

**DOWNERS GROVE PUBLIC LIBRARY
STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS
TEEN AND TWEEN FOCUS GROUPS
FEBRUARY-MARCH 2017**

Methodology:

We began by analyzing the questions that were asked of the community focus groups and trying to figure out the heart of the questions we were asking the adults. After that, we reworded the questions to become more 'teen friendly' and also cut the questions down to four because of time constraints involved when hosting focus groups at the schools. We then contacted the LRC directors at Herrick and O'Neill Middle Schools, and the head librarians at Downers Grove North and Downers Grove South High Schools to ask if they would be willing to host and publicize the focus groups. The schedules at Herrick and O'Neill allow students a home base, similar to a study hall, which is when we conduct programs and book talks at the middle schools. DGN and DGS do library instruction during this break, which necessitated the use of a written survey that the high school librarians collected.

We went to the middle schools and met with two groups of students at Herrick and four groups of students at O'Neill. The format was similar to the community focus groups, wherein we asked questions of the teens and recorded the answers. Following this, and the collection of the high school surveys, we condensed the responses to identify overall themes. In total, we had 71 participants at Herrick, 47 participants at O'Neill, 25 survey respondents from DGN, and 7 survey respondents from DGS.

Q 1. "What are you worried about?"

The top worries from four different schools could be summed up into the following:

- Issues surrounding school (grades, tests, college acceptance, and how to pay for college)
- Personal relationships (bullying and relationships with friends, family, and significant other)
- The future (global events, the environment, politics, what the economy will look like when it's time for them to get a job)
- Feeling overwhelmed (schoolwork, extracurriculars, personal obligations)

Overall, concern surrounding school issues was overwhelmingly the top response. Teenagers in Downers Grove want to achieve academically and they are worried about the number of 'things' they have to take on in order to succeed or stand out.

Q 2. "What would help solve your worries?"

Taking into consideration the four main worries expressed by teenagers what could help alleviate their worries fits into four categories.

- To combat worries with school, students expressed interest in an extra time and place for students to be able to work collaboratively on projects/homework, or seek out extra assistance on schoolwork.
- To help with their personal relationships, students voiced hopes for peers to intercede when they see bullying either face to face or on social media platforms. They also hoped to see a greater focus on fostering a spirit of empathy in their schools, to make the schools a safer place for all.
- To help set up their community for sustainability in the future, students wanted to be able to volunteer, or to have service projects that they could participate in. Students were especially concerned about the environment and wanted ways they could directly help.
- For their feeling of being overwhelmed, students wanted a space where they could step away from the school environment and have a break. They expressed the desire for longer passing periods in school and extra opportunities for destressing and unwinding.

Q 3. “If anything were possible, what would you want to do/be/learn?”

What Downers Grove teens wanted to do/be/learn fell into three main categories:

- Content creation (including art, creative writing, and the music and movie making process)
- Science/Technology (coding/computer hacking, engineering, medical fields)
- Global experiences (traveling, learning new languages)

Downers Grove teens also expressed an avenue to demonstrate their talents, especially when it comes to artistic talents. They wanted a place that they could have an open mic night, or a gallery showing, or public art that they could contribute to.

Q 4. “What do you like the most about living in Downers Grove? If you could change anything, what would you change?”

What teenagers like/do not like/would change or improve upon in Downers Grove very much mirrors how adults feel. They felt mostly very positive about Downers Grove, and are happy to grow up here. They felt very positive about the following characteristics of Downers Grove:

- It is very safe, peaceful, calm and friendly.
- A few teens specifically mentioned the [Forbes article](#), which names Downers Grove as one of the top friendliest towns in America.

The following are things that teenagers stated they dislike about Downers Grove:

- It is difficult to find places to go/things to do without being able to drive or car access.
- There are not enough classes for students outside of school that are focused on learning new creative skills (art, cooking, writing, learning foreign languages).
- The downtown shops are either too expensive, geared at people much older than them, or uninteresting chains. The teenagers mentioned hating seeing so many empty storefronts (which was something the adults felt as well). They feel like they have to go to Yorktown Mall for any good shopping opportunities.