
CHAPTER 9. EDUCATION STRATEGY

SERVICE MISSION

To strengthen and promote the excellence of all educational institutions in the city.

There are six Education goals:

1. Adopt a one percent local option sales tax for schools for infrastructure.
2. Expand cooperative efforts among policy makers of city and independent school district.
3. Coordinate multi-uses of public schools and city-owned facilities.
4. Increase communication between all educational institutions.
5. Develop cost-efficient techniques between the City and the Des Moines Independent School District.
6. Promote the Public Libraries of Des Moines (PLDM) as the information resource for the community.

RESULTS

The Education section posed questions to respondents about their level of satisfaction with the City's efforts in working with the Des Moines Independent School District for expanded and alternative uses of school and city facilities. The questions covering Goals 2-5 focused on non-policy and non-curriculum issues, as school-related policy development and curriculum issues are

under the purview of the School District and the Iowa Department of Education.

Of the 533 returned surveys, only 186 respondents (35 percent) were sufficiently familiar with the issue to respond to the four related educational strategy questions (Table 9-1). Several possible reasons for the low number of people familiar with Des Moines' efforts are evident from the Profile of survey respondents. First, most of the respondents are in the 45 and older age group, particularly in the 65 and older age group. These households tend to have fewer school-aged children, and therefore it is probable that the interest in keeping current with the education topics covered in this questionnaire is low. The Profile also identified that 80 percent of the surveyed households did not have school-aged children in the household.

Table 9-1. Familiarity with City Efforts to Increase the Cooperation and Communication Between It and the Des Moines Independent School District

	N	Percent
Familiar	186	35
Not familiar	347	65

COMMENTS

Overall, as Table 9-2 indicates, the majority of the respondents were satisfied with the City’s efforts to promote the excellence of its educational institutions. As indicated by Table 9-2, respondents are satisfied by a wide margin with Des Moines’ performance on expanding the use of school grounds and improving the communication between neighborhood schools and neighbors. However, that margin closes significantly when asked about working toward reducing city-school costs and the City’s communication efforts toward working with postsecondary institutions. Please note that these results should be used with caution, as the numbers of responses were far fewer than desired to make more confident interpretations from these comments.

Only 61 comments addressed some aspect of Education. Most of the comments were

made on issues that are under the jurisdiction of the Iowa Department of Education. These comments included improving the school curriculum, adding other classes, improving the quality of teaching, giving more money to schools and teachers, keeping local schools open, and adding school prayer as part of a student’s day.

There were few comments specific to the goals of the Education Issue Area. Of those, respondents asked that schools be multi-functional, that there should be an improvement in the communication between schools and the city, and that the city spend more time supporting the public school district. Finally, a few respondents indicated that the city should promote home and private schooling as a viable alternative to the public school system.

Table 9-2. Satisfaction with Des Moines Efforts in Education

	Satisfied or Very Satisfied		Dissatisfied or Very Dissatisfied	
	N	Percent	N	Percent
Use of school grounds for non-school activities	158	80	40	20
Communication between neighborhood schools and neighborhoods	140	71	57	29
Combining school and city operations to reduce costs	85	52	78	48
Improving communication between private and public post-secondary educational institutions to foster cooperation and growth	87	43	65	57