Ironically, Adding insult to injury

The Pottstown School District has operated a 4-year-old pre-school program since 1989 in its elementary schools. In 2006, the district greatly expanded its reach and won national recognition by partnering with local non-profits to design and implement common strategies to enable children to enter kindergarten ready to learn.

The initiative, called PEAK (Pottstown Early Action for Kindergarten Readiness) — Pre-K Counts, has won the confidence of government and private funders, including the Kellogg Foundation.

The YMCA is one of the district’s non-profit partners. The Y receives a yearly pass-through allotment of $296,000 for 40 Pre-K Counts students in two classrooms at the YMCA, conveniently located across the street from Pottstown High School, which also has a pre-K Counts classroom.

Last fall, as a member of the Pottstown School Board, I learned the YMCA was interested in leasing the former school district administrative annex building, located adjacent to the Franklin Elementary School, for pre-school classes.

“Great,” I thought, “they’re expanding!”

But no. The YMCA wanted the space because it’s closing its Pottstown facility and needed a place to move its day care classes.

Last month, the YMCA announced that moving its day care to a defunct child care center in a Lower Pottsgrove business campus was more cost-effective than using the annex building. So no deal.

Pottstown struggles mightily to provide an education for its children. We have the third highest school property taxes in Pennsylvania. We certainly could have used the income from leasing the annex building, which is in mint condition.

Moreover, the annex building is located within easy walking distance of most of Pottstown, accessible to our families.

But at the Y, it’s all about money.

Commentary by Thomas Hylton

The YMCA could have kept its pre-school program in Pottstown, at the former Pottstown School District administrative annex, above, across the street from the Franklin Elementary School. It chose instead to relocate its day care to a Lower Pottsgrove business campus, below.

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