Polar Cubs opening, community had only one in-home family daycare provider
  - ✓ Significant challenges for working families
- Local parents formed a non-profit to find solutions
- Non-profit collaborated with school district to repurpose unused school space (a result of declining enrollment)
- School district agreed to lease the unused space at cost to the non-profit

# Polar Cubs Childcare Center: Background

- City of Floodwood helped the Center secure approximately \$90,000 in grant funding to renovate the leased school space
  - ✓ \$30,000 from United Way of Northeastern Minnesota
  - ✓ \$60,000 from the Blandin Foundation
- Renovations began in February 2024



# Polar Cubs Childcare Center: Operations

- Grand opening in September 2024
- Open year-round, including snow days
- 7:00am – 5:00pm Monday through Friday
- Serves infants through 12 years
- Hosts annual fundraiser & accepts donations to help with expenses



# Polar Cubs Childcare Center: Lessons Learned

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- Partnership provides meaningful benefits to children, families, the school, and the community
- There were challenges!
  - ✓ Navigating state licensing & permitting requirements
  - ✓ Staffing shortages during the startup phase
  - ✓ Some enrolled families found alternative childcare while waiting for the Center to open, impacted enrollment stability

# Let's Talk!

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# Download the Presentation

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