

Washoe County School District

Department of Family-School Partnerships

**Parent University**

**Program Evaluation**

2023-2024 School Year

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Parent University is a program of Washoe County School District's (WCSD) Department of Family-School Partnerships. Parent University is planned and implemented by Department staff. Parent University is also supported by numerous individuals and community organizations working in partnership with the program for students and their families. Thank you for your support!

Arts for ALL Nevada  
Children's Cabinet  
Join Together Northern Nevada - JTNN  
KNPB – PBS Reno  
Nevada PEP  
Northern Nevada Literacy Council - NNLC  
Redfield Community Outreach Program  
Sierra Nevada Journeys  
Spread the Word Nevada  
Truckee Meadows Community College (TMCC)  
University of Nevada, Reno (UNR)- Office of the Provost  
UNR PBIS - Nevada Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS)  
Technical Assistance Center  
Washoe County Library System  
WCSD Department of Child and Family Services  
WCSD Department of Counseling Services  
WCSD Department of Curriculum & Instruction  
WCSD Department of English Language Learners & World Languages  
WCSD Department of Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) & Social Emotional Learning (SEL)  
WCSD Office of Student Services  
WCSD Career Technical Education (CTE) and Signature Academies



“Están [Parent University] interesados y preocupados por temas de crianza positiva y responsiva, enriqueciendo así los recursos para la educación y crianza de los niños.”

“They [Parent University] are interested and concerned about positive and responsive parenting issues, enriching resources for the education and upbringing of children.”

- Family Participant



## CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	1
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	4
PARENT UNIVERSITY	4
Summary of Findings	4
Alignment with WCSD Strategic Plan	11
PROGRAMMING OFFERED	13
PROGRAM REACH	13
<i>Overall Participation</i>	13
Program Reach Compared to Goals	14
Reach By Event	15
<i>Reach By School</i>	15
Reach By Early Warning Index	17
<i>Quality and Usefulness</i>	18
<i>What Families Liked Best</i>	19
PROGRAM IMPACTS	21
<i>Increased Knowledge, Skills, Confidence, and Awareness</i>	21
LEARNING FROM FAMILIES	22
<i>Topics for Future Parent University Programming</i>	22
Suggestions for Improvement	25
Future Eagles Night (Transition to Middle School)	26
College Fair	28
Family Hike	31
Conclusions and Recommendations	33



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## PARENT UNIVERSITY

Parent University, a program of the Washoe County School District Department of Family-School Partnerships, assists families in navigating academic systems and strengthens connections between learning at home and school. In the current year, the program identified goals of building the capacity of families:

- in math, literacy, and science;
- in social and emotional learning and mental well-being outside of the classroom and
- to navigate the pathways to college and highly skilled careers.

Parent University also assists school staff in building their skills and confidence to engage families. This work is essential; teachers, school staff, and the administrative teams have daily opportunities to make meaningful connections with family members. Through its work, Parent University aligns with the WCSD Strategic plan, especially Goal #4 – Academic Growth & Achievement and Goal #5 – Empowering All Learners for their Future.

Parent University evaluates the program each year to assess progress and continuously improve offerings. This report describes the results regarding reach, quality, and learning outcomes. Several program spotlights are also featured.



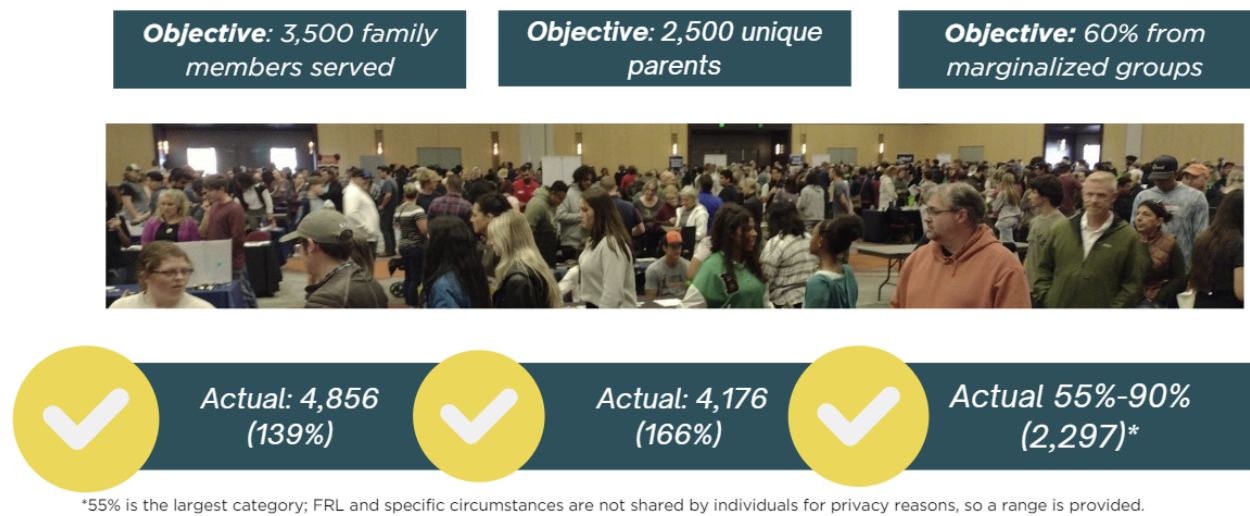
# SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

## REACH

Parent University held 175 workshops ranging in topics at 49 schools across Washoe County. Through these efforts, Parent University exceeded its annual participation goals. Goals were set for the total served (may include duplicates) and for unique participants (unduplicated). Actual reach was 139% of the total attendance goal and 166% of the unique participant goal."

Programs reach families from historically marginalized groups. More than half (55%) of the students whose parents attended Parent University qualified for Free or Reduced Lunch (FRL). This is the minimum percentage of families from historically marginalized groups; the actual percentage may be closer to 90%. A range is provided since individual data is private and protected. Historically marginalized include FRL, underrepresented racial and ethnic identities, special education, foster care, gifted and talented, learning English, experiencing homelessness, and other demographic and situational characteristics.

Households in 89431 and 89502, followed by 89509, 89433, and 89434 had the highest representation according to surveys.



## QUALITY

Participants rated their experiences highly. Nearly all (91%) would recommend the class to a friend or colleague. Experiences of quality and usefulness were extremely high; 90% of participants rated the classes as outstanding or above average.

In open-ended responses, participants noted specific aspects of quality.

- how the format and presentation of sessions were engaging and accessible for children and parents,
- the information and resources provided for parents and
- the family involvement and interaction, as well as fun activities



Families expressed gratitude for the workshops.

***“Thank you for the time given to the kids.”***

***“[We liked] Everything, especially teamwork.”***

***“The participatory aspect of the event was really fun!”***

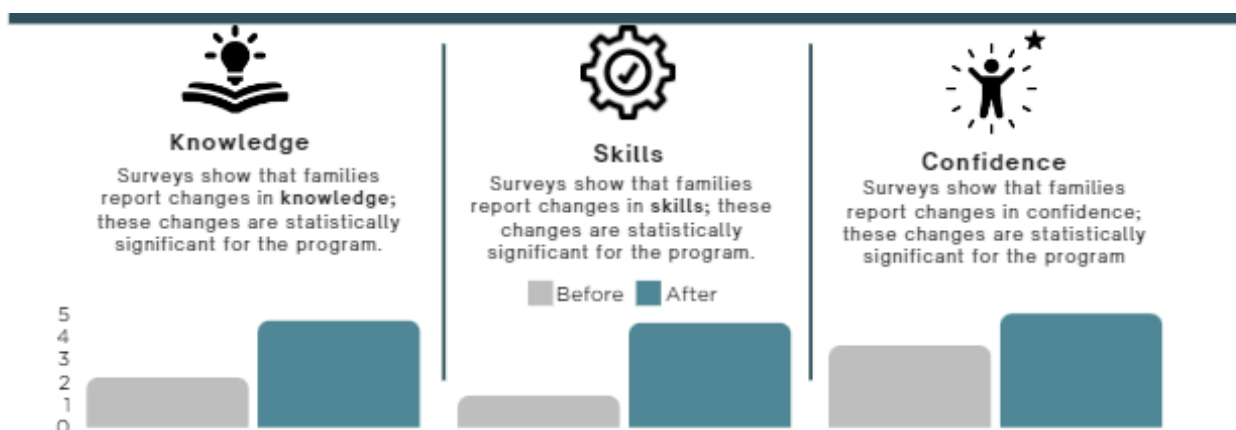
***“Great job in keeping kids intrigued in reading.”***

***“I can see other places I can use to help my child.”***

***“I love the free book & activity. Helps kids interested in reading.”***

## OUTCOMES

Participants reported increased knowledge, skills, confidence, and awareness related to the session topics after attending Parent University workshops. These changes are statistically significant.



## FUTURE OFFERINGS

When asked about additional topics, many open-ended responses expressed satisfaction and appreciation for what was available. Families also specifically ask for more support. Topics included:

- **Academic Support:** math, science, reading, writing, homework help, study skills
- **Social-Emotional Learning (SEL):** bullying, social skills, self-esteem, depression, anxiety, anger management, peer pressure, social-emotional development
- **College and Career Readiness:** college prep, career planning, scholarships, financial aid, high school programs, guest speakers from colleges
- **Parenting Skills:** communication with children, positive discipline, screen time management, supporting children with ADHD, helping children with reading, building strong parent-child relationships





- **Arts and Culture:** art classes, music classes, cultural events, art history, drama, creative writing
- **Family Engagement:** more parent nights, back-to-school nights, family activities, communication between parents and teachers, volunteer opportunities
- **Technology:** computer science, digital literacy, online safety, educational apps and games

## Recommendations

**Honor Family Voice.** Families have provided valuable feedback and input. Parent University has and can continue to hear families, improve programming, and respond to their suggestions and ideas. Through surveys, families express appreciation for what is offered and often want to see even **more offerings**. More funding for Parent University would help to expand teacher connections and programming. Provided funding at limited levels, programming through partnerships, can help to sustain what is in place.

**Strengthen the Capacity of Schools through Information and Support for Administrators and Teachers.** Parent University has over a decade of experience providing high-quality events that engage families, resulting in knowledge, skills, and confidence changes. Parent University can serve as a **hub, knowledge resource, and school repository**. This role - capacity builder and technical assistance provider - can also help to expand impact by leveraging the knowledge and expertise of the program team.

**Expand Offerings for Depth and Pathways for Engagement, Especially for Transitions.** Data shows that families seek information and support for school transitions, such as entering kindergarten, transitioning to middle, and beyond high school. Offering more depth to support these transitions - especially the transition to middle - **take advantage of important times in families' lives to strengthen relationships with schools and education.**

## Introduction

Parent University was established in 2011 to **help families build upon skills, knowledge, and support systems to advocate for student success**. Parent University engages WCSD families to assist in navigating academic systems and supporting connections between learning at home and school, and partners with schools, other departments, and community organizations to bring high-quality information and resources across the district to support students and their families.

Parent University values the families' unique and vital roles in each child's education. When families are equipped with knowledge, skills, and information to navigate school systems, they can better put these assets to use. Workshops and events focus on topics that families have said are important. Programming is adjusted each year, even during the school year, to support families across the district.

### Challenges for WCSD Students & Families

Situations like chronic stress, rising costs, social media, and related issues can be hard on students and their families. Student absence, behavioral health concerns, and health in general - can be complex for students and impact their learning. Together with differences in how neighborhood schools are resourced, these differences can deepen inequities.

Parent University's opportunity is to provide families access to the information they need to navigate school systems and connect with educational support. Parent University brings families more skills, tools, and confidence. Many offerings include child care and transportation support, reducing barriers for families who may otherwise not be able to attend.

Family engagement is a way schools can partner to help address equitable needs for





students and to help students reach their potential. In nearly 50 years of research, the importance of parent and family engagement in student achievement has been demonstrated and upheld. Published studies provide evidence that family engagement is important for addressing student challenges related to attendance and academic achievement.

Parent University has been a key community partner in Washoe County, working to nurture trust among the family, school, and community. The program staff accomplishes this through programming and communication with families to assist families in navigating academic systems and strengthening connections between learning at home and school.

### FAMILY ENGAGEMENT AS IMPORTANT AND ESSENTIAL

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 have better attendance, higher grades, and higher test scores. They were also more likely to graduate and attend post-secondary school (Dervarics & O'Brien, 2011). Family engagement practices have also been shown to be specifically associated with improved school attendance for English Language Learner (EL) students in minority EL classrooms (Premo, Pilarz, & Lin, 2023).

Parent University uses the **Dual Capacity-Building Framework** (Mapp & Kuttner, 2016) for family engagement. This research-backed approach builds capacity not only for families but also for schools. This framework has been used to enhance the impact of Parent University as staff work to develop the process conditions toward outcomes of effective partnerships that support student and school improvement. These process conditions are “relational: built on mutual trust, linked to learning and development, asset-based, culturally responsive and respectful, collaborative, and interactive. The organizational conditions are systemic: embraced by leadership across the organization, integrated, and sustained with resources and infrastructure” (Mapp & Kuttner, 2016).

## ALIGNMENT WITH WCSD STRATEGIC PLAN

Partnerships and programming are strategically developed to respond to students' and families' challenges in alignment with WCSD's strategic plan for supporting student achievement.<sup>1</sup> The 2023-2026 WCSD Strategic Plan<sup>1</sup> includes five goals. Parent University primarily supports goals 4 & 5.

<b>Strong Start for Every Child</b>	<i>"Every Student, through Grade 3, will experience equitable learning opportunities for success in developmentally appropriate environments."</i>
<b>Student Voice &amp; Advocacy</b>	<i>"Every student will have ongoing opportunities to take ownership of their education journey."</i>
<b>Safety &amp; Belonging</b>	<i>"Every student will be welcomed, included, and valued within a safe and supportive school environment."</i>
<b>Academic Growth &amp; Achievement</b>	<i>"Every student will have access to challenging academic programs, meet or exceed standards, and achieve at least one year's academic growth annually."</i>
<b>Empowering All Learners for their Future</b>	<i>"Every student will graduate with the skills necessary to thrive in a diverse and rapidly evolving world."</i>

The strategic plan further outlines the building blocks needed to achieve these goals. Among these building blocks is "Strong Partnerships Among Families, Community & School," defined as "Trust among the family, school, and community is nurtured through shared responsibility for student success; proactive and respectful teaming with families; and sustained relationships with the community."

## ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report summarizes 1) program reach and progress toward stated goals, 2) participant perspectives provided through surveys, and 3) new developments in engaging with partners and families for the 2022-23 school year. Additionally, several specific projects with Parent University are highlighted. Sources for this report include:

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.washoeschools.net/strategicplan>

- Program and workshop records kept by Parent University staff
- Information from “BIG” (a database connecting Parent University attendees to student information)
- Peer-reviewed literature
- Data from publicly available sources
- Previous evaluation reports
- Photos (provided by Parent University staff)
- 2,012 survey responses, or 41% of all Parent University workshops and offerings,
  - o 1,537 were completed in English
  - o 475 were completed in Spanish

Microsoft Excel was used for data compilation and analysis.



## PROGRAMMING OFFERED

Parent University planned 175 workshops over the 2023-24 school year. Programming for families was intentionally focused on supporting family needs, interests, and preferences. Workshops covered a wide range of topics, and this year, nearly all were held in person in settings like school classrooms and community locations.

Most learning sessions were offered as one-time events. Two literacy-focused workshop series, Family Literacy Club and Family Literacy Night, engaged families over a longer period for multiple sessions.

Parent University also curated and shared important information using social media platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.



## PROGRAM REACH

Each year, Parent University sets goals for participation. These goals are grounded in program values, funding available, and other factors such as program staffing and partnerships. Parent University has faced a smaller budget and continues to have fewer staff members than needed. With a lower annual budget and fewer staff, the program worked more closely with partners, leveraging relationships to co-sponsor activities.

## OVERALL PARTICIPATION

To understand Parent University's reach and impact within the community, it is important to know both how many individuals are present at workshops and how many unique individuals are served with Parent University programming.

**Total attendance** in Parent University is defined as the total number of adult family members (e.g., parents, guardians) counted in attendance across all Parent University workshops over the academic year. Many parents attend

multiple workshops each year. **Unduplicated attendance** is the number of unique adult family members who participated in at least one ParentUniversity workshop.

#### PROGRAM REACH COMPARED TO GOALS

Parent University set annual targets and exceeded all of them. Each target is followed by the actual result and the percentage of the goal:

- Total attendees were 4,865, or (139% of the goal)
- Unduplicated attendees were 4,176 (166% of goal)
- 55% were historically marginalized populations, including families from special populations (FRL, IEP & LEP). of the total. This is less than the objective set. However, the absolute number of people i

## Reach

**Objective:** 3,500 family members served

**Objective:** 2,500 unique parents

**Objective:** 60% from marginalized groups



**Actual:** 4,856  
(139%)



**Actual:** 4,176  
(166%)



**Actual** 55%-90%  
(2,297)\*

\*55% is the largest category; FRL and specific circumstances are not shared by individuals for privacy reasons, so a range is provided.



## REACH BY EVENT

Programs that reached the most family participants in 2023-24 included:

Topic	Families of Students Identified in IC <sup>23</sup>
College Fair	923
Family Literacy Night <sup>4</sup>	794
Panther Day	751
Pathway to High School Success	446
Kindergarten Kickoff	394

## REACH BY SCHOOL

According to the "Parent University Class List from BIG Report," 175 workshops were at 51 schools across Washoe County. Survey data is from 49 sites, with most sessions held at Hall Elementary School (13 sessions), Hug High School (10 sessions), Anderson Elementary School (8 sessions), and Wooster High School (8 sessions). Economic disparities play a role in family and student opportunities.

## REACH BY PARTICIPATING FAMILIES

Parent University staff work to reach families from groups that have historically been marginalized or minoritized as they face barriers within school systems. This year, Parent University aimed at least 60% of program participants to be from historically marginalized populations, defined as those experiencing economic instability, students with disabilities, students in families who speak a



<sup>2</sup> IC = Infinite Campus. Infinite Campus is the WCSD Student Information System (SIS).

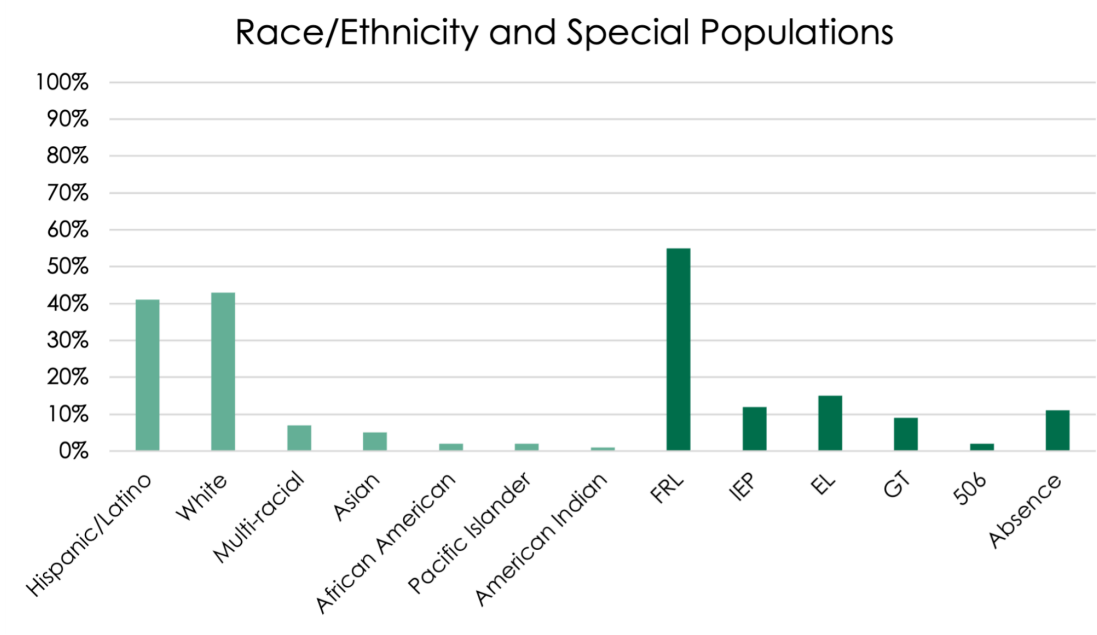
<sup>3</sup> Data from BIG Report

<sup>4</sup> Includes Spread the Word Nevada and Parent University Led Literacy Nights



language other than English at home, and students who may face racism or discrimination.

The total percentage of people reached from historically marginalized groups is at a minimum 55%, and may be as high as 91%. The exact percentage is not calculated due to privacy and protected information. According to the BIG Report, programs reached a diverse racial and ethnic population, and 55% of



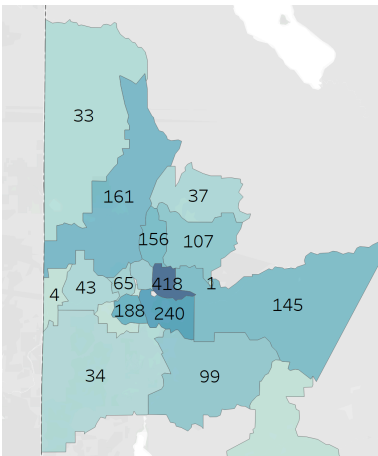
the students who attended Parent University qualified for Free or Reduced Lunch (FRL). Further, 15% of participants identified as English Language Learners (EL) and 12% as having Individualized Education Plans (IEP). Nearly one in 10 (9%) of attendees participated in one or more of the following programs, as well: Gifted and Talented (GT), 2% Children in Transition (CIT), and 2% Indian Education Programs (506). No students (0% in foster care) were counted.

**REACH BY ZIP CODE**

A large proportion of Parent University participants live in zip codes that have been economically disadvantaged. The program's focused efforts to reach families where needs are highest indicate the program's reach to families in communities affected by historical, economic, and social factors that

contribute to the inequity of outcomes. Parent University surveys show the greatest participation within zip codes 89431 and 89502, followed by 89509, 89433, and 89434.

**A map and chart of zip codes and participants.**



Zip Code	# of Participants
89431	418
89502	240
89509	188
89433	156
89434	145

**REACH BY GRADE LEVEL**

Families with students from pre-K to high school attended workshops. School years signifying a school transition: kindergarten, 6th grade, 8th grade, and 11th grade, had high participation. Families with children in pre-K through 5th made up the largest portion of participants (45%), followed by parents of middle schoolers grade 6-8 (30%) and high school students (25%).

**REACH BY EARLY WARNING INDEX**

WSCD uses data to identify students who have factors associated with being off track for on-time high school graduation. By identifying these students earlier through the early warning index, interventions and supports can be focused on addressing issues before they are problems.

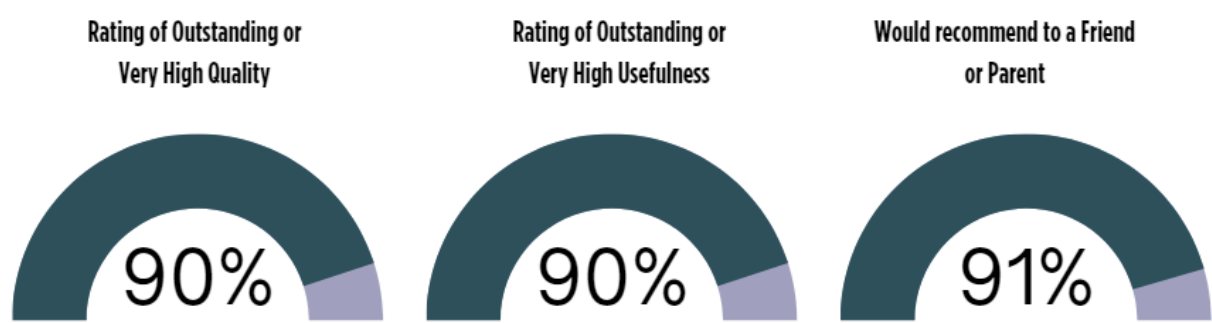
Among Parent University participants, 32% had some or more risk as monitored by this system. While this is slightly lower than the 45% of district students with at least some risk, this demonstrates Parent University is equitably reaching families who may benefit from additional resources and connections to services.

Beyond the individual student connected to the participating parent, many have siblings in the household who benefit from learning. The total reach extends beyond individual students.

## Participant Satisfaction

### QUALITY AND USEFULNESS

Families who completed surveys reported Parent University sessions to be of high quality and usefulness.

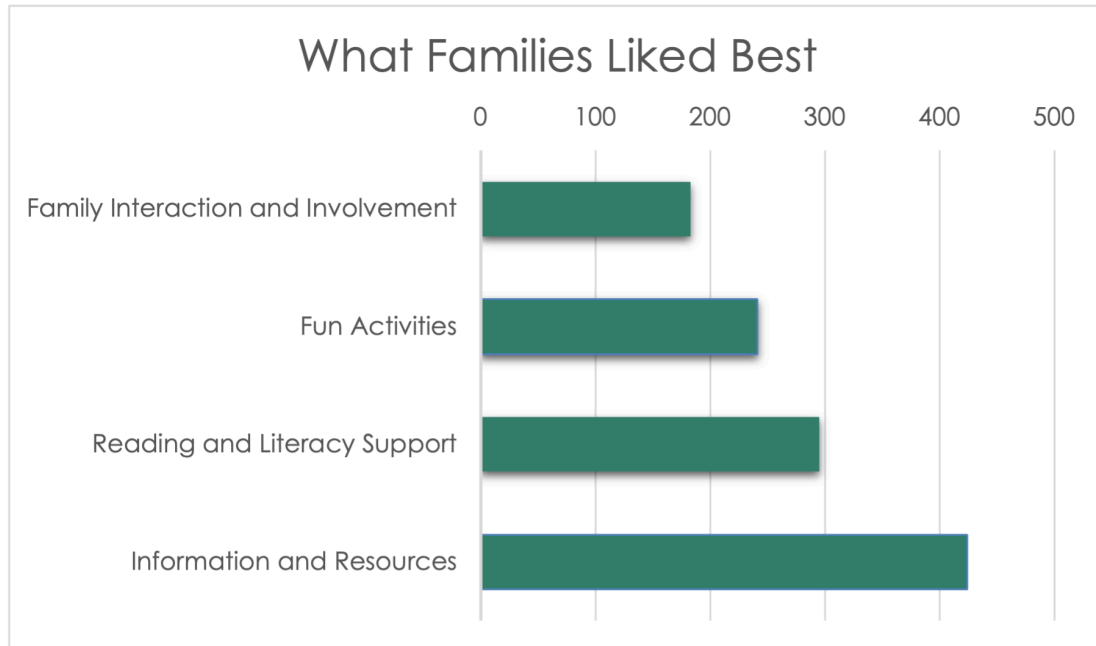


Satisfaction levels are similar to those from the previous year and demonstrate consistent quality and capacity built through Parent University staff and partners.

	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-24
Outstanding or Above Average <b>Quality</b>	89%	93%	91%	91%
Outstanding or Above Average <b>Usefulness</b>	91%	93%	89%	90%
Would you <b>recommend</b> the session to another parent or family	n/a	94%	91%	91%

## WHAT FAMILIES LIKED BEST

When asked what they liked best about the workshops, survey respondents shared comments that primarily fell within four main themes:



They commented on how the **information and resources** helped them with parenting and supporting their children in school. They noted that sessions were well organized with friendly and helpful facilitators, and some noted their appreciation for workshops offered in both English and Spanish.

***“ Teaching the kids about emotions and how to deal with them”***

***“ I love how this class went into more detail on how we as parents can help our children better understand social media.”***

***“ Lots of helpful/promotional high school info all in one place.”***

***“ It was detailed and straight to the point.”***

Many respondents also commented on how **fun the activities** within the workshops were.

***“It allows me to enjoy my children at school in a fun way and still be educational.”***

***“ Engaging activities”***

And some identified specific fun activities they liked best, such as ***“the rocket”*** at the Family STEM Night, and the ***“scavenger hunt”*** at the Field Trip to the Library.

Many liked best the **family involvement and interaction** of workshops. They appreciated the opportunities for parents/guardians and children to work and learn together.

***“Solving problems & having fun with our daughter.”***

***“Brings kids and parents together to read.”***

Finally, some participants liked best that the **activities were focused on reading and included free books:**

***“ It motivates families to read together.”***

***“ How interactive this event is w/ the kiddos. Also, providing the copy of the read-aloud for kids to take home & continue to enjoy.”***



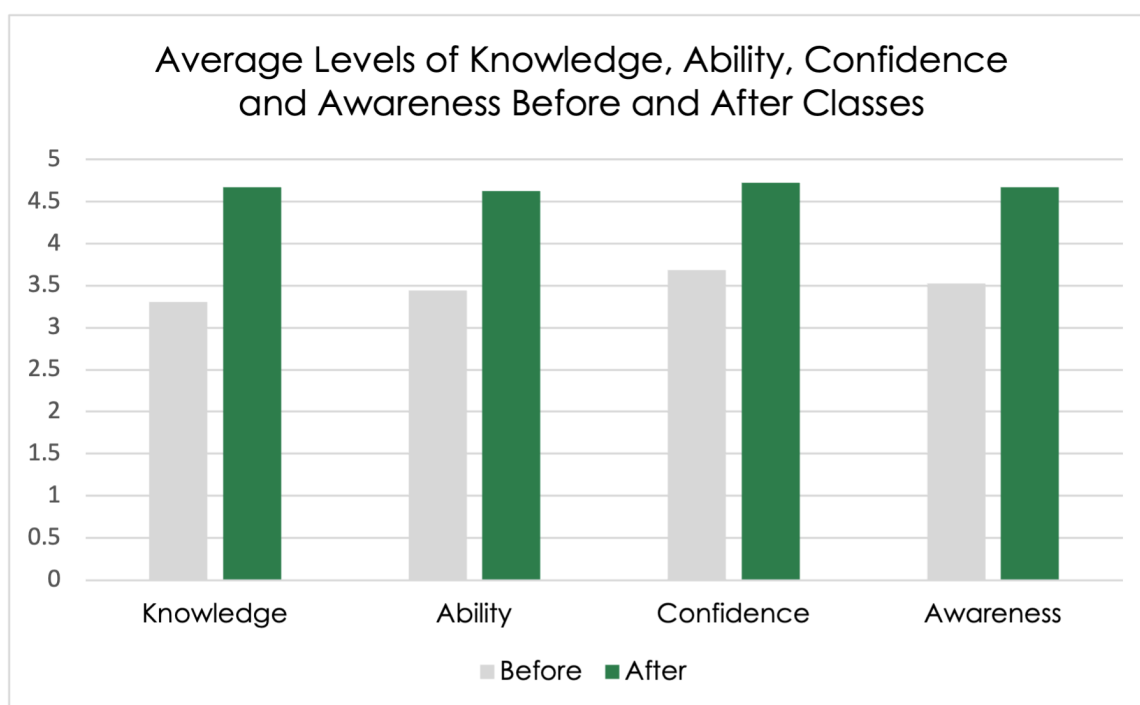
## PROGRAM IMPACTS

### INCREASED KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, CONFIDENCE, AND AWARENESS

Participants reported their levels of knowledge, skills, confidence, and awareness related to the session topic on a scale between 1 and 5 before and after attending the session.

“Confidence” is specifically related to parents’ confidence to positively impact their child’s education and help them reach their goals. “Awareness” refers to parents’ awareness of resources (at school or in the community) available to support their child’s learning and achievement.

Average increases were reported across all four domains, with the largest increases seen in knowledge, followed by ability, awareness, and confidence. Increases in all domains were statistically significant.<sup>5</sup>



<sup>5</sup> at  $p < .001$  as measured by one-tailed, paired t-tests



## LEARNING FROM FAMILIES

### TOPICS FOR FUTURE PARENT UNIVERSITY PROGRAMMING

Through surveys, families indicated topics they would like to learn more from Parent University.

- **Academic Support:** math, science, reading, writing, homework help, study skills
- **Social-Emotional Learning (SEL):** bullying, social skills, self-esteem, depression, anxiety, anger management, peer pressure, social-emotional development
- **College and Career Readiness:** college prep, career planning, scholarships, financial aid, high school programs, guest speakers from colleges
- **Parenting Skills:** communication with children, positive discipline, screen time management, supporting children with ADHD, helping children with reading, building strong parent-child relationships
- **Arts and Culture:** art classes, music classes, cultural events, art history, drama, creative writing
- **Family Engagement:** more parent nights, back-to-school nights, family activities, communication between parents and teachers, volunteer opportunities
- **Technology:** computer science, digital literacy, online safety, educational apps and games

Many respondents also offered more general remarks, such as more events like this: great job, keep it up, no suggestions.

Other topics or classes that parents would like to see offered through Parent University:

- Mental health and coping techniques, including topics such as anxiety, depression, and suicide
- Social media and its impact on teens

- How to talk to children about complex topics such as sex, drugs, and alcohol
- Educational programs for parents on a variety of topics, such as math, reading, and science
- More after-school programs and activities for children
- Information about college admissions and financial aid
- Resources for parents of children with special needs
- Classes in English for parents who are Spanish speakers
- More cultural events and activities

Parents' open-ended responses express their desire for their children to have a well-rounded education that includes academic skills, emotional well-being, social skills, and a sense of belonging.

### **On Mental Health and Well-being:**

- "More 'tools' for parents AND students on how to handle anxiety."
- "Depression topic, social media management."
- "Anything related to mental health & coping techniques."

### **On Academic Support:**

- "How to make writing fun."
- "Math classes would be great."
- "More programs that support reading."

### **On Social-Emotional Learning:**

- "Handling emotions."
- "Appreciating everyone's differences."
- "Overcoming obstacles."

### **On Family Engagement:**

- "More direct personal communication w/ parents."



- "Family interaction."
- "Community connected rallies."

### **On Diversity and Inclusion:**

- "Racial inclusion."
- "Different family engagement gatherings."
- "Books on cultural diversity or empathy."

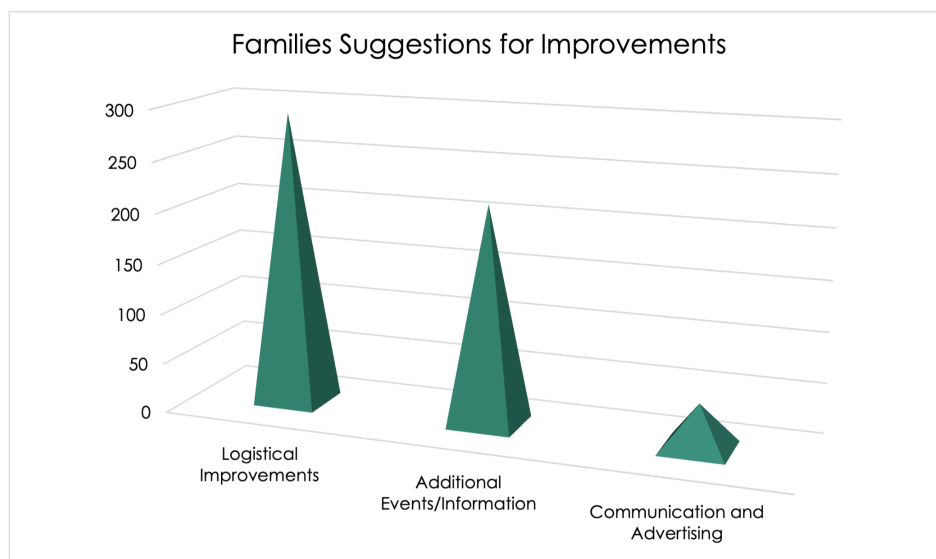
### **On Personal Development:**

- "How to support my grandkids better academically."
- "Self-love."
- "Self-esteem books."



## SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

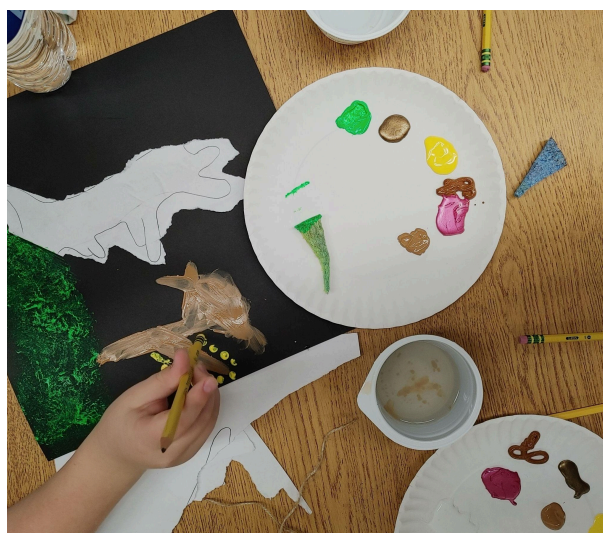
This year, families also shared their suggestions for improvement for Parent University activities for future years. Four main themes were identified across families' comments:



The majority of comments were

related to the **general logistics involved with workshops**, such as longer or shorter sessions, changing the start times so more parents can attend, offering more food, providing instructions in both English and Spanish, improving organization, more volunteers/instructors to assist children, using a microphone, having a larger space, etc.

The next most common suggestions related to either having **more activities or more options for the activities**. Finally, families also requested **improved communication** regarding upcoming activities in future years: ***“Needs more advertising, more parents need to come to this. Maybe offer it in more schools.”***



# PROGRAM Spotlights

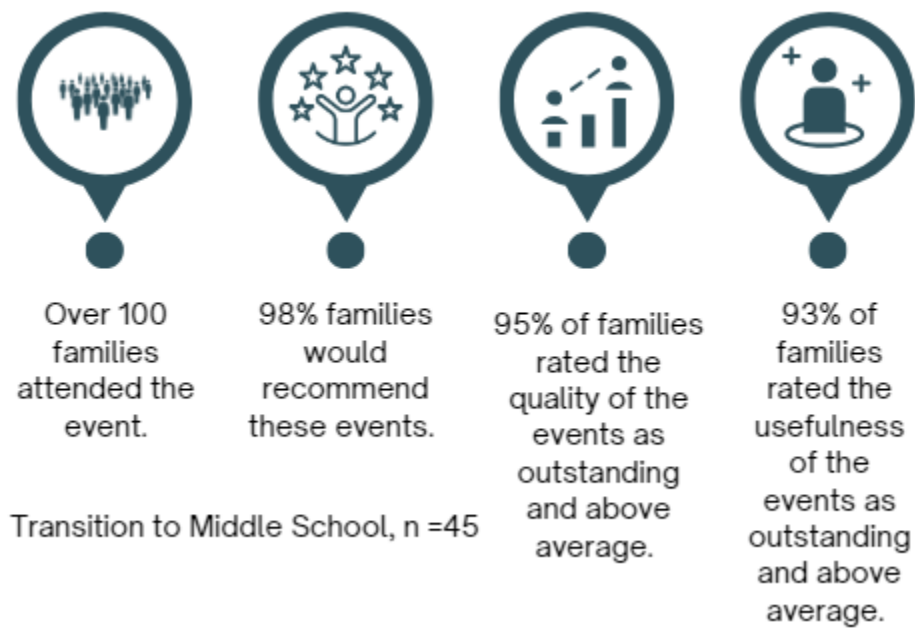
Four programs are spotlighted as examples of innovative programming.

## FUTURE EAGLES NIGHT (TRANSITION TO MIDDLE SCHOOL)



Parent University partnered with Vaughn MS to plan and host an event for the incoming sixth-grade families and students. Transition events help students and their families be better prepared for changes in the physical environment, social dynamics, academic expectations, and overall responsibility as students leave elementary school. The event aimed to provide familiarity, build excitement, offer support, and foster community.

Over 100 families attended. Through surveys, nearly all (95%) of families would recommend this event, and most 88% of families rated the quality and usefulness of the event as outstanding and above average.



Future Eagles Night reached families that have been historically marginalized. Nearly all (99%) met the criteria for Free or Reduced Lunch. More than three quarters (77%) were Hispanic/Latino; 14% were white, 5% were multiracial, 3% Black/African American, and 2% American Indian. More than one in three were learning English (35%), 14% have IEPs, 5% experiencing homelessness, and 6%

with chronic absence. A small portion of students with a 506 (3%) and gifted and talented (GT) (2%) were identified.

The parents and students who attended the informational meeting expressed great satisfaction:

#### **Specific Aspects Mentioned:**

- **Meeting Content:** Curriculum, school policies, transition to middle school, bullying, mental health, academic support, technology, and extracurricular activities.

**"[I liked most the] detailed information about transitioning into middle school."  
(Información detallada sobre la transición a la escuela secundaria)**

- **Meeting Format:** Presentations, question-and-answer sessions, school tour.
- **Organization:** Clear and well-structured.
- **Staff:** Friendly, knowledgeable, and helpful.

**"Everyone was friendly //Todos fueron amables"**

#### **Additional Comments:**

- Attendees appreciated the opportunity to meet other parents and students.
- Some parents mentioned the importance of receiving information in Spanish.

**"[Me gusta mas] todo en general. El empeño de tratar de ayudar a los adolescentes y ayudar a las personas que no hablan inglés./ [I liked best] Everything in general. The effort to try to help teenagers and help people who don't speak English."**

- Some students expressed excitement about starting the new school year.

**"Explican todo perfecto con detalle. Para que hacia los niños se sientan más seguros. // They explain everything perfectly in detail. So the children feel safer."**



## COLLEGE FAIR



Families had an opportunity to attend workshops and access nearly 50 colleges and their representatives. Over 1,200 family members and students participated in the College Fair. Parent University built on success and increased 50% over the 2022-23 school year. This count includes over 923 parents or guardians and 944 students. A total of 1,867 adults and students attended the 23-24 College Fair.



The College Fair reached families, including many that have traditionally been underrepresented. While more than half of the participants were white (57%), more than one in four were Hispanic/Latino, and 8% were multiracial, 6% Asian, 2% Black/African American, and 1% Pacific Islander. Nearly one in four (24%) met the criteria for free and reduced lunch (FRL). Youth with IEPs, learning English, Experiencing homelessness, and chronic absence were also in attendance.



Established a new partnership with Spread the Word Nevada to host Family Literacy Nights at various elementary schools. Twelve schools participated in the Family Literacy Nights series. Schools served included

- Cannan
- Greenbrae
- Maxwell
- Kate Smith
- Risley
- Smithridge
- Palmer
- Mitchell
- Anderson
- Desert Heights
- Mariposa
- Booth

The Family Literacy Night series brought families together to participate in read-aloud designed to model skills families can use in the home when reading with their children. Families learn a new skill in each session and receive a free book supporting the new skill. These were offered through 45 events during the school year.

These events were very well attended, with more than 600 families participating. Nearly all 94% would recommend to others, and nearly all (90%) rated usefulness and quality as outstanding or above average.



Over 600 families attended the event.



94% of families would recommend these events.



90% of families rated the quality of the events as outstanding and above average.



90% of families rated the usefulness of the events as outstanding and above average.

Family Literacy Night, n =542

Spread the Word Nevada reached families with intention. Nearly all (99%) met the criteria for Free or Reduced Lunch. Over two-thirds (68%) were Hispanic/Latino; 18% were white, 4% were multiracial, 4% Black/African American, 3% Asian, 4% Black/African American, 2% Pacific Islander, and 1% American Indian. Nearly one in three were learning English. 14% have IEPs, 3% experiencing homelessness, and 13% with chronic absence.

Families expressed gratitude for the workshops and discussed how they had impacted them.

**“[We liked best] the amazing knowledge the teachers have and how they make things easy for us parents to learn how to help our kids.”**

**“Thank you for the time given to the kids.”**

**“[We liked] Everything, especially teamwork.”**

**“The participatory aspect of the event was really fun!”**

**“Great job in keeping kids intrigued in reading.”**

**“I can see other places I can use to help my child.**

**“I loved the free book & activity. Helps kids interested in reading.”**

## FAMILY HIKE



As part of the Parent U Emotional Well-being/Mental Health Strand, and in partnership with Reno Inspiring Connections Outdoors (ICO) and the

Redfield Community Outreach program, Parent University offered a Family Day at the Carson River Trail. The Family Day event allowed families to strengthen their relationships with their children as they

enjoyed a beautiful hike along the river. "The benefits of children and parents/caregivers experiencing nature together include (1) improved communication and stronger bonds between family members, (2) deeper appreciation of family traditions and cultural heritage, and (3) stronger and sustained connectedness to nature<sup>6</sup>."



The event brought together 26 participants connected with nature and bonded while spending high-quality time together. They also learned about the following:

- Access the outdoor resources
- Leave No Trace principles and trail etiquette
- Hiking safety
- Benefits of hiking - brain regulation, mental health, connection to our natural
- environment, free exercise



<sup>6</sup> Research digest: Family engagement with nature' Children & Nature Network. (2023, May 30). <https://www.childrenandnature.org/resources/research-digest-family-engagement-with-nature.>



Overall, this event was rated by participating families as a great experience to explore and connect while having fun in nature.

Participating families answered a brief survey about their experiences. In general, they loved the overall experience, and the picnic spot was a highlight.

About the Experience and Best Part

- **“This is my first time, me and [my child] and I really had a fun time and also for me a good exercise. My favorite part was sitting and having lunch with everyone and talking a lot of experience.”**
- **“We had lots of fun. We loved the river and the trail where we sat to eat as well. My favorite part was walking and looking at nature. “**
- **“To be honest, it is great to be out in nature again. My kids loved it, and they want to do it again. My favorite time together, and it is a good thing to experience the world with our friends.”**
- **“It was very cool and very fun. The sites were very beautiful, and the lunch was very good. My favorite part was the Carson River, when we went down and threw rocks in.**
- **“We had lots of fun walking down the trails, learned about nature, and enjoyed our lunch outside. My favorite part was being with a group and eating lunch.”**
- **“It’s a good experience for both of us to have a good view. I do see that kids are really excited and having fun. My favorite part was the picnic spot.”**



## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Parent University served thousands of families in the 2023-24 school year; programming spanned topics and geographies. Parent University met its targets and aligned programming with its goals. The vast majority of participants indicated that the workshops were of high quality and usefulness. Self-reported changes in knowledge, skills, and confidence were statistically significant.

As Parent University moves into its next programming year, the evaluation supports continuing to use the practices that it has to develop programming and engage families. The following recommendations are also respectfully submitted.

**Honor Family Voice.** Families have provided valuable feedback and input. Parent University has and can continue to hear families, improve programming, and respond to their suggestions and ideas. Through surveys, families express appreciation for what is offered and often want to see even **more offerings**. More funding for Parent University would help to expand teacher connections and programming. Provided funding at limited levels, programming through partnerships can help to sustain what is in place.

**Strengthen the Capacity of Schools through Information and Support for Administrators and Teachers.** Parent University has over a decade of experience providing high-quality events that engage families, resulting in knowledge, skills, and confidence changes. Parent University can serve as a **hub, knowledge resource, and school repository**. This role - capacity builder and technical assistance provider - can also help to expand impact by leveraging the knowledge and expertise of the program team.

**Expand Offerings for Depth and Pathways for Engagement, Especially for Transitions.** Data shows that families seek information and support for school transitions, such as entering kindergarten, transitioning to middle, and beyond high school. Offering more depth to support these transitions - especially the transition to middle - **take advantage of important times in families' lives to strengthen relationships with schools and education.**

## Contact Information

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