



# 2018-19 Program Evaluation

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WASHOE COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT

Evaluation Summary

WCSD | DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS

## Acknowledgments

Parent University is a program of Washoe County School District's Department of Family-School Partnerships. It is planned and implemented by the Department staff, and made possible by generous donations and supported with the help of numerous individuals and community organizations.



Community Services Agency–Head Start  
Cooperative Extension–University of Nevada, Reno (UNR)  
Department of Assessment  
Department of Child & Family Services  
Department of Counseling Services  
Department of Curriculum & Instruction  
Department of English Language Learners & World Languages  
Department of Gifted and Talented  
Department of Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) and Social Emotional Learning (SEL)  
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University of Nevada, Reno - College of Education  
Volunteer Services  
Washoe County Library System



“Es la primera vez y me gustó pues me hace sentir importante para la escuela.”

“This is the first time I came [to a Parent University Workshop], and I liked it because it makes me feel that the school cares about me.”



*Comment from a Parent University Participant Survey*

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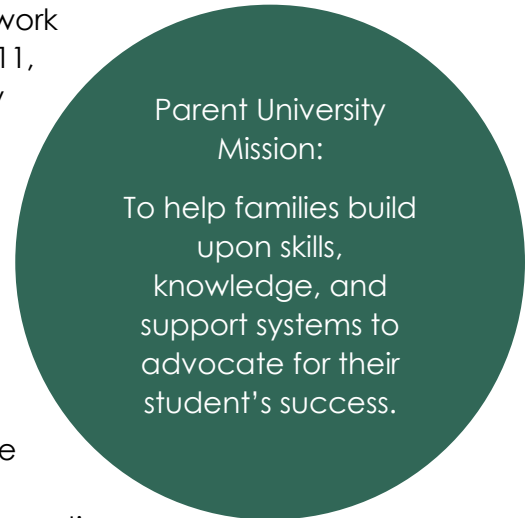


## Executive Summary

Parent University is designed to help families and schools work together toward student success. Since its inception in 2011, the program has cumulatively reached over 35,000 family members, delivering workshops and other learning sessions that help families navigate school systems and connect home and school learning environments.<sup>1</sup>

In the 2018-19 school year Parent University continued its work directly with families, and also worked intentionally with teachers and staff, helping to build the capacity of schools to communicate and connect with families.

Program evaluation provides information to summarize the year, and, to help guide continuous improvement. This document summarizes the results of several sources of information, including program records and participant surveys.



## Evaluation Results

In 2018-19, Parent University was successful in reaching program participation goals. Families that participated reported program quality as above average or outstanding, family members noted increased knowledge, awareness, and confidence as a result of their participation.

### Measures of Program Reach

- ✓ 237 classes sessions offered
- ✓ 3,537 individual participants (177% of goal)
- ✓ 4,426 total participants (105% of goal)
- ✓ 2,303 participant surveys collected
- ✓ 2,740 students reached through family engagement, across 106 schools

### Measures of Program Quality

- ✓ 94% of participants rated the workshop quality as outstanding or above average
- ✓ 93% rated usefulness as outstanding or above average
- ✓ 93% reported that they would recommend Parent University to a friend or family member
- ✓ Participants increased in knowledge, awareness, and confidence as a result of Parent University
- ✓ The majority of respondents provided positive, open-ended comments to surveys
- ✓ Comments to improve Parent University were also offered as suggestions

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<sup>1</sup> Includes duplication / total people served.

## Introduction

Family engagement matters. In nearly 50 years of research, the importance of parent and family involvement in student achievement has been demonstrated and upheld. Published studies provide evidence that family engagement is an important component for students, schools, and districts to reach shared goals. This research is used by information to guide and refine approaches for Family Engagement. Parent University uses peer-reviewed information to both guide program planning and to help shape program evaluation. Several studies that have helped to inform the program are highlighted here:

- **Family Engagement is Effective.** In a review of 51 studies, scholars at the Southwest Education Development Laboratory (SEDL) found that students with involved parents--regardless of income or background--were more likely to earn higher grades and have higher test scores, have better attendance, behave better at school, and were more likely to graduate and go on to post-secondary school (Dervarics & O'Brien, 2011).
- **Family Engagement Is Cost Effective.** It is estimated that schools would need to spend "\$1,000 more per pupil to reap the same gains in student achievement that an involved parent brings" (Westmorland, Rosenberg, Lopez, & Weiss, 2009). Strategies that can help involve parents, and other caregivers are likely to be worth the investment.
- **The Approach for Family Engagement Makes a Difference.** Research continues to suggest and refine methods to deepen and enhance families' engagement to help their children reach educational goals. For example,
  - Research supports that the most powerful interventions most strongly linked to student achievement are those that engage families in supporting their children's learning at home (Dervarics & O'Brien, 2011)."
  - Studies of family engagement emphasize the importance of trust between families and schools. Family engagement strategies should also link to student learning and consider the context, including preferences and concerns of the specific families, school personnel, and neighborhood.
  - The Dual Capacity Framework (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013) emphasizes the importance of building capacity not only of families but of schools. This framework has been used to enhance the impact of Parent University. Family-School Partnerships have effective when they are:?

### **Process Conditions for Family Engagement, Adapted from the Dual Capacity Framework for Family-School Partnerships**

- Relational: built on mutual trust
- Linked to learning and development
- Asset-based
- Culturally responsive and respectful
- Collaborative
- Interactive



Strategies build the capacity of both staff and families in four areas (the "4 Cs"):

- Capabilities (Knowledge and Skills)
- Connections (Networks)
- Cognitions (Beliefs, Values)
- Confidence (Self-Efficacy)

## Background and Context for Parent University

WCSD had an enrollment of an estimated 64,574 students in 2018-19, enrolled across 62 elementary schools 14 middle schools, 14 comprehensive high schools, and 8 charter schools.<sup>3</sup>

For more than a decade, Washoe County School District has been working to improve graduation rates and other educational outcomes, using data to help drive decisions and resource programs and practices that can help more people, especially those who may be underserved through current systems, to reach their educational goals. In 2018-19, WCSD's graduation rate improved, but there are still inequitable outcomes across race, ethnicity, and other factors.

Parent University was envisioned, planned, and implemented in 2011 as a pathway to family engagement, intentionally and systematically providing information to help families navigate school systems and support academic learning outside of the classroom. Through the support of the District, qualified staff, and outside investment, Parent University has completed its eighth year. The WCSD Department of Family-School Partnerships leads planning and implementation of Parent University.

Parent University is founded on the understanding that all families want their children to be successful. However, families need support to develop the knowledge and skills (capabilities), connections (networks), beliefs and values (cognitions), or confidence (self-efficacy) to support their children in reaching their academic potential. One of the strategies includes working to reduce barriers to participation, for example offering sessions at a wide range of times that work with family schedules, providing childcare, and ensuring interpretation and translation at each session. The program, while open to all, has used strategies to connect with families that need may need the most help. Through WCSD's Parent University, Department staff work with schools and other partners to build knowledge and skills of parents and other caring adults in the child's life.

## Program Highlights

Parent University is funded through a combination of public and private funding, with partners helping to expand the reach and impact of programming. Each year, program staff identify opportunities for improvement using the resources available. In 2018-19 several programs and partnerships were developed and were highlighted here.



### Family Literacy Clubs

Washoe County School District's Parent University is working diligently to align resources and supports for SB 391, Nevada's Read by Grade 3 Act. The Grade-level Reading Coalition of Northern Nevada is a key partner with Parent University to disseminate information about the opportunities provided to build families' capacity around early literacy practices. One of the practices is Family

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<sup>3</sup> Additionally, Parent University had 4 alternative schools 1 school for medically fragile students, and one adult achievement school in 2018-19.

Literacy Clubs. They are a highly effective model to build the capacity of families to support their children with literacy at home. Family Literacy Clubs provide families with opportunities to learn about the progress of their child in literacy by diving deeper into the five parts of literacy. Families learn literacy tips and games; receive free books and supplies at every session, and much more! As part of the Family Literacy Club, families also have the opportunity to participate in a family-friendly field trip to a Washoe County Library. During the field trip families participated in a tour, have an opportunity to sign up for a library card, and learn how to utilize the many resources available at the library. Parent U supported fourteen teachers to implement four-week Family Literacy Clubs with their own families in their classrooms at their school site. The Family Literacy Club ended with a family field trip to a local Washoe County Library.



### Chart the Course

Continuing the vision of Family Access Days, Parent University collaborated with the Counseling Department and the Career & Technical Education (CTE) Department, Truckee Meadows Community College (TMCC) and University of Nevada Reno (UNR) to host Chart the Course for Middle and High School families at the UNR campus. Over two-hundred families attended the event with thirty workshops and 15 partner organizations focused on connecting students to college, careers & the military. The full-day event was held in February and included breakfast, lunch, childcare, and transportation, translation, and interpretation.



### STEM Academy

Parent University collaborated with Dilworth STEM Academy to develop a meaningful and effective *Transition to Middle School* event for families. Over two-hundred families attended the event. This model will be used at additional middle schools in the 19-20 school year.



### Early Learning and Kindergarten Readiness

Parent University supported 37 kindergarten teachers to host a Summer Learning Session to promote literacy during summertime and prevent summer learning loss. Building capacity of teachers is a way that Parent University can leverage its investment and reach more students and families. It is also a strategy for sustainability by building teachers' capacity for family engagement across the district.

Additionally, 22 schools hosted a Kinder-Kickoff event to welcome Kinder families into their classrooms and begin establishing relationships with them.



### Partnerships to Bridge Cultures and Languages

Parent University formed a strong partnership with the Northern Nevada International Center (NNIC) and the WCSD English Language Development (ELD) Department. During 18-19 school year, Parent U collaborated with NNIC and the ELD Department to create a welcoming environment with a strong support system for refugee families. Case managers at NNIC helped disseminate the menu of resources and engagement opportunities available at the school sites where refugees were present. The Department of Family-School Partnerships ensured that Family Graduation



Advocates (FGAs) and schools that participated on the Home Visit Project could initiate relationships to support refugee families.



### Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)

Parent University has partnered with Social & Emotional Learning and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Departments to expand classes for families on Digital Citizenship. These partnerships help support families to keep their children safer online, and, work to reduce the number of online bullying incidents.



### New Workshop Offerings

Parent University partnered with the Nevada Department of Education and the steering committee to create a strand of workshops for families that were offered concurrently with the 2018 Nevada Family Engagement Summit. A total of thirty families attended the Nevada Family Engagement Summit.



### Online Resources

Information for families, including literacy tip sheets, summer break resources and events, and a family video learning library are available on the Parent University page, along with a calendar that provides information about upcoming workshops. The program's social media platforms, including Facebook and Instagram, are also resources for families to learn about upcoming opportunities.



### Communication and Connection with Individual Schools

Parent University staff worked with individual schools to understand specific needs, context, and ways to best serve the families and children within the particular school setting. Parent University partnered with school-led academic events such as literacy, science, math, transition, career ready, and college prep events.



### Support for All to Attend

For all workshops and learning sessions, Parent University workshops are provided at no cost to participants, with childcare and interpretation into Spanish (and other languages upon request) offered. Workshops are held at schools and community locations. For larger events such as Chart the Course, transportation, and food were also provided.



### Interactive Learning

Parent University learning sessions are designed to be participatory and interactive, whenever possible. Workshops have been designed to incorporate activities, questions, and answers.

## Results

This section of the report provides high-level findings from the evaluation. Detailed comments from surveys are provided back to the program to help inform continuous improvement.

### Overview of Parent University Workshops

Parent University held 237 learning sessions at schools and community locations across the district. Department staff continued to offer a set of curriculum-driven workshops. Parent University staff worked with the school personnel to select the course topics and timing for learning sessions and events.

### Progress on Participation Goals

Each year, Parent University leadership sets targets for participation. Targets leverage the financial and staffing resources to impact as many students possible, with a priority to reach those who might need the information most. In 2018-19, goals were set to at 4,200 total attendance (could include people who attended more than one Parent University event or session), and 2,000 unique attendees.

These goals were accomplished. Program data showed:

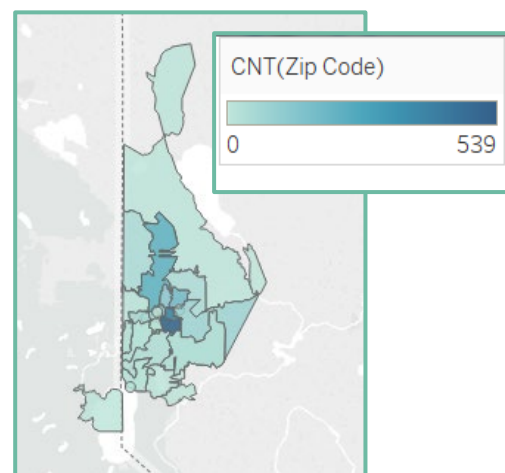
- 3,537 individual participants (177% of goal)
- 4,426 total participants (105% of goal)
- 2,740 Students reached across 106 schools

An additional factor in considering reach are families and children who were connected to information and resources through the teachers who received training in family engagement. This strategy has the potential to create a “ripple effect,” as teachers grow in their capacity to engage with families into the future.

### Families Reached

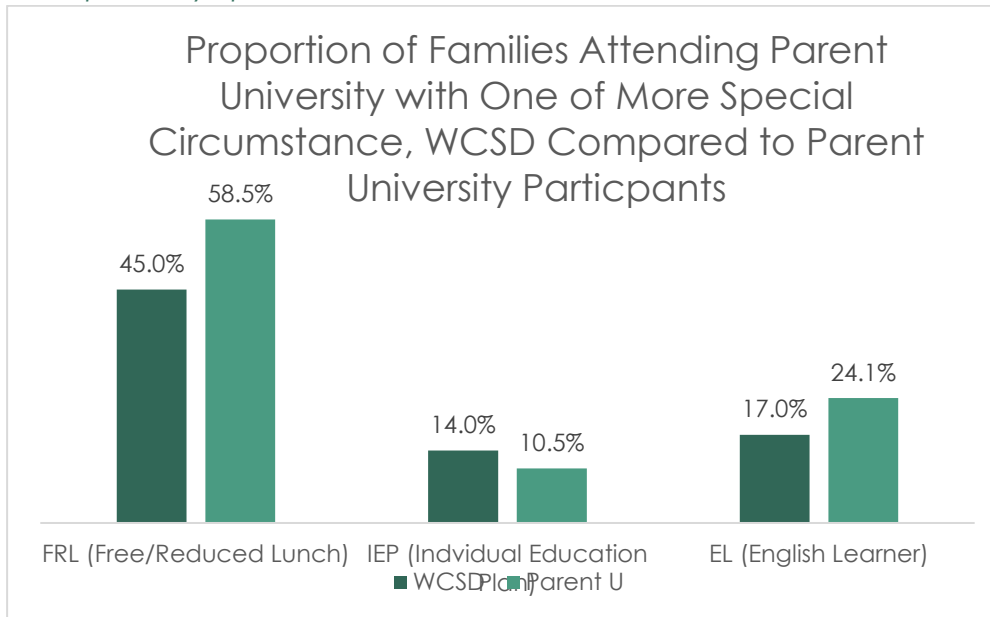
By geography, participants came from a wide range of zip codes in the District. Using survey data as a proxy for all participation, data shows that people in zip codes 89502 (539) and 89431 (436) were well represented, along with the zip code 89436 (192).

Parent University reached a high proportion of families that use free or reduced lunch, a proxy for lower socio-economic status. Roughly one in ten families that participated in Parent University had a child with an individualized education plan (IEP) (a rate lower than the district average). Parent University reached a high percentage of students who are English learners, with nearly one in four participating families. Together, these data suggest that Parent University is reaching families that might face barriers to navigating the educational system.



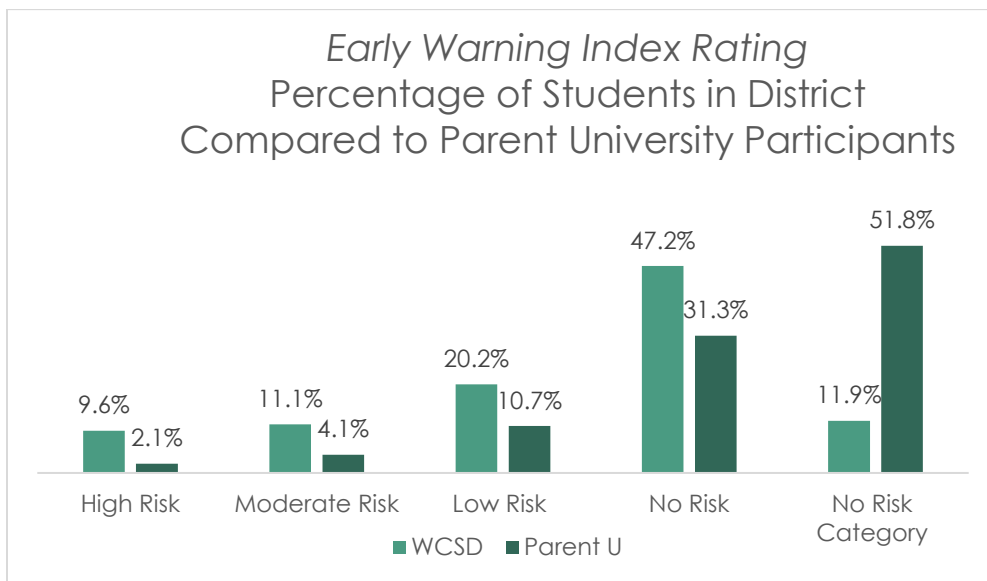
**Participation by zip code in Parent University, based on workshop surveys showed that in 2018-19, 89502 had the most participants.**

*Participants by Special Circumstances*



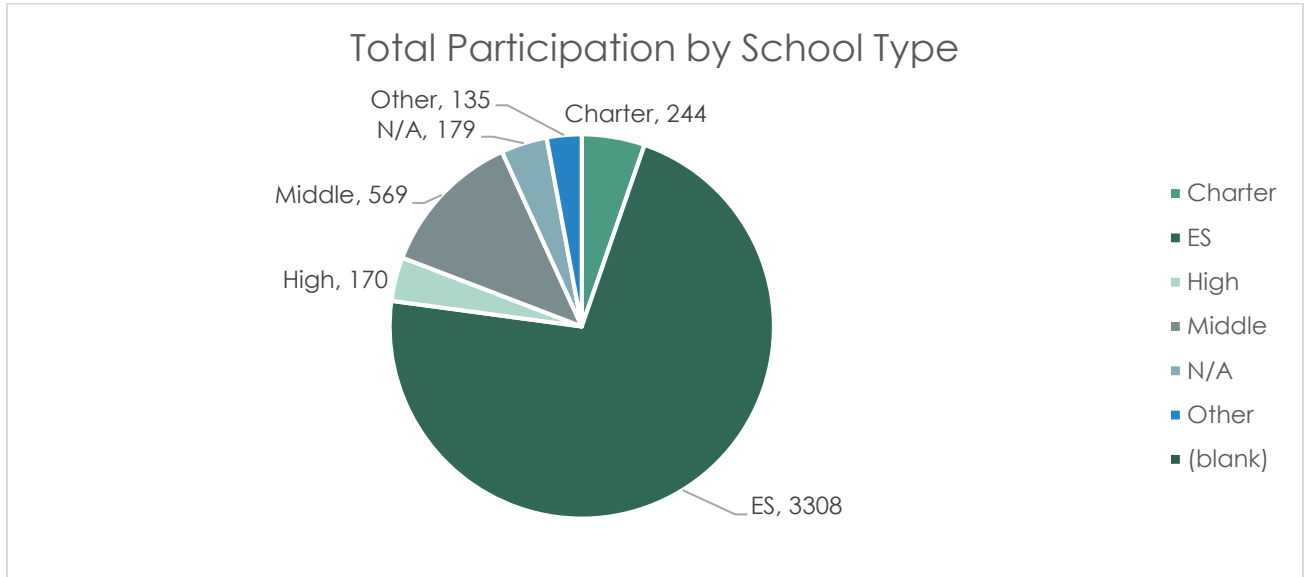
*Participants by Early Warning Index Rating*

WCSD also uses data on students to identify early warning. The early warning system identifies children and youth that based on key criteria, may be at risk for school failure. Among Parent University participants, 17% had some or more risk as monitored by this system. While this rate is not as high as the district's population of students with risk, it indicates that Parent University is effectively reaching families of students who can benefit from information, resources, and connections.



*Participants by School Type*

In 2018-19, the majority of participating families had children in traditional elementary school. The next largest group was families of middle schoolers, representing 13% of participants.



*Participants by School*

Parent University is promoted through schools themselves as well as made available through district outreach. Previous evaluations of Parent University have demonstrated the importance of school involvement in Parent University as a critical factor for family involvement.

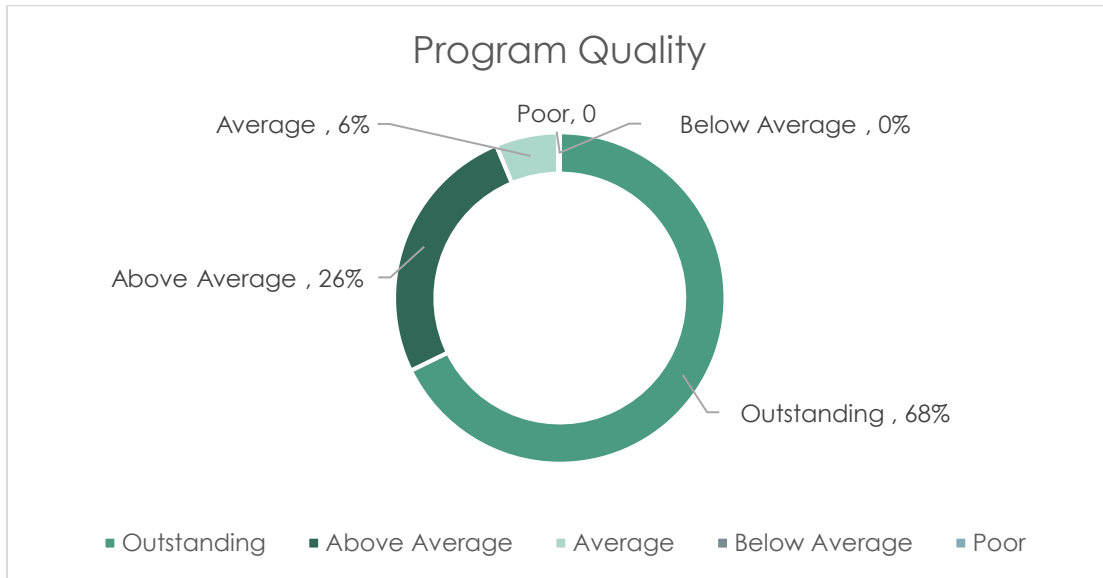
In 2018-19, twelve schools had 100 family participants or more. Of these, five were Title 1 schools (noted with an asterisk).

*Schools with 100 or More Family Members Participating in Parent University*

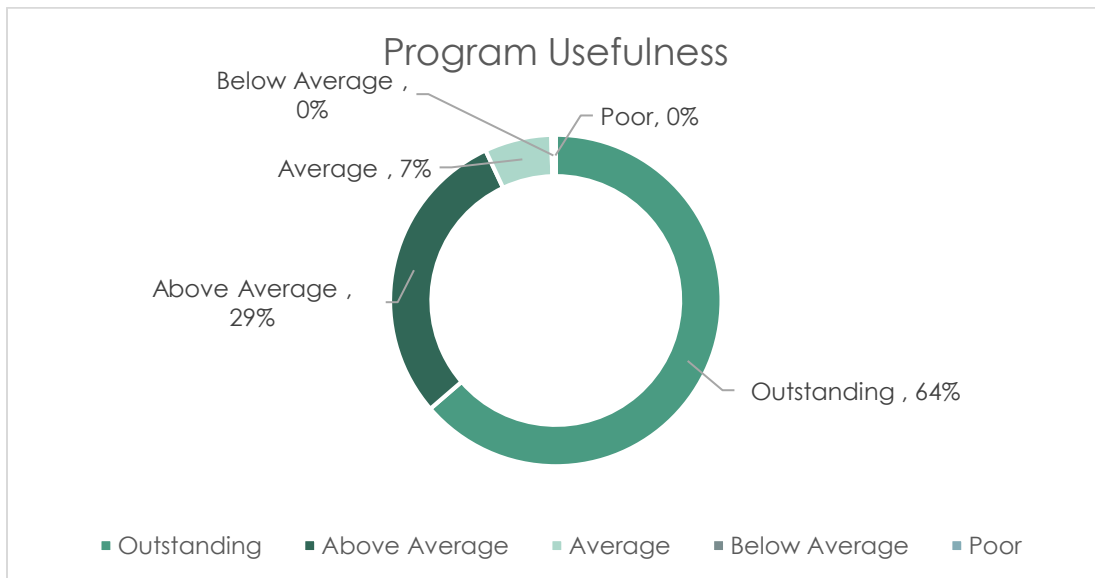
▪ Kate Smith ES*	235
▪ Stead ES*	221
▪ Dodson ES*	185
▪ Lincoln Park ES*	181
▪ Jesse Hall Es School	178
▪ Bailey Charter (ES)	166
▪ Mount Rose K-8 Academy of Languages	143
▪ Katherine Dunn ES	136
▪ Veterans Memorial S.T.E.M. Academy*	128
▪ Virginia Palmer ES	117
▪ Lena Juniper ES	109
▪ Sepulveda ES School	108

## Program Quality & Usefulness

Nearly all participants (94%) rated the workshop quality as outstanding or above average.



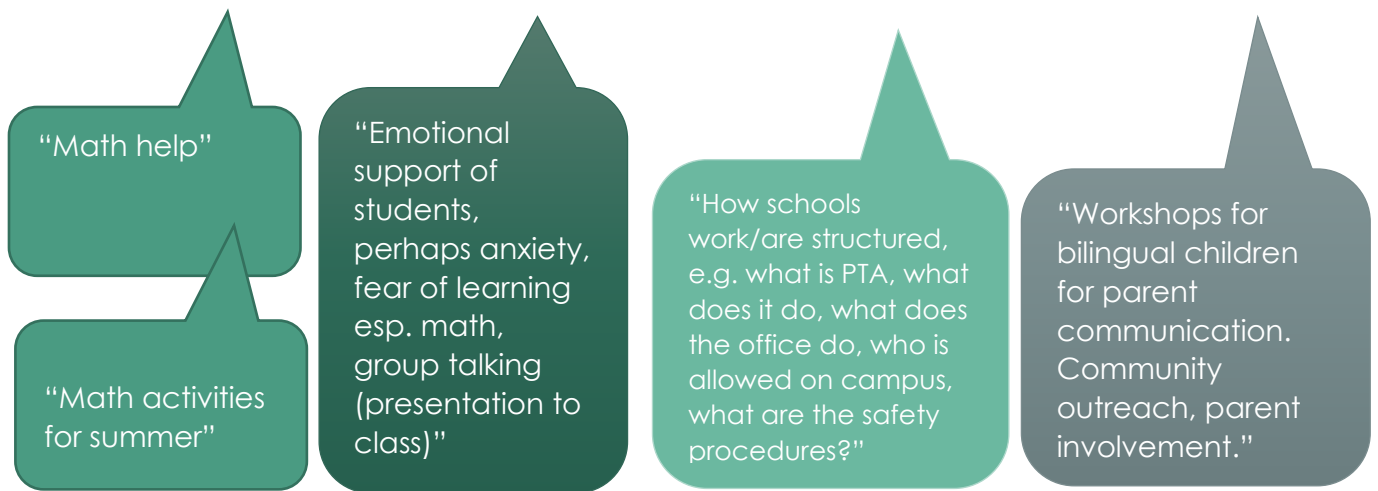
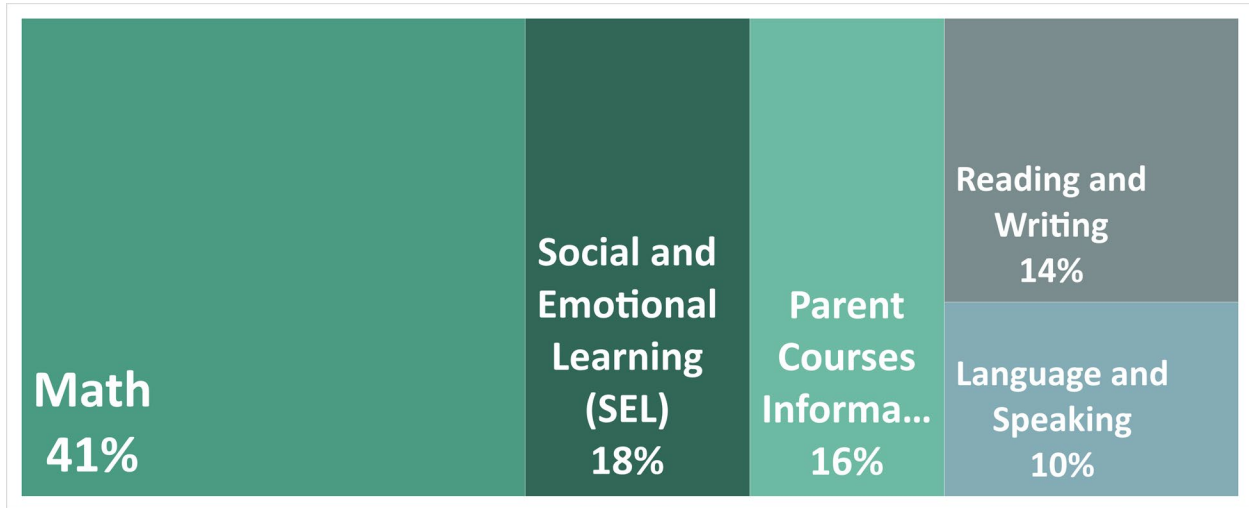
Nearly all participants (93%) rated usefulness as outstanding or above average.



## Family Responses and Voices

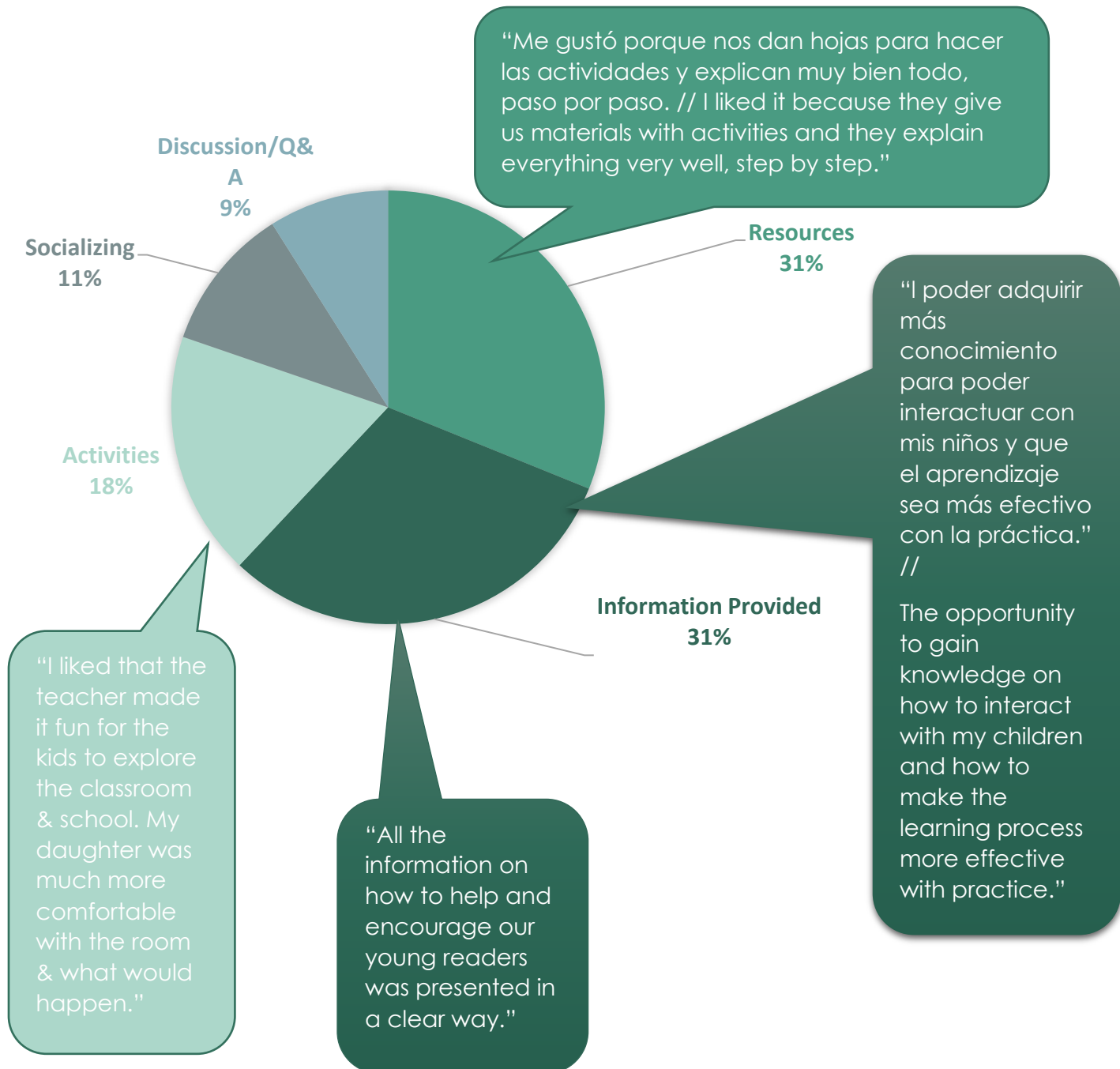
### *What Topics Families are Interested In*

Participating families are asked about what topics they would like to learn more about. In general, responses were highest for math, followed by social and emotional learning, general parent information, reading and writing, and language and speaking.



### What Participants Liked Best

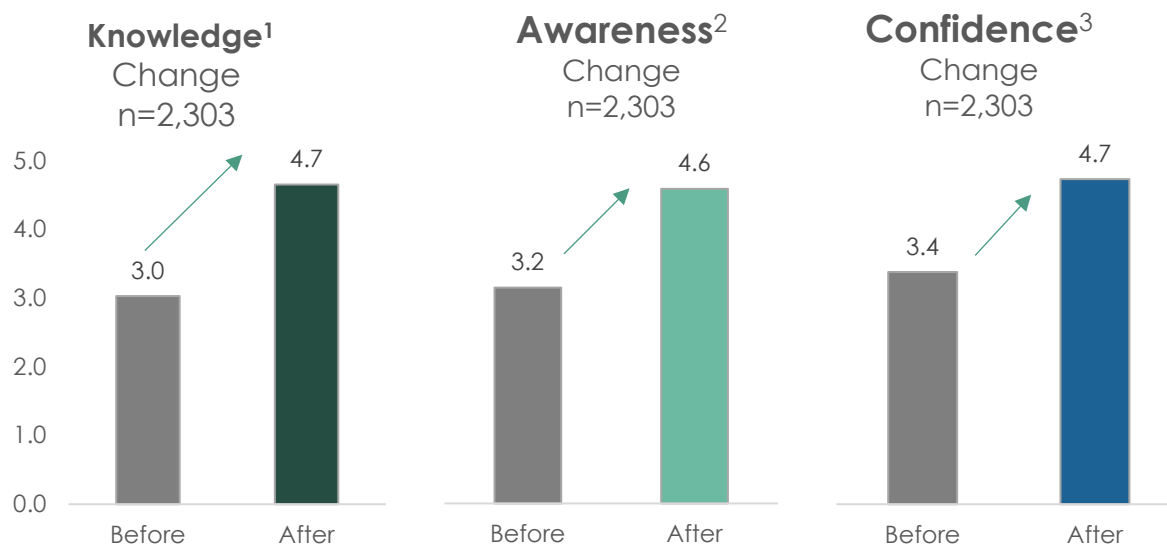
Overall, participants expressed satisfaction with the learning sessions, “todo” (everything) was the most common response. Among substantive responses, participants noted resources, information, activities, socializing, and the question and answer portion of the programming.



## Changes in Knowledge, Awareness, and Confidence

At the conclusion of most Parent University sessions, participants are asked to complete an anonymous survey to provide feedback and report any changes as a result of the session.

Participants reported changes in knowledge awareness and confidence as a result of learning sessions. The most significant growth was in knowledge change, followed by awareness and confidence. Across the program, these gains were consistent and statistically significant.



1

**Knowledge** related to the class topic (Capabilities)

2

**Awareness** of resources (at school or in the community) that are available to support my child/teen's learning and achievement (Connections)

3

**Confidence** to positively impact my child/teen's education and help them reach their goals (Self-Efficacy)





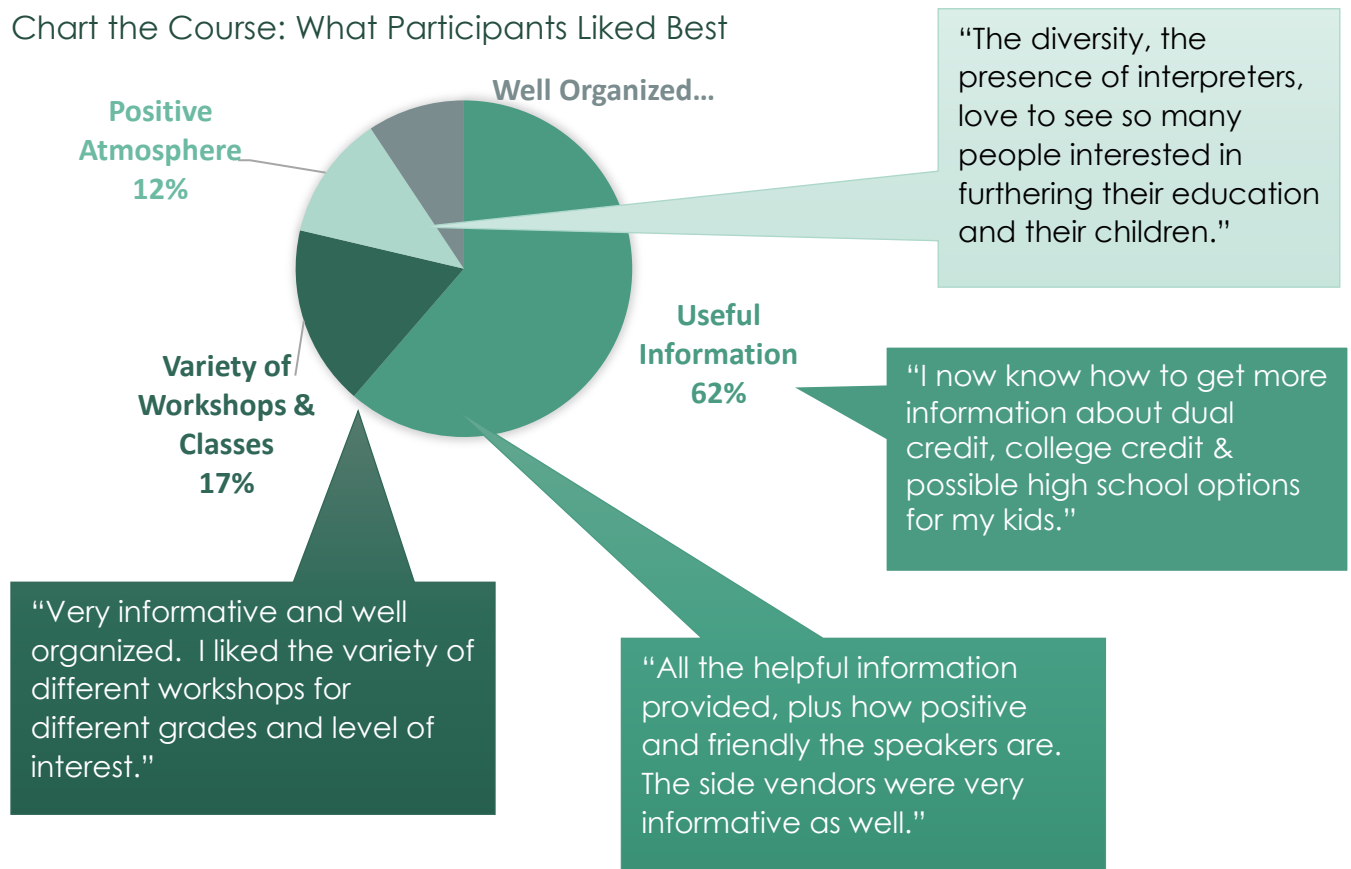
## Program Spotlight: Chart the Course

Continuing the vision of Family Access Days, Parent University collaborated with the Counseling Department and the Career & Technical Education (CTE) Department, TMCC, and UNR to host Chart the Course for middle and high school families at the University of Nevada Reno. Over two-hundred families attended the event with thirty workshops along with more than 15 partners assist students on their paths to college, careers & the military. The full-day event was held in February and included breakfast, lunch, childcare, and transportation, translation, and interpretation.

Evaluation results for this event are highlighted from this event.

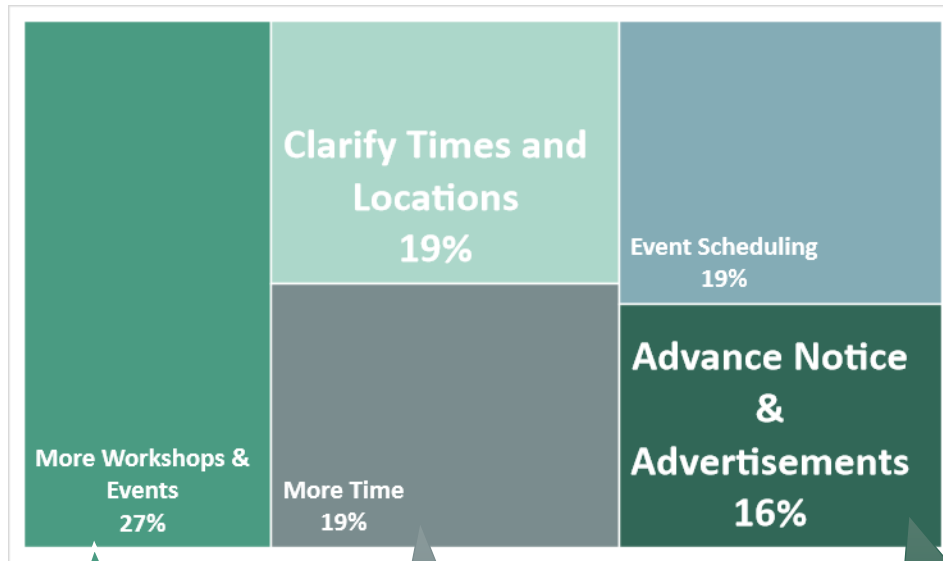
Participants were asked to share what they liked best about the class of learning session. **Useful information** was the most common theme from responses (62%). A large portion of responses also identified that they appreciated the wide variety of workshops available, that there was a positive atmosphere, and that the event was well-organized.

Chart the Course: What Participants Liked Best



## Chart the Course: Suggestions for Improvement

Participants were asked to provide feedback about what they would improve from the sessions. The majority did not provide a suggestion, or if they made a comment, it was to emphasize their satisfaction with the event. Of respondents providing a comment, the most common responses were more workshops and events, clarity about logistics, more time to learn, and additional advance notice.



"Offer more like events and continue to speak out on how important parent/teacher/coach involvement motivates our kids."

"I'm not sure how you would do it but it would be nice if there was a way to attend ALL of the sessions instead of just three."

"Maybe just improve how you get the word out about the event. I have several friends with kids in middle school that weren't aware of the event when I asked them and registration was already closed."

## Summary of Findings & Recommendations

### Key Findings

- Participation goals were exceeded.
- The quality and usefulness of class sessions were rated highly, with nearly all scoring workshops as above average or outstanding.
- Surveys showed significant increases in participants' knowledge, awareness, and confidence.
- Participating families appreciate Parent University. Surveys, including open-ended comments were largely positive, and expressed gratitude, and encouragement.
- Parent University reached people who are likely to benefit from additional information and resources.

### Discussion

- Parent University reached a high proportion of younger (elementary) age students. This may also yield positive long-term gains, with families connecting with schools early in the children's academic life.
- Strategies that build the capacity of teachers to engage better with families is expected to have ripple effects, impacting teachers, the families they work with both now and in the future.
- Funding and capacity appear to limit the total number of students that can be reached through Parent University. Individual school engagement with Parent University also appears to limit access of families to Parent University. This means that not all families that can benefit have access to the program.
- Improvements offered by families most typically include logistical aspects of programming. More time for learning is also a common request.

### Recommendations

- Continue work to reach families directly, and to reach families that are most likely to benefit from the information, resources, and tools. This may include continuing to build the capacity of teachers and schools to engage with families, identifying funding sources to expand reach, or other strategies.
- Consider modes to address participating families' requests for information. This may include more direct information about upcoming offerings sent directly to those who have already attended a Parent University session and would like to learn more.
- Consider collecting student surveys for Chart the Course to gather feedback from youth participants.
- Explore opportunities to link School Climate Survey Data to Parent University Evaluation as additional indicators of effect. Possible data include parent satisfaction with communication, and ratings of school quality.
- Consider program strategies and related evaluation tools to measure families' in alignment with the *Dual Capacity Framework*.
- Continue to review feedback from surveys to determine if suggestions can be incorporated.

## Contact Information

For more information about Parent University and other Washoe County School District Family Engagement Programs, contact:

## Department of Family-School Partnerships

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