

2020 Community Needs Assessment Summary of Findings

Introduction





The mission of West Des Moines Community Schools (WDMCS) Community Education is to serve the needs of the community by connecting people, ideas, and resources. One strategy to achieve this mission is the coordination of a comprehensive community needs assessment every five years.

The needs assessment provides valuable insights into the strengths and emerging needs of the community served by the WDMCS district. The results of the needs assessment are used to guide and prioritize the work of WDMCS Community Education.

What did we ask?

- What makes our community a great place to live/go to school?
- How welcoming and inclusive is our community?
- What challenges or barriers do students, parents, and/or people in our community experience?

Identified Strengths

-  Quality Schools
-  Opportunities
-  Safety
-  Small Town Atmosphere
-  Amenities
-  Collaboration
-  Diversity
-  Human Services

Identified Challenges

-  Access to Resources
-  Issues At School
-  Navigating Schools
-  Language and Cultural Barriers
-  Racism and Inequity
-  Financial Hardship
-  Transportation

Who did we talk to?

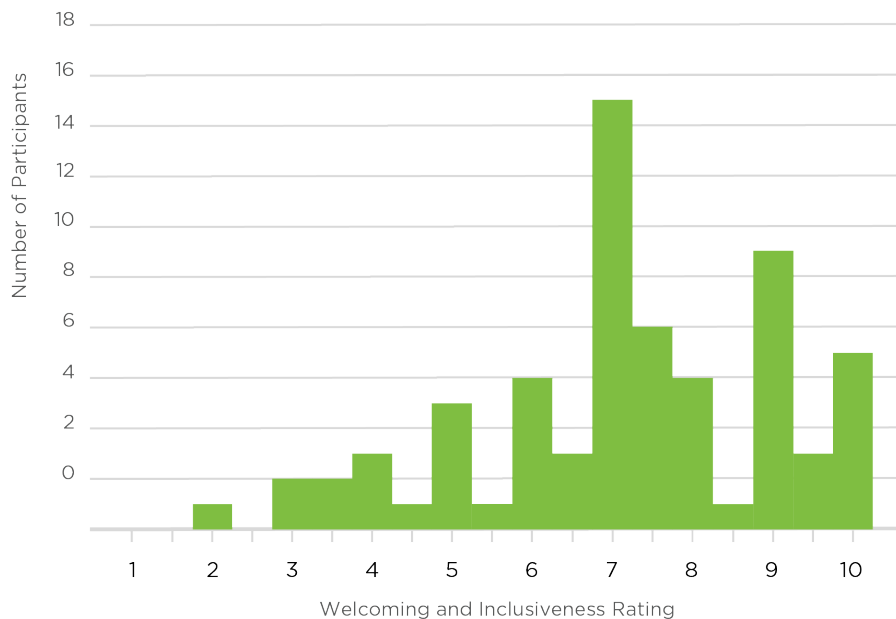
A total of 94 individuals participated in focus groups coordinated by the Community Education Advisory Council (CEAC).

These groups gathered during February and March of 2020.

Participants included:

- Community-based professionals
- School-based professionals
- K-12 parents
- Spanish-speaking parents
- Hakha Chin/Burmese-speaking parents
- Lower-income families
- High school students
- English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) students

How welcoming and inclusive is our community?



Participants rated how welcoming and inclusive they felt the community was on a scale of 1-10, with 10 being the highest. The average rating was 7.1.

Participants recognized segments of the community that are making intentional efforts to be welcoming and inclusive. Especially successful entities included schools, faith communities, human services, and ethnic-based community organizations.

What did we learn?

1. Residents value the quality of life they experience within the communities of the West Des Moines Community School district.
2. People appreciate the high quality schools, safe environment, and extensive amenities and opportunities that are available.
3. Our community is making intentional efforts towards welcoming and inclusion of diverse populations, though there is room for improvement on a systemic level.
4. Participants value high quality schools in WDMCS, but social/emotional concerns are increasing and navigating the school system was a common challenge.
5. While there are many resources available in the community, there are also barriers that prevent some residents from accessing those resources.
6. Giving people a voice matters.



How will this information be used?

WDMCS Community Education is committed to using this information to positively impact the communities served by WDMCS.

Information will be shared with community leaders and stakeholders who have a vested interest in community betterment.

WDMCS 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 2020 Community Needs Assessment, visit the WDMCS Community Education website at <https://commed.wdmcs.org/community/advisory-council/needs-assessment>

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