



Report for Vertical Vision Flight Academy at KDSM

Region: Awards Consideration (includes report card)

Below is a summary of scores and feedback from all the usable evaluations which were submitted for you during the 2026 Flight Training Experience Award application period. Many flight training providers receive exceptionally high scores so we also share with you the distribution of the overall aggregate scores for comparison.

1. Eligibility

To be eligible for an award, you needed to receive at least 10 unique evaluations, each at least 80% complete.

A survey response was considered 'usable' if the respondent answered at least 80% of the questions required for scoring.

A Flight School was considered 'eligible' for an award if they received at least 10 unique, usable responses.

Average scores were based on all usable responses received and have been rounded where necessary

Your percentile rank was calculated by comparing your score to scores of all other(nominated/eligible) Flight Schools

Percentile ranks were calculated at both national and regional levels and may have been rounded.

Your performance (percentile rank) compared to all other eligible Flight Schools in your region was one of many factors that informed award decisions.

You received 15 evaluations.

2. Free Responses

At the end of each evaluation, we ask the following open-ended question:

Why should or shouldn't your school win a Flight Training Experience Award?

3. Individual Overall Scores & Responses

Total Score	Student Review
82.00	I've been a student here for just over a year. Throughout that time I've gone from a student pilot all the way to a commercial pilot about to complete my flight instructor rating. In that time I've had countless positive experiences not only with the flight instructors at Vertical Vision, but also the administrative staff. Not only is the school serving students, but they are also serving the local community of Des Moines in the local food pantry and many other ways. I look back very fondly on my flight training, as well as the opportunities I've had thanks to Vertical Vision. While I could write all day about positive things to say about Vertical Vision, simply put they deserve this award as well as many more.
88.00	This flight school has been nothing short of amazing. The instructors and staff went above and beyond every step of the way, helping me complete all of my ratings and build the confidence I needed as a pilot. Their dedication and support were so impactful that I now have the honor of teaching here myself. The school has a fleet of new, well-maintained airplanes and a fantastic simulator that makes training both realistic and enjoyable. From the quality of the equipment to the people who make it all happen, they truly set the standard for what a flight school should be. I believe this school deserves this award because they don't just train pilots — they build a community and invest in every student's success. They go above and beyond, and I couldn't imagine learning to fly anywhere else.

90.00	This flight school should receive a training experience reward because they really care about their students. They have build their program around the feedback of their students and the experience of their staff. They care about making good pilots and not just checkride pilots while also not breaking the bank.
90.00	As the Airport Manager at Perry Municipal Airport, I had the privilege of watching Vertical Vision Flight Academy grow into one of the most professional and community-focused training organizations on our field. They've set a new standard for excellence in flight training combining a modern fleet, a dedicated team of instructors, and a structured curriculum that produces safe, competent, and career-ready pilots. Beyond their operational excellence, what stands out most is their culture. Vertical Vision consistently gives back to the community, supports local events, and fosters inclusive learning environment that inspires future aviators. Their commitment to safety, education, and student success makes them truly deserving of a Flight Training Experience Award.
84.00	The flight instructors and the staff at Vertical Vision have been super helpful in my aviation journey. They care, truly, and passionately, they only want the best for their students. They check up on me throughout my journey, asking for feedback from me. The communication and safety aspect has been nothing but incredible. I have never felt unsafe in an airplane, or with an instructor. Every aspect has given me confidence in my training. All flight schools are similar in my eyes, but Vertical Vision does it the best.
90.00	When I think about why Vertical Vision Flight Academy deserves the AOPA Best Flight School Award, it comes down to one thing: this place is changing lives. From the very beginning, Vertical Vision made me feel like more than just a student—they made me feel like a pilot in training with a real future in aviation. The instructors here don't just teach to a syllabus; they invest in us. They know our names, our goals, and they work tirelessly to help us succeed. Whether it's staying late to answer questions, breaking down complex concepts in a way that finally makes sense, or encouraging us when we doubt ourselves, they always go above and beyond. The opportunities we get here are unbelievable. I've been able to fly into Oshkosh during the world's busiest air traffic event, take part in cross-country trips that stretched hundreds of miles, and even join airshow flights. Those experiences gave me real-world confidence and memories that I'll carry forever. Not every school gives students the chance to fly advanced aircraft with modern avionics and autopilot, but Vertical Vision does—and they do it while keeping training affordable. More than anything, Vertical Vision feels like a community. Study nights, group events, and the friendships I've built with other students and instructors make this school feel like a family. Everyone pushes each other to grow, and we celebrate each other's milestones together. I know that I'm not just learning to pass a checkride here—I'm learning to become the best and safest pilot I can be. That's why I believe Vertical Vision Flight Academy deserves to be recognized as the best flight school. They've changed the way I see aviation, and they've changed the way I see myself.
89.00	I was referred to Vertical Vision by a friend and I am EXTREMELY grateful that I was. This is a first class organization and it's not a handful of corporate pilots that will try to fit you in on their time. They are here to teach you to fly. Full stop. More importantly, in the months that I had been with them (I now have my PPL), I did not encounter a single instructor who didn't have the heart of a teacher. They are highly selective in the CFIs they bring on board to teach and you can tell. I trained with Felipe Amaya and could not have asked for a better instructor. Omer, my ground instructor and now the chief pilot, is extraordinarily generous in taking the time to share all the knowledge he can with his students. He and the rest of the staff are there to send proficient pilots out into the world of aviation. Vertical Vision is run with a family atmosphere and they work to make sure you're comfortable and will not leave a single question unanswered. I would write three more paragraphs but I will say that you won't find a better flight school in DSM. Very new equipment and aircraft. You'll be learning to fly in the modern era with glass panels and also have the option to learn on a traditional 6 pack so you're a well-rounded pilot. They're extremely serious about making you a smart, SAFE, complete pilot. I loved training there.
84.00	I highly recommend Vertical Vision as a flight school. The instructors are top-notch. A great feature of the program is that it has a great blend of new aircraft with up-to-date avionics and 6-pack training so you can be proficient at both. They also provide in-person ground classes with knowledgeable instructors and small class sizes, which is perfect for acquiring the ground knowledge that you need for your checkrides!
86.00	This School is set apart for one reason above the other's I've seen. They care. The instructors care about their student's success and safety every time. When students fail at something the school's instructors will work for a solution. If we don't understand something they will take the time to explain it. This school is more than about making money. It's about teaching pilots to be the best they can be and that learning from mistakes is the best way.
80.00	Vertical Visions deserves this award because they bridge a gap in Aerospace training. The crew of teaching staff make flying approachable and are excellent resources to help future pilots get on the right tracks for their hobbies or careers.

89.00	We offer a great fleet of airplanes for training and a experienced staff to propel students into their careers
90.00	I've checked out numerous schools over the years, but none come close to the experience I had at this one—hands-down the best decision I ever made for my pilot certificate. From the moment I walked into their brand-new dedicated hangar tucked right on the Charlie ramp at Des Moines International (KDSM), I knew this wasn't your average strip-mall option. The facility is spotless, the line crew is sharp, and the location means you're rolling out under a Class C veil with real ATC interaction on every lesson—zero wasted time taxiing across nowhere doing nothing but burning dollars. The fleet is a dream. Their Piper Archers are pristine, late-model airframes fitted with Garmin G1000 glass cockpits that make transitions to modern airliners a breeze. If you still want steam-gauge fundamentals, they keep a perfectly maintained six-pack Archer on the line. Need complex time? Their high-performance bird (think 200+ hp and constant-speed prop) is available the moment you're signed off. And for the gadget lovers, the G3X Touch-equipped training options are buttery smooth—large displays, synthetic vision, and autopilot that actually teaches you to use it properly rather than babysit you. The structured curriculum is where they really separate themselves. Every phase has crystal-clear checkpoints and stage checks, so you're never wondering "how much is this going to cost?" or "when do I solo?" The syllabus is built to keep the meter from spinning unnecessarily—with total costs coming in well under what I see other people stuck paying elsewhere despite what an hourly rate might suggest. Instruction is world-class. The roster of instructors is increasingly home-grown output from their own curriculum with a smattering of others from other world-class schools elsewhere in the globe. They pair you strategically and rotate you when it makes sense so you're never stuck in one mindset. The full-motion Redbird simulator is the secret weapon. It's certified by the FAA as an Advanced Aviation Training Device and has wrap-around visuals, real G1000 replication, and the motion base actually cues you into seat-of-the-pants feel that static sims can't. From IFR procedures, emergency scenarios, landing and pattern practice...even engine-out practice over the Rockies—and the FAA allows a bunch of this time to go towards my ratings. It saves hundreds in aircraft rental while letting people nail their checkride approaches long before real IMC is ever experienced. Bottom line: if you're serious about flying and you're anywhere near Iowa, do yourself a favor and train here. Modern fleet, bulletproof curriculum, top-tier instructors, and a simulator that pays for itself tenfold—all in a shiny new hangar with jets whistling overhead. Five stars isn't enough.
86.00	They offer many different experiences like fly in breakfast and community events. I personally got to go to EAA Airventure and got the chance to pick up an airplane with an instructor. They also are constantly taking student feedback to consistently make their program better for their students so that way student get the best training experience possible.
84.00	Admin at this facility seems to be making a concerted effort to develop a professional, dedicated aviation academy. They've put significant effort into developing in-house curriculum, building a brand new facility, purchasing new aircraft with advanced avionics, and increasing the standards and consistency of training, hiring, etc. I've been with them since it was transferred into new ownership, and although we have experienced some growing pains, they have a clear vision for a path to excellence and they're actively working to execute it. The Chief CFI is an exceptional gentleman, and I see him working relentlessly on a daily basis. The admins are great guys too, and have been very accommodating and helpful as I've progressed from a PPL applicant with zero hours, all the way through instrument, commercial, and CFI.
90.00	Vertical Vision Flight Academy deserves the Flight Training Experience Award for its professionalism, safety, and student success. Led by dedicated instructors, the school maintains high FAA standards with a structured, supportive environment. Its detailed lesson plans, mentorship, and modern resources build confident, skilled aviators. Vertical Vision embodies excellence, discipline, and passion for aviation training.

4. Aggregate Overall Score (Range: 0 to 100)

This is the overall score you received from your customers in the 2026 Flight Training Experience Award application period:

Your Score: 87

4.1 Compared to All Nominees (those with at least 1 evaluation)

National Average: 87

Your national percentile ranking: 60%

Regional Average: 87

Your regional percentile ranking: 60%

4.2 Compared to All Eligible Nominees (those with at least 10 evaluations)

National Average: 87

Your national percentile ranking: 62%

Regional Average: 87

Your regional percentile ranking: 62%

5. SubScore Summary for Vertical Vision Flight Academy at KDSM

Region: Awards Consideration (includes report card)

The remaining sections summarize your individual subscores (range: 0 to 100) as they apply to each of the four areas from our Flight Training Experience Research: Educational Quality, Customer Focus, Community, and Information Sharing. You will also find national and regional averages, for benchmarking.

Subscore Summary:

	Your Score	National Avg
Educational Quality	98	79
Customer Focus	98	78
Community	98	78
Information Sharing	91	74
NetPromoter Score	94	95
Overall Total	87	70

6. Educational Quality Scale (Range: 0 to 100)

This is the score you received from your customers, derived solely from the questions related to Educational Quality; offering effective training from professional instructors who are dedicated to students' success

Your Score: 98

6.1 Compared to All Nominees (those with at least 1 evaluation)

National Average: 79

Your national percentile ranking: 95%

Regional Average: 79

Your regional percentile ranking: 95%

6.2 Compared to All Eligible Nominees (those with at least 10 evaluations)

National Average: 81

Your national percentile ranking: 96%

Regional Average: 81

Your regional percentile ranking: 96%

6.3 Responses per Question

My school consistently used a training syllabus that I could consult.

Response Choice	Frequency	%
Strongly Agree	12	80%
Somewhat Agree	3	20%

My school helped me find an instructor who considered my personal strengths and weaknesses when creating lesson plans.

Response Choice	Frequency	%
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Strongly Agree	15	100%
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My school promotes a culture of safety.

Response Choice	Frequency	%
Strongly Agree	15	100%

My instructor at my school regularly suggested what I should study before arriving at the airport for a lesson.

Response Choice	Frequency	%
Strongly Agree	12	80%
Somewhat Agree	3	20%

7. Customer Focus Scale (Range: 0 to 100)

This is the score you received from your customers, derived solely from the questions related to Customer Focus; adding value by demonstrating professionalism and engagement with students

Your Score: 98

7.1 Compared to All Nominees (those with at least 1 evaluation)

National Average: 78

Your national percentile ranking: 96%

Regional Average: 78

Your regional percentile ranking: 96%

7.2 Compared to All Eligible Nominees (those with at least 10 evaluations)

National Average: 79

Your national percentile ranking: 96%

Regional Average: 79

Your regional percentile ranking: 96%

7.3 Responses per Question

Instructors at my school were never available to answer questions outside of formal lessons.

Response Choice	Frequency	%
Somewhat Disagree	1	6.67%
Strongly Disagree	14	93.33%

I found it easy to reschedule lessons at my school when there were issues, like maintenance or weather.

Response Choice	Frequency	%
Strongly Agree	14	93.33%
Somewhat Agree	1	6.67%

Staff at my school always treated me with respect.

Response Choice	Frequency	%
Strongly Agree	15	100%

Sometimes I wish I had chosen a different flight school.

Response Choice	Frequency	%
Neither agree nor disagree	1	6.67%
Somewhat Disagree	2	13.33%
Strongly Disagree	12	80%

8. Community Focus Scale (Range: 0 to 100)

This is the score you received from your customers, derived solely from the questions related to Community; emphasizing social connections and accomplishments.

Your Score: 98

8.1 Compared to All Nominees (those with at least 1 evaluation)

National Average:	78
Your national percentile ranking:	97%
Regional Average:	78
Your regional percentile ranking:	97%

8.2 Compared to All Eligible Nominees (those with at least 10 evaluations)

National Average:	79
Your national percentile ranking:	99%
Regional Average:	79
Your regional percentile ranking:	99%

8.3 Responses per Question

After training at my school, I feel like a member of the general aviation community.

Response Choice	Frequency	%
Strongly Agree	12	80%
Somewhat Agree	3	20%

Sometimes I felt as if I didn't belong at my school.

Response Choice	Frequency	%
Somewhat Disagree	1	6.67%

Strongly Disagree	14	93.33%
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My school provided adequate opportunities to meet students, new pilots, and members of the local aviation community

Response Choice	Frequency	%
Strongly Agree	13	86.67%
Somewhat Agree	2	13.33%

I received regular positive encouragement that made me want to come back for my next lesson at my school.

Response Choice	Frequency	%
Strongly Agree	15	100%

9. Information Sharing Scale (Range: 0 to 100)

This is the score you received from your customers, derived solely from the questions related to Information Sharing; educating and empowering students to make informed decisions about flight training investments.

Your Score: 91

9.1 Compared to All Nominees (those with at least 1 evaluation)

National Average:	74
Your national percentile ranking:	93%
Regional Average:	74
Your regional percentile ranking:	93%

9.2 Compared to All Eligible Nominees (those with at least 10 evaluations)

National Average:	76
Your national percentile ranking:	94%
Regional Average:	76
Your regional percentile ranking:	94%

9.3 Responses per Question

I always understood the steps required to reach my flight training goals at my school.

Response Choice	Frequency	%
Strongly Agree	13	86.67%
Somewhat Agree	2	13.33%

My flight training at my school has required more time and/or money than I expected.

Response Choice	Frequency	%
Strongly Agree	1	6.67%

Somewhat Agree	5	33.33%
Neither agree nor disagree	1	6.67%
Somewhat Disagree	2	13.33%
Strongly Disagree	6	40%

My school readily shares information about student success rates (e.g. passing FAA checkride).

Response Choice	Frequency	%
Strongly Agree	12	80%
Somewhat Agree	3	20%

I was shown where I could find additional resources, like study guides or practice exams, to supplement my studies in anticipation of written or practical exams.

Response Choice	Frequency	%
Strongly Agree	15	100%

10.Net Promoter Score

10.1 Questionnaire Responses

The Net Promoter Score is generated by asking customers how likely they would be to recommend a given product or service - in this case, your services as a flight instructor to another potential customer, on an 11 point scale.

How likely are you to recommend your CFI to someone interested in flight training?

Response Choice	Frequency	%
10	14	93.33%
8	1	6.67%

10.2 NPS Grouping

Responses to this question are then used to sort customers into one of three groups:

Detractor: Less likely to use your services again and may not speak highly of your services to others.

Passive: Generally somewhat satisfied, passive respondents likely won't help or hurt your business in talking to other people.

Promoters: Ideally, all of your customers would be promoters. Promoters would fly with you again in the future and would tell others how great they think you are.

Response Choice	Frequency	%
Promoter	14	93.33%
Passive	1	6.67%

10.3 Standardized Score Calculation

The overall Net Promoter Score is calculated by subtracting the percentage of your customers who are 'detractors' from the percentage of your customers you are 'promoters.' Thus, the overall Net Promoter Score can range from - 100 to 100.

For more information on the Net Promoter Score and how to interpret it, check out: <https://www.medallia.com/net-promoter-score>

Your Score: 94

10.3.1 Compared to All Nominees (those with at least 1 evaluation)

National Average: 95

Your national percentile ranking: 30%

Regional Average: 95

Your regional percentile ranking: 30%

10.3.2 Compared to All Eligible Nominees (those with at least 10 evaluations)

National Average: 96

Your national percentile ranking: 33%

Regional Average: 96

Your regional percentile ranking: 33%