

Northside Achievement Zone

Summary of 2013 community survey results: A follow-up to the 2010 baseline survey
March 2014

In 2008, the Northside Achievement Zone (NAZ) was formed as a collaborative with the mission *to build a culture of achievement in a geographic Zone in North Minneapolis to ensure all youth graduate from high school college-ready*. In 2011, after piloting initial efforts, NAZ was awarded a Promise Neighborhood grant and significantly scaled up its solutions and impact. Wilder Research was contracted to provide independent, external evaluation services, which included conducting a community survey to identify community strengths and needs and assess the progress of the initiative over time. A baseline survey was conducted in 2010 and then repeated in the summer of 2013. The survey aimed to gather in-depth data about the well-being of children in the Zone, assess parents' perceptions of the community, and monitor progress toward key outcomes.

Methodology

The surveys were conducted using an in-person, door-to-door survey method (the same methodology used in 2010), although eligible individuals who were not at home were left a flyer and invited to complete the survey by phone. Wilder Research contracted with the Urban Research and Outreach-Engagement Center (UROC) at the University of Minnesota for data collection. Respondents who completed the survey received a \$20 gift card as a thank you for their participation.

The sample consisted of a random sample of residential addresses in the Zone, released in phases in order to monitor completes and ensure an adequate response rate. Potential respondents were screened to determine their eligibility for the survey – that is, parents or guardians to a minor child (age 18 or younger) living in the household. Interviewers received extensive training on social science interview methods, the survey, and general interviewing



techniques; all doorstep interviewing was conducted in pairs. The surveys collected information about respondents' impressions of the neighborhood, schools, and NAZ; their participation in various programs and activities; their access to health care, transportation, and technology; their educational aspirations for their children; demographic information; and specific questions about the well-being of children in the household (age 0-5 and age 6-18).

Of the 1,635 households contacted, 402 completed the interview. About half of the contacted households (52%) were ineligible. Assuming the same percentage of un-contacted households were also ineligible, the response rate for the survey is 69 percent, a significant increase from 47 percent in 2010. This very respectable response rate increases the confidence one can have that the survey results are a good representation of the overall population of households with children in the Zone.

Description of respondents

A total of 402 Northside residents completed the survey, most of whom were female (75%), and either black/African American (60%), white (13%), Asian (12%), Hispanic/Latino (6%), or multiracial (5%). About 1 in 5 (21%) had not finished high school, one-quarter (26%) had a high school diploma, an additional quarter had some college, 12 percent had a vocational certificate or two-year degree, and 15 percent had a college or graduate degree. Just over half of respondents (57%) said they were employed. On average, respondents had lived at their current address for just under 4 years (median = 2 years). Overall, 60 percent of households had children age 0 through 5, while 86 percent had school-age children

Most respondents (70%) reported having reliable transportation options. Almost all (98%) said they had a working phone in the household (usually just a cell phone), and most (81%) had access to a working computer or other internet-accessible device.

Key findings

The following summarizes key findings from the 2013 survey, including comparisons between 2010 and 2013 results and NAZ-enrolled and non-NAZ enrolled families where possible. The results highlight the success of the work happening in the Zone as a result of the NAZ initiative to date as well as opportunities for strengthening the work and its impact within the Zone.

Successes to date

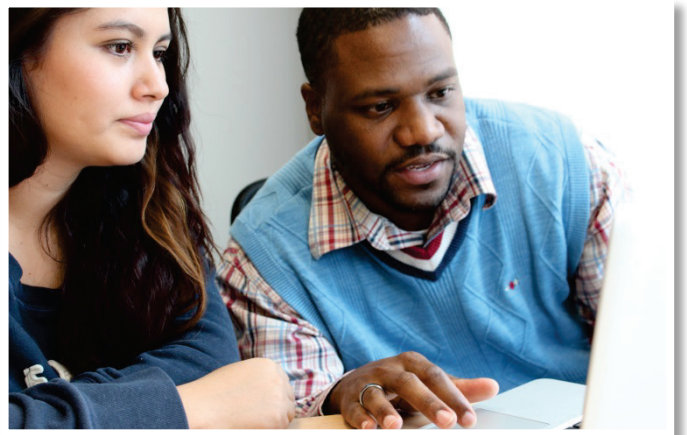
Knowledge of and perceptions of NAZ.

Significantly more Zone residents were familiar with the Northside Achievement Zone in 2013 than in 2010 (from 20% to 38%), indicating NAZ has successfully increased its visibility within the neighborhood. Furthermore, almost all respondents who were familiar with NAZ had a positive impression of its reputation and felt the organization would improve things for children and families within the neighborhood. These results suggest that not only has the word about NAZ spread, but a solid foundation has been established that will serve the

organization well in future recruitment and expansion efforts.

Child care enrollment. There has been significant focus in these early years of the NAZ initiative on enhancing access to early childhood care and activities, including helping families enroll in high-quality child care and preschool settings. While there was a slight increase in overall enrollment in child care centers and preschools since 2010 (from 10% to 17%), particularly noteworthy is the proportion of NAZ-enrolled families using child care centers and preschools (42%) compared to families not enrolled in NAZ (14%) in 2013. Such findings indicate that NAZ efforts in this area have had an impact and will likely increase as enrollment in NAZ continues to grow.

Child participation in afterschool activities and mentoring. In addition to early childhood activities, there has been substantial effort aimed at connecting school-age children to activities and resources. Results suggest that these efforts appear to be paying off. Children in the Zone were significantly more likely to be involved in afterschool activities in 2013 compared to 2010. Furthermore, in 2013, NAZ-enrolled parents were more likely to say their child was in an afterschool activity focused on schoolwork compared to non-NAZ enrolled families (89% vs. 71%). And, while overall participation in mentoring Zone-wide decreased from 2010 to 2013, participation among NAZ-enrolled families in 2013 was significantly higher than among non-NAZ enrolled families (46% compared to 21%), indicating many NAZ-enrolled families are being connected to mentoring programs. As NAZ enrollment increases, it is likely that participation in mentoring will as well.



Parent participation in parent-teacher conferences and parent education. Findings suggest that more parents got involved in parent-teacher conferences in 2013 compared to 2010, although the proportion who said they did so was high in both years and may be a reflection of parents wanting to provide a socially desirable response. Approximately the same proportion of parents reported participating in parent education classes in 2013 as 2010 (about 4 in 10 respondents); however, in 2013, significantly more NAZ-enrolled families (54%) said they had participated in such a class or activity than non-NAZ enrolled families (36%), suggesting that NAZ has had an impact on connecting families to parenting education opportunities.

Opportunities for the future

Crime, safety, and neighborhood cohesion.

Respondents expressed mixed feelings about crime and safety in the neighborhood. While some felt the neighborhood was safe and crime did not prevent them from doing things they would like to do, about an equal proportion of respondents felt the exact opposite. Although not expected to change in such a short period of time, measures of collective efficacy – or the sense of community connection and willingness to take action together for the well-being of the community – remained unchanged from 2010 to 2013. These findings, of course, are not surprising given the historically high rates of poverty and crime in this area, and the fact that moving the needle on such pervasive conditions will take time; yet, these findings serve as a reminder of the context in which the work of NAZ exists and the opportunity to impact these significant issues over time.

Perceptions of school quality. Another opportunity for enhancement relates to parents' perceptions of their child's schooling. Somewhat surprisingly, an overwhelmingly high proportion of parents rated their child's school positively on a range of factors.

While at first glance this might seem to be a positive finding, the fact that parents' perceptions stand in stark contrast to the consistently poor achievement data coming out of many Minneapolis Public Schools is striking and suggests parents may not have a realistic picture of how their children's schools are faring. NAZ-enrolled families, however, were less likely to highly rate some aspects of their child's school than non-NAZ enrolled families, suggesting these families may be more in touch with what is happening in schools and see opportunities for improvement. In general, though, it appears there are opportunities to not only increase parents' awareness of school issues but their involvement in addressing these issues.

Parental participation in child's schooling.

Relatedly, parental participation in certain school-related activities declined from 2010 to 2013. Specifically, significantly fewer parents reported being involved in parent committees like the PTA or PTO in 2013. Although not statistically significant, there was also a slight dip in rates of volunteering at school from 2010 to 2013. These results, coupled with parents' exceedingly positive views of their children's schools, point to the need for continued work with parents around their involvement in the schools.

Educational aspirations. Parents' expectations for their children's educational attainment were mixed. While nearly two-thirds expect their child to achieve a college degree or higher, this means more than one-third expect something less. These findings are important to consider in light of research showing that parental expectations for children's educational achievement are highly predictive of children's actual educational outcomes. Therefore, an important facet of this work is working with parents to change their belief systems around their educational aspirations for their children.

Next steps

Overall, the findings indicate that the efforts of NAZ have begun to make an impact Zone-wide in several ways, although there is certainly more work to do. In addition to the opportunities already noted, other findings from the report highlight specific groups of individuals who are faring less well on certain outcomes and might benefit from more targeted efforts. The next follow-up survey with the community is expected to occur in the summer of 2015 (and then every two years subsequently). These findings will be critical for reassessing the progress of the initiative in the Zone and examining longer-term trend data that will inform the work of NAZ in the future.



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