

The Minneapolis Foundation Destination 2010 initiative

Description of participating youth and their families

Destination 2010 is a multi-year initiative of The Minneapolis Foundation designed to improve student achievement, increase high school graduation rates, and advance educational reform. In the spring of 2001, third graders in seven struggling schools located in St. Paul and Minneapolis were invited to join the initiative. The goal is to help the students graduate in 2010 and attend post-secondary education, while also inspiring students, increasing parental involvement, and further motivating teachers.

This report summarizes the background of the students participating in the initiative and their families. Most information for this report was obtained through telephone surveys conducted in spring 2006 by Wilder Research. Interviews were conducted with 118 of 217 students (54%) and 125 of 217 parents (58%). About one-third of the sample could not be reached. Caution should be used in interpreting results as findings may not reflect the perspectives of all students and parents.

Participant demographics

The demographics for the interviewed students were similar to those in the total Destination 2010 cohort. Half of the students (52%) and two-thirds of the parents (69%) interviewed were female. Almost all of the adult respondents were parents of the students. Fifty-nine percent of the students attended school in St. Paul and 41 percent attended school in Minneapolis.

The most prevalent languages spoken at home were English, Hmong, and Spanish. The majority of students (89%) and about two-thirds (63%) of the parents were born in the United States. Parents born outside the United States were most likely to have been born in Laos or Mexico; students born outside of the United States were most likely to have been born in Mexico.

Neighborhood demographics

Most participants live near the original seven schools in neighborhoods that are characterized by relatively high levels of poverty and crime. In 2001, Destination 2010 invited third grade students from seven elementary schools to join the initiative. Most of the students currently involved in the initiative still live in or near the neighborhoods where these schools are located. Three neighborhoods in St. Paul and six in Minneapolis were chosen to illustrate the characteristics of these neighborhoods. As compared to the cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul, these neighborhoods had a higher percentage of non-white and non-English speaking residents, more poverty in the school system, a higher percentage of younger residents and families with children, and higher crime rates.

Household and family characteristics

Most respondents either own a home or rent a house or apartment. None of the families lived in a shelter or were homeless. On average, households were home to 2.3 adults and 3.7 children.

While just over half of the parents were married or lived in a marriage-like relationship, more had someone with whom to share parenting. Fifty-four percent of the parents were married or lived in a marriage-like relationship. Other parents were divorced, separated, widowed, or never married. However, 70 percent of the respondents had someone to share their parenting responsibilities, most often the child's parent or the respondent's spouse.

About one-third of the participants would be the first person in their family to attend post-secondary education. Parents reported that 64 percent of the Destination 2010 students will not be the first person in their immediate family to attend school after high school. This indicates that there are other family influences for education in the students' lives, since only 42 percent of the respondents and 28 percent of their parenting partners continued school after high school.

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Most parents and partners were employed full-time. About three-quarters of the parents and parenting partners work full-time or have one or more part-time jobs. They were employed in a variety of occupations, mostly industrial or mechanical, food service, or medical and health fields

Students' lifestyle and emotional health

Despite experiencing some peer pressure, most students are maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

Almost all of the students say they know how to live a healthy lifestyle and about two-thirds of the parents and students report that the students live a healthy lifestyle. About 15 percent of the students feel pressure from friends, former friends, or strangers to engage in unhealthy activities such as using drugs or alcohol. Despite some pressure, use of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs is minimal with the vast majority avoiding any use. Similarly, only a few students reported feeling stressed, sad, or anxious.

Support

Most participants have supportive individuals in their lives. Destination 2010 students report that they have people on whom they can depend and people they can talk to when they have important decisions to make, including parents, teachers, friends, and other relatives. These people will listen, give advice, and help them make good decisions.

Involvement

Half of the students were involved in community programs; many said that the initiative helped them become involved. About half of the students (53%) said that they were involved in organizations or activities outside of school, such as church programs, after-school programs, and sports. Half the students (53%) and two-thirds of the parents (70%) said there are new activities the student would like to try.

Seventy-eight percent of the students (and 80% of the parents) said that Destination 2010 helped students get

involved in new activities. Almost all of the students (99%) and parents (97%) said that they enjoyed the activities or that the student had a positive experience.

A few students and parents said Destination 2010 did not help them become involved in new activities. The most common reasons were the student lacked interest in the activities, they were too busy with school or the family did not have time, or they had not heard about the activities from Destination 2010.

Recommendations

- Identify strategies for increasing communication with participants who are not currently participating in activities, especially related to upcoming events.
- Be aware that Destination 2010 students live in some challenging neighborhoods. Continue to provide programming and opportunities for these students, such as summer camps, and reach out to community agencies working with youth in these neighborhoods.
- Consider offering forums to provide information about avoiding alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use, and resisting peer pressure. Also include information about building on their assets such as support networks, friends, and healthy lifestyles.
- Continue to offer students exposure to college campuses and information about post high school education. Also, encourage parents and siblings who have completed or are currently attending school to help their student pursue higher education opportunities.
- Consider options for increasing student participation in activities that they would like to try, such as sports, performing arts, and art.
- Consider strategies for obtaining more accurate contact information to increase the response rates for the next survey.
- Implement plans to reach out to the families not responding to the survey. Their feedback may be dramatically different than the results gleaned from the survey respondents.

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For more information

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