

The Minneapolis Foundation Destination 2010 initiative

Student and family satisfaction

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 within the St. Paul and Minneapolis school districts. 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.

Research methods

In spring 2006, Wilder Research conducted telephone surveys to assess student and family views of the initiative. Interviews were conducted with 118 of 217 students (55%) and 125 of 217 parents (59%). 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.

Half of the students (52%) and two-thirds of the parents (69%) interviewed were female. The most prevalent languages spoken at home were English, Hmong, and Spanish. Fifty-nine percent of the students attended school in St. Paul and 41 percent attended school in Minneapolis.

Parent perceptions of Destination 2010

Most parents were satisfied with the initiative.

Most parents (92%) said that the initiative met their expectations and about two-thirds did not have any suggestions for improvement.

Most parents identified benefits of the initiative for students; fewer saw benefits for other family members.

Most parents (93%) said that Destination 2010 benefited the student, while only 65 percent felt that other family members benefited. Many of these parents said that other family members did not participate in events.

Parents tended to identify the computer, the opportunity to learn new things, and the scholarship as the strongest benefits. When asked to identify the initiative's benefits, parents often mentioned the computers and the opportunity to learn new things or have new experiences. They gave similar responses when asked to identify the most helpful components. Other parents mentioned the scholarships and information received about educational options.

Relationships with initiative staff

Most parents and students had positive relationships with staff. Most parents (94%) and students (91%) "agreed" or "strongly agreed" that they enjoy talking to staff. Three-quarters of the parents (77%) and students (75%) "agreed" or "strongly agreed" that they know staff members or their liaison/outreach worker well. Seventy-five percent of the parents, but only 63 percent of the students, "agreed" or "strongly agreed" that the staff or liaison/outreach worker knows their family well. Eighty-eight percent of the parents (and 85% of the students) "agreed" or "strongly agreed" that the liaison/outreach worker was helpful.

Parents with a home language other than English rated staff relationships more positively. Parents with a home language other than English were more likely to "agree" or "strongly agree" that they know the staff well and that the staff know them well.

Parents and students requested additional information regarding events and activities.

When asked how staff had been helpful, 62 percent of the parents highlighted their role in sharing information about events. However, of the ten parents who said that their expectations had not been met, seven said that they needed more event reminders. Improved communication between parents and staff was also their most common suggestion for improving the initiative.

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Student perspectives of the initiative

Participating students, especially those with a home language other than English, saw benefits of participation. Most students said that Destination 2010 helped them feel successful (94%) and meet new people (91%). More than 80 percent said the initiative helped them grow as a leader, feel like they belong to a group, and explore new places. Students with a home language other than English were more likely than those who speak English to say that the initiative helped them develop skills, meet people, and find activities.

When asked what they liked and what they found useful, students often mentioned spending time with friends and meeting people. Others listed college visits, scholarships, exposure to new activities, the computer, and leadership opportunities.

Students provided a range of options for improving Destination 2010. Most students did not recommend other ways that Destination 2010 could help students. Others suggested increasing case management or tutoring, providing more encouragement, sharing more information about activities, and distributing more information about colleges and high school.

Participation in activities

Most parents attended at least one event; almost all rated events favorably. Three-quarters of the parents (77%) attended at least one initiative event, such as a Lynx game, computer training/giveaway, a summer activity preview, and family days at the Science Museum. Of these parents, almost all (99%) described activities as “very positive” or “somewhat positive.”

Parents requested additional academic and recreational activities. When asked to suggest future events, parents often requested activities to keep students on track for graduation and campus visits. Others suggested recreational activities, such as cookouts, sporting events, and field trips.

Families found the resource guide helpful. Each year, Destination 2010 creates a resource guide of community organizations and summer camps. Almost all parents (97%) and students (92%) “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that the guide provides helpful information. Students who speak English at home were more likely to agree with this item than students who spoke other languages.

About half of the students were involved in community programs; most felt that Destination 2010 helped increase their involvement. Fifty-three percent of the students (and 51% of the parents) said that students were involved in organizations or activities outside of school, such as church programs, after-school programs, and sports.

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 (96%) and parents (97%) said that they enjoyed the activities or that the student had a positive experience.

Recommendations

- Identify opportunities to provide events of interest to siblings and other family members.
- Continue to provide opportunities for students to explore educational options and new activities.
- Consider strategies to further build staff relationships with students, especially those who speak English at home.
- Identify strategies for increasing communication with participants who are not currently participating in activities, especially related to upcoming events.
- Consider options for increasing student involvement in camps.
- Consider strategies for obtaining more accurate contact information to increase the response rates for the next survey.

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For more information

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