

## 5. Learning

Learning is a life long process and is a responsibility of the entire community. Young people begin learning well before their formal experience at school, and experience teaches invaluable lessons far beyond the walls of a classroom. This chapter addresses the learning resources at our disposal in Minneapolis, from early childhood learning centers in neighborhoods, to the Minneapolis Public School's community and magnet schools, to private colleges, the state university system and the community college network serving the Twin Cities area. These institutions are highly visible features of daily life in Minneapolis, and offer resources and sites that open up worlds of possibility to students, whatever their stage in life. Other community-based connections have a critical role in serving the needs of all residents. Combined resources allow these institutions to offer greater breadth in programming. Links among public institutions, such as the Library Board, the School Board or the Park Board, develop even stronger ties to the community they serve.

- 5.1 **Minneapolis will support the Minneapolis Public School's efforts to restructure its curriculum and instruction to improve student achievement.**
- 5.2 **Minneapolis will invest human and financial resources in nurturing healthy children and providing them with a safe school environment.**
- 5.3 **Minneapolis will encourage the further development of community connections to public schools.**
- 5.4 **Minneapolis will promote and expand opportunities for adult learning that recognize our diverse communities of interest.**
- 5.5 **Minneapolis will build on the educational activities of colleges, universities and technical schools in the Twin Cities region.**
- 5.6 **Minneapolis will support a strong library system with excellent services, programs and collections to meet a variety of informational and educational needs.**
- 5.7 **Minneapolis will expand access to digital information and communications technology.**
- 5.8 **Minneapolis will encourage the growth of partnerships and learning opportunities that prepare students for the world of work.**

### *introduction*

Learning occurs throughout our lives, but the formal educational process begins with preschool experiences for some children and with kindergarten for most. The formal setting of the classroom builds on these earlier opportunities to acquire basic skills such as language and mathematics, but also gives students a sense of possibilities and choices available to them by building tool-like skills, such as problem-solving, research and the ability to work in teams. The entire learning process is fundamental to a child's grasp of the choices and potential for future success. Yet the actual process of learning does not end on graduation from high school. As we get older, we realize that learning continues elsewhere, in the workplace, the neighborhood center and in community education programs, and also through the use of information technology. New acquaintances, workplaces or friendships encourage us to share knowledge and information in order to support our shared interests and common goals: we both teach and learn from each other. Learning is critical to our experience of the rights and responsibilities associated with civic life. As business firms increasingly find that their most valuable asset is the human capital they employ, they look to continuing education for their workers, both on and off the job, to enhance the value and capacity of their workforce. Access to information networks like the World Wide Web familiarizes people with the technology that is increasingly a part of everyday life and brings an eclectic collection of information within the grasp of a great number of residents. Whatever the source, participating in diverse learning experiences teaches us that learning is the key to a prosperous future.

The demands of work and the amount of complex information encountered in the activities and transactions of everyday life require skills that differ from past requirements. Living wage jobs in all industries and sectors require higher levels of education than in the past. Radical changes to the nature of business activity may result in a number of career shifts for individuals over their lifetimes. In work environments that are perpetually changing, the ability to learn new skills becomes an invaluable asset as workers are expected to adapt quickly and efficiently.

### *learning to learn*

The 1990 Census reported that 26,000 children under the age of 5 years lived in Minneapolis at that time. Ensuring that these children have healthy, stimulating and supportive preschool years is an essential component of preparing children for more formal learning experiences. Early childhood care, library resources, education and nutrition programs are important tools that the city invests in to build a bright future for all children. The city participates in programs with other public agencies such as the Park Board, the Minneapolis Public Schools and Hennepin County that connect families to local resources, offer support services to families with young children and provide educational programs to preschoolers and their parents alike. Other nonprofit and private agencies offer culturally-specific programs for young children and deliver services that respond to special needs within the community.

Minneapolis has an obligation to its future to provide adequate resources that deliver high quality services to children; yet child care for working parents has come under a great deal of pressure as federal welfare reforms expect recipients to enter the work force within two years of receiving limited financial relief. Federal assistance to pay for child care in order to attend work or employment training will be withdrawn under the new welfare reform act. These changes will place additional strain on resources

for child care funding and, until new providers emerge to serve increased demand for child care, waiting lists will continue to be long and the need for child care will not be met. Some of the projected impacts from the changes to welfare programs estimated by Hennepin County include an increase in juvenile delinquency or crime as children are left alone while parents are at work; an increased threat to child and family safety as children are subjected to increased family stress; and increased pressure on nonprofit organizations to help families with child care costs.

Child care services, early childhood learning centers and preschool-oriented programs are thriving in Minneapolis today. With future changes to welfare and an increase in workforce participation, Minneapolis must continue to show the same commitment to childcare and programming it has historically shown in order to realize its goals of remaining a vital, growing and livable city.

### ***early education through high school***

A solid foundation for lifelong learning starts with meeting needs for early childhood learning and with high quality public education. The Minneapolis Public Schools are committed to providing the skills and information that the next generation of citizens will need to maintain the strength and vitality of our community. As the population of the city has changed dramatically over the last three decades, the demographic profile of the Minneapolis Public School student population has also changed radically. Though the city's demographic profile tells us that only seventeen percent of the city's households include children, school enrollment has been increasing steadily. Current enrollment for 1996-1997 is about 46,000 students, and projections reach 50,000 by the year 2000. The ethnic composition of the schools is also changing radically. There have been tremendous changes in school populations in terms of racial/ethnic percentages; over the past 25 years, the student of color population has increased from seventeen percent in 1973 to sixty-three percent in 1994 and is projected to increase to sixty-eight percent by 1998. An increasing number of students do not speak English at home, and as a result are more isolated in their efforts to complete assignments or participate in activities such as parent-teacher interviews. As the Twin Cities area again becomes a destination for immigrants, Minneapolis assumes a large share of both the challenges and opportunities associated with the responsibility to help students and their families in learning a new language in a foreign culture. The steady increases in student population as well as changes in the family and socio-economic status of students attending Minneapolis Public Schools demands a response to the challenge of accommodating growth and change in the student population's ethnic heritage.

### ***creating the best possible learning environment***

With such a wide range of family backgrounds, teachers find that student learning styles differ considerably. Diversifying instructional methods to respond to differences in learning styles is a critical part of this process; one approach does not meet all needs in the classroom. Educational reform underway at the federal, state and school district levels addresses this very important element of the learning experience and also includes a definition of performance standards. Performance standards allow the community the ability to measure academic achievement across the student population. Students must meet district, state and national standards. These standards provide measures and indicators for the community at large, and help to focus efforts at creating the best possible environment for learning, one that is responsive to individual learning differences and challenges.

### ***magnet and community schools***

Just as performance standards and a variety of instructional methods aim to meet different needs within the student population, magnet and community schools provide distinct learning experiences to students. Magnet schools in the Minneapolis Public Schools district match up with business partners to give students a fast track into their chosen career by offering specialized curricula and internship opportunities. They offer a high academic challenge to students and provide critical college preparation to the student population. Community schools function as one of the most important institutions that foster 'stronger and longer' attachments linking students, their families and educators. Broadening the web of support and interest in student achievement at magnet or community-based schools sends a supportive message to students looking for approval and praise in their school careers. The emphasis on achievement and performance encourages students to actively pursue skills and talents and develop new interests in a supportive school environment. (See Map 1.5.1)

#### **5.1 Minneapolis will support the Minneapolis Public School's efforts to restructure its curriculum and instruction to improve student achievement.**

##### **Implementation Steps**

Finalize and maintain school performance standards that ensure students have the skills and knowledge they need to be contributing members of their community.

Provide equity of resources that enable students to achieve goals and acquire new skills.

Work with communities to offer a system of magnet and community-based schools of choice to the student population.

Establish high achievement levels and the practical application of basic skills.

### ***invest in healthy students***

A healthy, safe and nurturing environment at school is a benefit some children may not enjoy in their home or neighborhood. Making sure that school age children are healthy and alert is an important aspect of ensuring that students are ready to learn. School age children spend a critical part of their day under the supervision of school staff. Consequently, student health care, delivered by Health Related Services (HRS) throughout the Minneapolis Public Schools, is targeted to promote and support student achievement, health and well-being. Given that each school site has considerable impact on the health and well-being of the student body, the physical condition and appearance of the buildings and surrounding site have a tremendous impact on children. Many schools and sites require changes to improve their condition and appearance. Specifically, the school sites are being upgraded to meet standards set by fire codes, environmental regulations (e.g. lead and asbestos materials) and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

#### **5.2 Minneapolis will invest human and financial resources in nurturing healthy children and providing them with a safe school environment.**

##### **Implementation Steps**

Support the health of families and children with services provided through a system of year-round, school-based care which includes physical and mental health.

Integrate health screening and preventative care into the school facility.

Maintain the school's role in providing healthy nutritional meals for children, in accordance with the redesign initiative on health care.

Implement the Minneapolis Public School's Master Facilities Plan for upgrading facilities to meet safety and ADA requirements, and deferred maintenance.

Support initiatives that rely on joint efforts to make neighboring areas around schools and walking routes to schools safer and more secure for school children.

Coordinate safety initiatives targeted to school environments.

Respond to, investigate and attempt to resolve student behavior and school security problems and neighborhood complaints.

Direct the Police Department to mitigate juvenile behavior problems by attending school gatherings and making classroom presentations.

*"The lives of students directly affect their ability to learn. The schools alone cannot meet all students' needs. We need a supportive and involved community to improve the social, emotional and physical health, nutrition and financial well-being of the district's students and their families"*

### **connect schools to community resources**

A child's success at learning demands that the community, educators and family members alike focus on the child's total environment. The community's commitment of energy and resources to the learning experience is expressed through all of the "asset-building" activities in which a child is engaged in his or her public and private worlds. After all, a student spends only 8% of his or her lifetime from birth to age 18 in a formal classroom setting. School children attending Minneapolis' public school system arrive each day from a diverse range of family backgrounds. Learning and mastering new skills requires practice, concentration, a sense of achievement and praise. The encouragement and participation of family members and other community leaders shows students the value of succeeding at learning. Whether this support comes in the form of volunteer mentorship programs, daily homework help, community service opportunities or short courses offered by cultural institutions and businesses, these community connections link the learning process to life beyond the classroom. Public institutions such as the Minneapolis Public Libraries, the Parks and Recreation Board and non-profit youth organizations or religious organizations offer learning experiences as part of their normal programming.

### **5.3 Minneapolis will encourage the further development of community connections to public schools.**

#### **Implementation Steps**

Continue to explore solutions to space shortages and an increased student population with local businesses, cultural institutions and other participating organizations.

Continue to expand shared facilities agreements with other public institutions (such as parks and libraries) to maximize the learning resources available to students in their own communities.

Promote public and private programs that reward both employers and participants who participate in non-paid civic and community-based work.

Expand the school day and the school year to provide for extra learning time for students, in conjunction with increased community-based resources for tutoring and teaching experiences.

Work with schools, community organizations and family associations to increase and coordinate volunteer efforts devoted to improving student achievement.

Provide high quality housing of a variety of types and affordability levels at sites close to designated community schools to assist with family and neighborhood stability and strength.

### **adult education**

Education is a continuous process that occurs over the course of our lifetimes. Continuing education can be an opportunity to upgrade or improve skills. Others welcome the opportunity for continuing education as a chance to learn new skills and acquire knowledge about unknown issues or subjects important to them. Occasionally residents experience a need for transitional training that will take them from school to their future careers. A chance to learn beyond the traditional student years offers opportunities for personal enrichment and the possibility of acquiring new skills through community-based initiatives that cater to a wide range of interests.

### **diversity and accessibility in learning experiences**

Many new immigrants arrive in Minneapolis with a language other than English. The difficulties of learning to communicate in an unfamiliar culture with only a rudimentary understanding of the language are very real for many newcomers. Applying for and securing a job are nearly impossible without this kind of assistance. Approximately one-tenth of the students in the Minneapolis Public Schools speak a language other than English at home; for the sake of their families and the future success of these students, English as a Second Language (ESL) programs are an important investment in the work readiness and employability of newcomers to the city. There is a great demand for English as a Second Language (ESL) programs for all age groups.

Making it easier and more accessible for all members of the community to pursue enriched learning and skill building close to home opens up worlds of possibilities. After school, after work and evening classes bring the idea of further training or learning new skills within the reach of residents who may have discarded their desire to enroll in a class for reasons of time, travel and convenience. Minneapolis' public libraries offer creative programs for learning that can be tailored to individual interests and learning styles. As the scope and range of courses available at different institutions and organizations broadens, more doors open to residents, new interests are sparked, and the excitement of embarking on a new course of learning grows. Some of the non-traditional partnerships discussed in this chapter are excellent candidates for these innovative learning experiences. Educational institutions, in the public and private sphere, are resources for the community as a whole, addressing a breadth of interests and fields with excellent facilities and staff resources.

### **5.4 Minneapolis will promote and expand opportunities for adult learning that recognize our diverse communities of interest.**

#### **Implementation Steps**

Provide a range of choices through diverse community education courses.

Support the teaching of English to adults whose primary language is not English.

Maintain the diversity of educational offerings available to residents at educational institutions located in Minneapolis.

Encourage non-profit agencies and other organizations to contribute to community education and enrichment programs.

Promote opportunities for on the job training offered by employers as a means for residents to acquire new skills.

Encourage the development of job readiness skills for adults.

### ***the educational role of post secondary institutions***

Most of the state's best post secondary educational institutions are located within the Twin Cities metropolitan area. Private and public vocational and technical schools offer career programs as well as specific responses to working people's needs for lifelong learning and occupational training. Community colleges throughout the state are taking on increased importance as workforce requirements change. Some of these schools have begun to offer their services to employers interested in providing their employees with on-the-job training. Job seekers look to the colleges for assistance in acquiring marketable technical skills. There are six of these community colleges within the metropolitan area, including the Minneapolis Community College located downtown. The co-location of technical colleges with the community colleges located throughout the metropolitan area provides a flexible learning option to students. Downtown workers and city residents alike are well served by the Minneapolis Community and Technical Colleges on Hennepin Avenue, by Metro State's campus on Hennepin Avenue and the University of Saint Thomas on LaSalle at 10th Street.

The state's university system evolved from the creation of teacher training institutions established in the mid 19th century. From an early focus on teachers' colleges, the state university system was expanded first in the 1940s and later in the 1970s to offer general post secondary education and training and then 'alternative educational forms'. The creation of Metro State University, aimed primarily at mid-career adults, responded to this demand for alternative education venues. With a downtown campus in Minneapolis and another site in Saint Paul, it acts as a valuable resource for working people returning to school as well as full-time students in both central cities.

The University of Minnesota was established as a land grant institution by the territorial legislature in 1851. Its mission emphasizes research, graduate education, and professional training "to serve agriculture, the mechanic arts and industries of the state." Today, the University offers graduate and undergraduate degrees in over 200 fields to more than 40,000 students throughout the state. The university is recognized nationally for its work in agricultural research and development, medicine and science, and technology. It produces almost half of the state's doctors and most of its engineers and scientists among its 400,000 awarded degrees. Connections to the community are an important aspect of the University of Minnesota's profile as a land grant institution. As the University increases its involvement in community development initiatives, it will expand the connections that link the institution to the community at large, sharing expertise, research and innovation with Minneapolis.

Private colleges in the metropolitan area coordinate their programs under the auspices of the Associated Colleges of the Twin Cities. Within the boundaries of Minneapolis and Saint Paul, private undergraduate and graduate programs are available at no fewer than five institutions. Macalester College in Saint Paul, the University of Saint Thomas in Saint Paul (with a major downtown campus located in Minneapolis), the College of Saint Catherine in Minneapolis and Saint Paul, the College of Saint Mary's in Minneapolis, Concordia College in Saint Paul, Hamline University in Saint Paul and Augsburg College in Minneapolis plan programs together to avoid duplication and allow students registered at any

sister institution to enroll in classes held at another campus. Inter-loan library programs sponsored by these colleges offer a vast world of research material to students and faculty at any of the participating institutions.

Residents of Minneapolis have invaluable educational resources at their fingertips. The state has demonstrated its leadership in investing in education, and Minneapolis is committed to maintaining the city's prominence in housing the broadest range of educational institutions residing in the state. Continuing and furthering the educational choices available to residents is a priority for the future growth and prosperity of this community.

### **5.5 Minneapolis will build on the educational activities of colleges, universities and technical schools in the Twin Cities region.**

#### **Implementation Steps**

Encourage technology transfer from colleges and universities into the marketplace.

Foster outreach efforts to engage universities and other educational institutions in community planning and development activities.

Maintain links to businesses in order to best identify skills and information taught at technical institutions that have practical application and demand in the employment market.

### ***community resources***

Expanding and improving the library system, another essential community resource, connects city residents to learning opportunities in familiar, close-to-home environments. One of the library's key missions is to provide lifelong learning opportunities to all residents of the community by ensuring access to information. The diversity and accessibility of its material and human resources make the library a cornerstone of community activity throughout the city. The network of libraries functions as a pivotal information, education, and cultural resource for people in the community.

### ***library services and programs***

Residents use library services differently according to their specific informational needs and the nature of their search. For example, a family may use the local branch library for activities such as story-telling, or to borrow a copy of the latest best seller, or to find good resources for an older child's research project. The central library provides unique resources unmatched elsewhere in the state, including extensive business materials to help job seekers or entrepreneurs looking for very specific data. Library collections accessible to borrowers provide information in the form of books and printed material, electronic information and other treasures, such as rare books, historical manuscripts, music and audio-visual materials. The possibilities for lifelong, independent learning at Minneapolis' public libraries are endless.

### ***offering library services that respond to resident interests***

Some neighborhood libraries act as centers for other learning activities beyond book borrowing or research. For example, the Franklin Learning Center at Franklin Library offers literacy training and instruction in English as a Second Language. Both Franklin and Hosmer Libraries house computer learning centers where residents can get free skills training. Several neighborhood libraries also provide tutors for after-school homework help for neighborhood children in a safe, supportive environment. Developing links such as these to the community is key to the future of the libraries. Residents want to see publicly funded

services meet their needs, on schedules and timetables that make sense in their lives. Sharing facilities and resources to preserve the integrity of library materials while increasing residents' accessibility to these materials is crucial to providing the public goods and services that Minneapolis prides itself on, in the form of schools, parks and libraries.

Making sure that people are able to use the library, whatever their needs, must be enhanced by efforts to bring resource materials to residents, particularly residents who do not have a library easily accessible to their homes. Mobile lending programs will reach under-served areas or less active populations as part of library programming strategy. The "bookmobile" program, the volunteer book delivery service for people with limited mobility, adaptive equipment and other services or library products for people with disabilities, and the upgrading of library facilities to meet ADA standards, will further improve accessibility to the library system in the future.

**information technology and the libraries**

New communications technology allows libraries to better connect users with different branches and services of the library system. Upgrading of the library's computer networks will allow for access to global information services such as the World Wide Web and other communications technology. As technology becomes more and more present in our daily lives, residents need to feel capable and comfortable with these information tools. The dream of a computer with Internet connections in every home is a very real one as the computer industry continues to experience steady change. Just as important, though, is an effort to provide accessible opportunities to access this technology in public institutions. Libraries provide one of the most important access points for this increasingly common technology.

**5.6 Minneapolis will support a strong library system with excellent services, programs and collections to meet a variety of informational and educational needs.**

**Implementation Steps**

- Provide a downtown central library that has excellent transportation linkages, state of the art access to information technology and learning spaces for both youth and adults.
- Secure new funding sources to augment basic, tax supported library service.
- Improve physical access to library services through the bookmobile program, adaptive equipment such as voice recognition and print enlargement and ADA upgrades for city libraries.
- Ensure that library facilities contribute to the civic pride of Minneapolis, preserve their historical integrity and are designed to be a community focus for education, information and culture.
- Design services and programs in response to needs resulting from demographic and societal changes in Minneapolis.
- Remodel, expand or replace community libraries for functionality and space to meet neighborhoods' library service needs.

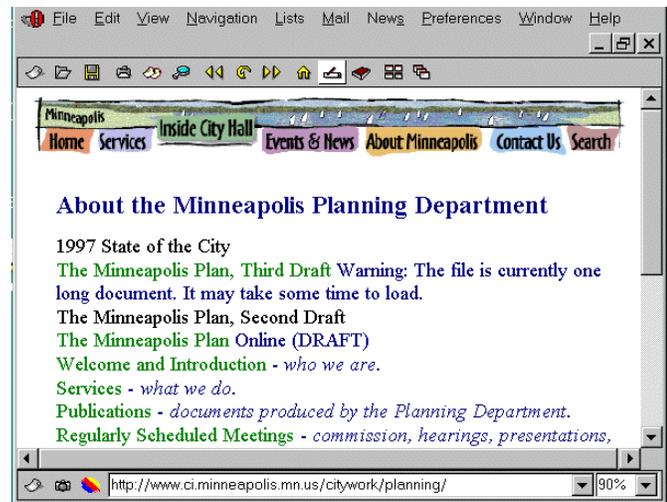
Radical changes in technology have created new learning opportunities through the World Wide Web and other electronic communication networks. The World Wide Web makes a vast quantity of information easily accessible to users without extensive computer skills. Access to the World Wide Web and other electronic information answers residents' interests in learning about issues and research topics close to their heart. Although some optimists have expressed their confidence that every house in the nation will someday be linked to this global information 'network,' the City of Minneapolis will continue to invest in

improvements and extensions to the electronic links provided in our public learning facilities to ensure equal access for all. Other communities across the country have seized on the idea of electronic access to these networks by creating 'e-villages' and information hubs in public facilities. These e-villages have involved extending and reallocating staff hours to monitor the facilities and assist residents in their efforts to connect to the networks. Some communities have established 'navigator services,' offering introductory orientation sessions on exploring the Web as part of community-based recreational and educational programming. Minneapolis' public libraries provide free World Wide Web access and tutoring sessions to help people learn to maneuver their way through this new world of information. Our citizens should have accessible opportunities to connect to the world of information that hovers on the other side of the electronic link to the Internet.

**5.7 Minneapolis will expand access to digital information and communications technology.**

**Implementation Steps**

- Electronically link schools, libraries and community centers into telecommunications and informational infrastructure.
- Continue to place public information generated by city agencies on the World Wide Web.
- Support libraries as the focal and most public service location for local, regional and worldwide digital information for the community.



E-mail addresses / web sites

municipal information library  
LIB @ MTN . org

city of Minneapolis home page  
HTTP : \ \ www . ci . mpl . MN . US

Public Affairs Office  
OPR \_ MPLS @ ci . minneapolis . MN . US

Hennepin County's Home Page on the Web  
HTTP : \ \ www . co . Hennepin . MN . US \ Welcome . html

**learning partnerships**

As the city grows and changes, public institutions and private as well as not-for-profit partners must work together to maintain the high quality and diversity of programs and facilities that respond

to residents' educational needs and interests. Traditional services and programs such as the library and the public schools have much to contribute to residents' learning opportunities, but there is also an undeniable need to foster a sense of participation and commitment to community-based activities among businesses and non-profit organizations. There are a number of examples of corporations and non-profit agencies running successful educational and mentorship programs, whether for training, vocational skills or volunteer service. The Boys and Girls Club of Minneapolis has worked with the Minneapolis Park Board and the Phelps Programming Collaborative to create a community center in South Minneapolis that offers classes, recreational opportunities and learning experiences for youth, and also opens its doors to people of all ages. The new facility is a wonderful example of the kinds of partnerships that can work together to provide the backbone of a strong, vital community.

Preparing students for the world of work involves teaching them not just the basic skills of language or mathematics. Success lies in developing an ability to solve problems, do research, interact with others in all kinds of work environments, work together, and organize time and resources effectively. Many of these skills are being taught in the public schools, as educational reform (curriculum development and changes in instructional methods) which strengthen the link between what students are taught and how they apply that knowledge. Business and educational institutions have developed mentorship and 'job-shadowing' programs that offer youth a real life glimpse into the world of work. Links between youth organizations, schools and businesses both small and large, provide unique opportunities for growth, personal development and the building of dreams. They enrich the community, fulfill businesses' search for capable, skilled workers and dispel the mystery of careers and work for many city residents. Non-profit organizations and the foundation community have become more involved with facilitating these kinds of experiences. The contributions these organizations make will continue to be promoted and encouraged, as they are incorporated into the world of work and learning for many residents.

### **5.8 Minneapolis will encourage the growth of partnerships and learning opportunities that prepare students for the world of work.**

#### **Implementation Steps**

Assist new and support existing businesses that sponsor skill-building experiences in city neighborhoods.

Support and expand existing mentorship programs that increase participation and experiential/environmental learning opportunities.

Continue to connect schools with business partners where educational curriculum and training overlap with business activities.

Create more opportunities for youth to work, apprentice and otherwise experience a local business' operations through small business 'shadowing' programs.

Require that students develop problem-solving and research skills, the ability to work independently and the capacity to be a productive team participant.

Continue to work with a wide range of business and educational organizations to develop student skills and expand experiences they need to become contributing members of the community.

### ***putting it together***

The diversity and density of residents living in the city promises the opportunity for new discoveries and the possibility of learning from a wide range of resources within the community. Improving the quality, access and type of lifelong learning experiences

residents have is the best long-term investment we can make as a community in our quality of life. Informed, educated residents respect the differences and build on the common interests they share with their neighbors. A more educated and skilled workforce earns higher wages in their chosen field.

Providing an environment where learning and education are highly respected and appreciated is the responsibility of the entire community. Each individual's actions, as a student or a teacher, contributes to a shared sense of interest and commitment to understanding and accommodating change. Learning is more than reading and writing, and takes place even beyond the walls of a classroom. Learning is a community-wide responsibility. Its success relies on partnerships and involvement among a variety of participants in order to be truly successful at providing all residents with 'lifelong learning' experiences.