



Minnesota State Senate

NEWS RELEASE

State Senator Tom Saxhaug

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Sen. Saxhaug hosts State Capitol review of “Invest Early” education initiative

Legislative leaders received an informational hearing on efforts designed to improve and expand early childhood education in Minnesota. State Sen. Tom Saxhaug, DFL-Grand Rapids, welcomed early childhood experts from Itasca County to the State Capitol this week and underscored his support for their efforts.

“We learned again how important early childhood education is not just in our region, but throughout our state,” said Sen. Saxhaug. “In these days of serious economic times, we know that educating young children and preparing them for the future is one of the best investments we can make.”

Invest Early is in its third year and operates out of Deer River, Grand Rapids, Greenway, and Nashwauk/Keewatin, with the stated mission to “deliver comprehensive wrap-around services to children and their families, while evaluating the long-term impact of the investments.” Officials from the program testified before the Senate’s E-12 Education Committee, providing details about the way the program works, statistics about how many they served, and sharing success stories from families and children who have been helped by Invest Early.

Among the core services offered by Invest Early are infant/toddler classrooms, preschool classrooms, parent education, and health services. Beyond that, families can choose from other available options, including adult basic education, regional transportation, wrap-around child

care (available Monday through Friday throughout the year), family development, and mental health support.

Invest Early works in partnership with Itasca Community College and Bemidji State University to enable those interested in working in early childhood to pursue a career ladder of training that will result in teacher licensure. The early childhood education classes provide licensed instructors and child care providers; a safe, stimulating learning environment; a chance for kids to play and learn from hands-on activities; developmentally appropriate activities; healthy meals and snacks; and an individual learning plan for each child. Those providing information about the program thanked the Blandin Foundation for its financial commitment to and support for Invest Early.

“We appreciate the opportunity we had to share the story of the Invest Early progress and work of all of the partners and what is going on in Itasca County with the rest of the state,” said Jim Hoolihan, President of the Blandin Foundation. “We’re grateful to Sen. Saxhaug for his support and for having us come to the Capitol to share that story with other legislators.”

Applications for Invest Early are available at the early childhood centers, Kootasca Head Start, or online at www.investearly.org.

For more information, contact Sen. Saxhaug’s State Capitol office by phone at 651-296-4136, or via e-mail at sen.tom.saxhaug@senate.mn.



Photo caption: A group supporting early childhood education efforts in Itasca County testified before members of the Minnesota Senate at the State Capitol recently. Pictured are (front row, left to right) Mary Kosak, state Sen. Tom Saxhaug and Jim Hoolihan. (back row, left to right) Jan Reindl, Sue Hoeft, and Maureen Rosato.