



West Des Moines Community Education

REPORT ON THE COMMUNITY

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

September 2010



West Des Moines Community Education has committed to undertaking a community needs assessment every five years. The needs assessment was conducted in order to identify community needs and strengths and mobilize resources to ensure that all community members have access to high-quality learning opportunities and services.

Who participated in the community assessment?

Over 100 West Des Moines Community School District residents were engaged in ten focus groups for the community assessment in July 2010, including high school students, young adults, preschool families, school-age families, empty nesters, retirees, senior citizens, Latino families, and low-income families. The demographics of focus group participants closely resembled that of the general population of the West Des Moines schools community.

What does the assessment tell us about our community?

The community strengths most often cited:

- » Exceptional schools
- » Low crime rates
- » Watchful, attentive neighborhoods
- » Good value for cost of living
- » Safe, clean parks
- » Well maintained walking and biking trails
- » Well-utilized public libraries
- » Convenience

Areas in need of improvement cited:

- » Public transportation
- » Volunteer opportunities
- » Centralized information on programs, services, and activities
- » Maintenance of older infrastructure and neighborhoods
- » Transparency of decision-making in high growth areas

Based on analysis of all focus group participant responses, this is what the community had to say:

1. Community identity is strongly rooted in people and the schools.
2. A sign of strength of the West Des Moines Schools community, growth, can put other identified community strengths such as good schools, low crime, nice parks, and strong neighborhood cohesiveness at risk.
3. There is agreement that current services to residents throughout the community are provided well, but there is a growing concern regarding services to middle-income families, individuals with disabilities, and aging residents.
4. Expanding opportunities for all residents to be civically engaged is important.
5. Transparency of decision-making and engaging community members in the decision-making process is important to residents in the high-growth community of West Des Moines.
6. Preferred methods for receiving information on community programs, services, or activities differ based on factors including involvement with the schools, primary language, culture, age, and interest.

How will this Information be used?

West Des Moines Community Education is committed to using this information to positively impact the West Des Moines Schools community. Information will be shared with the community officials and leaders that can put these suggestions into action. West Des Moines Community Education will also use the information to improve programs and services to our residents in the short term, as well as plan strategically for the future of our community.

For More Information

To view the full Report on the Community, please visit the Community Education website at www.wdmcs.org/commed/ – Advisory Council – Community Need Assessment.

Contact: Shahna Janssen at (515) 633-5005, or janssens@wdmcs.org.

About West Des Moines Community Education

The goal of West Des Moines Community Education is to help improve the community by engaging people to identify needs and inviting all service agencies and citizens to work together and share resources to meet those needs. West Des Moines Community Education was established in the mid 1970s and has created and/or funded numerous programs and services, and collaborations, including: before and after school programming, adult classes, facility use, service learning, summer programs, and early childhood opportunities.

West Des Moines Community Education serves the needs of the community by connecting people, ideas and resources.