

Visioning 2026 Education Focus Group Notes

November 8, 2006

11:30 – 1:00 p.m.

Chamber of Commerce

Present: Gregg Hanson, Greg Heineman; Norm Jedlicka, Jim Brewer, Brian Nordby, Lora Young, Mark Hall, Nancy Brozek, J. Paul McIntosh, Pam Carlson

Introductions were made. Background on Visioning 2026 and the focus groups was outlined. Sixteen trends affecting Norfolk and Madison Co. in the next 20 years were handed out and presented on.

What aspects of our current education system do we feel need a fresh approach?

- *Schools are teaching theory and not actual application – ie: accounting practices
- *teaching second or third languages in grade school (comment about Chinese immigration to the states)
- *education on cultural diversity -(discussion about perceptions of Hispanics not thinking education is important –they could be coming from own life experience where they had high hopes and had to settle for less)
- *testing and assessment –(taking a test may be different from “knowing or applying” information)
- *Funding for education – (how can we afford not to – need lots of people making lots of money to support society – need education to do that. Need to feel like they can be successful – mentoring programs and scholarships – what age is that appropriate – 4th grade maybe too late- impressions/expectations already set?)

Do you feel our current education system does a good job of reaching all age groups?

- *schools reach out – especially community college – people who had a bad experience won't reach back
- *Early education and grade school focus on comments thus far – how do we develop culture of educational curiosity (have to continue education with changes etc. How do you realize that is needed? Interface with education – what is the purpose – education or enrollment number or grade point averages?)
- *Intimidation by technology – things outside of experience base. (reverse mentoring)
- *Different types of intelligence – do we reach or target those? (Teachers – shortage of teachers and qualified teachers – community college allows for competence in field for teaching not necessarily competence of teaching - Federal mandates to make education/abilities equal makes sure everyone is mediocre. How do you get to individual instruction/needs with “standards”?)
- *Create learning environments – get parents involved and supporting children (technology role – checking up/giving more autonomy?)
- *Incentive for children/parents to be involved – extra curricular activities, access to laptop/connection, distance learning, personal attention, safe environment to learn

What ideas do you have for changing or improving our education system?

- *Parental involvement
- *Using infrastructure of school system to build community (financial services, health care, safe place to be and learn – library)
- *Interface with community – have “non” teachers come in and teach a lesson – not just demonstration or explanation, but real “teaching” (vice versa having teachers involved with community – merit pay)
- *Encourage artistic self expression – creativity
- *More application for what “students” are learning – (know what they can ‘get’ from an accounting degree – doesn't mean all you have to do is sit behind a desk filling out paperwork) Some jobs are new and don't have “training” – make it up as you go
- *Prepare for jobs of the future – falling behind in world – engineering/outsourcing – need to stay competitive.

List of Overall ideas

Use v theory – hands on
2nd language in grade school
Cultural diversity education – differences – expectations-opportunities
Testing and assessment of proficiency
Funding
Early childhood education
Mentoring
Continuing education
School environment
Arts/Creative expression
Partnerships – all levels of the community/nation/globe