2020-21 Program Evaluation

WASHOE COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT (WCSD)

DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Community Services Agency - Head Start

Join Together Northern Nevada (JTNN)

KNPB / PBS Reno

Nevada Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support (PBIS)

RISE Academy for Adult Achievement

Sierra Nevada Journeys

Truckee Meadows Community College (TMCC)

University of Nevada, Reno - College of Education

Washoe County Library System

WCSD 21st Century Learning Department

WCSD Department of Assessment

WCSD Department of Counseling Services

WCSD Department of Curriculum & Instruction

WCSD Department of English Language Learners & World Languages

WCSD Department of Gifted and Talented

WCSD Department of Multi -Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) and Social Emotional Learning (SEL)

WCSD Extended Studies

WCSD Signature Academy and Career & Technical Education (CTE)

Contents

EVALUATION SUMMARY

Through the 2020-21 school year, Parent University brought information to families to extend their knowledge, skills, confidence, and connections in support of student learning. This work took place under considerably challenging circumstances, with the COVID-19 pandemic changing the ways that children, families, teachers, and schools experienced educational settings. Parent University adapted and modified to meet the emerging needs of families, teachers, and schools. This report summarizes some of the processes and the outcomes from this year.

Sources for the evaluation include program records, data from social media, participant surveys, published literature on family engagement, teacher-recorded videos, focus groups with teachers and other staff, and informal interviews with Parent University leadership.

Summary of Results

REACH

✓ A total of **2,440** participants were counted by Parent University facilitators. Of this total, **1,830** individual families were verified by name through the Infinite Campus System. Not all participants were able to be counted or verified due to technological and processes barriers. Views of posted online Parent University offerings exceeded **4,800**. Together, these data support that Parent University **met or exceeded its goal of 2,000 participants** during the school year.

CONNECTION

Among participating families,

✓ 34% had a student who qualified for free and reduced lunch (FRL);
✓ 12% had increased risk factors (as measured by the District's Early Warning Index, or EWI);
✓ 10% had a student with limited English proficiency (LEP); and
✓ 10% had a student with an individualized education plan (IEP).
✓ Many engaged in more than one learning opportunity, deepening their experience and connection to instructors and content.

ADAPTING TO CHANGING NEEDS

Parent University adjusted to meet emerging needs necessitated by COVID-19, including:

✓ **Method of Delivery**. When in-person gatherings were not allowable, Parent University moved sessions and events online, using platforms like zoom. The program also

worked to innovate in-person gatherings for families who could not access online offerings at home. Data from the asynchronous (recordings) show that over 4,000 people accessed recordings related to technology.

✓ **Outreach.** Principals, teachers, and FACE liaisons encouraged families to attend offerings at participating schools and online. Examples of extensive outreach included calling families and giving them step-by-step instructions on connecting to webinars and learning sessions.

✓ **Content.** Parent University kept many of the same topics from previous years and also partnered to provide support for families' emerging needs.

ENGAGEMENT OF SCHOOLS, TEACHERS, AND STAFF

✓ Programming was offered through **35** schools, resulting in over **100** offerings for families, covering nearly **60** topics. Within these offerings, several consisted of multiple sessions to deepen knowledge, learning, and connections.

SATISFACTION & LEARNING

✓ Three in four participants **(76%)** rated program quality and usefulness as **outstanding.**

✓ Nearly all participants reported gains in skills and abilities related to the topic, awareness of available resources, and confidence to support their children's goals.

Discussion and Recommendations

The COVID-19 pandemic has created new challenges for families, and impacts have been and will continue to be felt disproportionately. Family Engagement through Parent University provides a lasting solution to support families–especially those disproportionately impacted by the pandemic—to connect schools, families, and communities for education and toward community resilience. Parent University has extensive experience and success with family engagement and has built-in learning to its processes to adapt to changing situations.

RECCOMENDATIONS & OPPORTUNTIES

The following recommendations are respectfully submitted for consideration for future work. Many of these recommendations reflect work already in progress and reflect opportunities to continue efforts.

1. **Stay the Course: Relationships, Trust, and Information**
2. **Experiment and Learn What Works as Conditions Change**
3. **Focus on Teachers & School Capacity**
4. **Support Language Opportunities & Cultural Sensitivity**
5. **Strengthen Opportunities to Build Family Leadership**

INTRODUCTION

CONTEXT FOR THE EVALUATION

The school year 2020-21 marked a historically challenging time for education. The COVID-19 pandemic continued from spring 2020 into the fall of 2021, creating obstacles for school districts across the nation as they worked to incorporate emerging public health knowledge alongside high-quality education.

Family engagement also changed in the context of the pandemic. Undoubtedly, families needed new information to navigate new structures and systems. New questions and issues took on considerable urgency as more families experienced major changes in employment, care, health, social connection, and education.

Data provide evidence that the experiences of families and students' academic outcomes are considerably different, with social determinants disproportionately impacting people and specific communities. The pandemic further exposed these differences in conditions. People who were already in challenging situations experienced some of the pandemic's most potent, negative impacts.

As specific examples, families who worked front-line jobs were required to continue work in person, even when other jobs were relocated to homes. This difference in family support – a supervised and supported online education vs. one that had to be performed with little to no adult supervision – provides an example of how disparity and inequity deepened during the school year. Families with lower incomes did not have the flexibility to work from home and support their children. Undocumented families that did not qualify for unemployment and stimulus checks had extra stressors. Multigenerational households were more worried about keeping their elders safe and healthy. Other examples include:

Technology – including virtual platforms for learning – was an aid to connection when in-person gatherings were not possible. However, these technologies had their barriers, and student, parent, teacher, and neighborhood access varied considerably. The "technology divide" or "digital divide" impacted families disproportionately. Limited access to the internet and lack of familiarity with devices and software platforms were some of the factors that prevented many from connecting to Parent University online events, workshops, and live events.

Parent University was envisioned, planned, and implemented in 2011 as a pathway for meaningful family engagement, intentionally and systematically providing information to help families navigate school systems and support academic learning outside of the classroom. From its start, Parent University worked with an equity lens, directing support and information families who may need it most. However, in 2020-21, Parent University was less able to reach these families, given that many had heightened stresses and challenges, growing from employment, economic instability, individual or family members ill with COVID-19, and other related conditions. In contrast, families with more resources were also more ready to take up supports. These challenges are the backdrop for the program in 2020-21. Amid considerable external changes, the Parent University team demonstrated commitment to several key practices.

- Embedded in Parent University is attention to equity, orienting outreach, programming, and support to families who may need more assistance than others in navigating school systems. Both as a process and an outcome, Parent University considers relationship building the first steps in meaningful Family Engagement. The focus on equity both informs the process and the work to continuously improve program outcomes. In a typical program year, Parent University supported childcare and transportation to reduce participation. barriers. In the current year, taking down barriers centered largely around addressing the digital divide.
- Trust and relationships have been a cornerstone, important process for, and goal of family engagement. Yet, practitioners recognize that trust is a barrier for many families in engaging with schools. When it can be authentically gained, the results are far-reaching. Trust can also be absent from the perspective of administrators and teachers, who may doubt or question families' roles in aspects of their education. Building trust and communication requires intentionality requires ongoing practice.
- Parent University values and centers families and recognizes parents and caregivers as foundational partners in student success. Leveraging research on family engagement, Parent University worked to develop knowledge and skills (capabilities), connections (networks), beliefs and values (cognitions), and confidence (self-efficacy) of families to support their children during challenging conditions.

The program evaluation methods were guided by previous years' evaluations, with some modifications made based on new questions from Parent University leadership. To adapt to changing conditions during the pandemic, many adjustments and changes to programming, record keeping, and evaluation took place in 2020-21.

- Parent University team members tracked the details of sessions, including what was planned where, and session outcomes.
- Data on attendance was collected through Parent University Session leaders. In some cases, not all participants could be counted. Examples include when a person was using a device anonymously. These data have been captured as "views" and counts.
- For families where names were provided, Parent University submitted this information to provide aggregate information on student demographics, e.g., schools where students attend, demographic factors, and more.
- Post event surveys (515) were collected. Of this total, 456, or 89% were English, and 11% were completed in Spanish. Compared to previous years, the total number of surveys as both an absolute number and as a percentage of sessions is lower. This difference is likely due to the changes to an online experience and was not isolated only to Parent University but to other programs collecting participant surveys and feedback.
- Two online focus groups were held with teachers and Parent University team members who had participated in Kinder Kickoff, Literacy Clubs (or both). Focus groups asked questions to better understand how these events worked in the virtual space; successes, challenges, and lessons learned.
- Social media data was recorded electronically and automatically by the hosting platform (e.g., YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram). These data were extracted at year end (June 2021) and provided to the evaluator.
- Informal interviews with the staff and team took place at year end. These conversations helped the evaluator to understand program changes that took place during the year.
- Information from secondary sources such as WCSD and national results were also reviewed and summarized in the development of this report.

Limitations

- Compared to previous years, sign-in sheets and evaluations were not collected at the same level. Some of the reasons include facilitators forgetting, especially as they balanced and used new online tools. Some families felt that it was tedious, or time consuming. Some families used their smart phone to participate, making evaluations and sign in sheets very challenging.

EVALUATION QUESTION 1: What has been the reach of Parent University this year?

Programming was offered through 35 schools, resulting in over 100 offerings for families, covering nearly 60 topics and areas for learning. Within these offerings, several consisted of multiple sessions for the same families. Offerings covered student development from pre-K to high school completion. Sessions were completed online using virtual connections (e.g., zoom and YouTube); some sessions were held in person when allowable and appropriate.

Parent University set an attendance goal to serve 2,000 through synchronous, "live" sessions. Of this total, program staff verified 1,830 families attended through the Infinite Campus System. A total of 2,440 individuals were counted through attendance by facilitators. The primary reason families that were not "verified" as a result of joining by smartphone and not sharing a screen name. With this context, the evaluation data supports that the attendance goal, including for live, synchronous sessions, was most likely met or exceeded. Considering only verified individuals, 92% of the goal was met.

Attendance Goal	Count of Unduplicated Individual Families, Verified through Student IDs	Count of Participants, in Sessions, including those Not Verified	Count of all Children, including Siblings, from Participating and Verified Households
2,000	1,830	2,440	2,805

In addition to people attending live sessions, recorded materials posted on the web could be viewed asynchronously. This capability expanded reach of information. Participant views of this material exceeded 4,800.

Views of Recorded Materials
4,800+

EVALUATION QUESTION 2: To what extent has parent university been able to reach families who need information most?

Factors can impact students' ability to reach their academic potential. Being able to reach families of students who may face difficulties early can help to get or keep them on track and moving toward success in school, including graduation and post-secondary success. Yet, many families face barriers to engagement. Many of these barriers deepened and widened during the pandemic.

BY EARLY WARNING INDEX

WSCD uses data on students to identify factors associated with non-graduation or school failure. Among Parent University participants, 12% 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 is higher than in previous years.

When compared to the previous school year, the percentage of students who are "no risk" fell. This suggests that both at the District level and within Parent University have more students with one or more risk factors. As another factor, it is important to note that Pre-K and Kindergarten students made up a large proportion of Parent University families but do not have a risk category available.

	Percentage in Parent University	Overall Percentage in WCSD
Risk Category not Available	37.6%	11.8%
No Risk	50.8%	59.8%
Low Risk*	7.0%	13.6%
Moderate Risk	2.8%	7.5%
High Risk	1.7%	7.2%

BY CIRCUMSTANCE

Families may face different types of barriers to engaging with school systems. These situations are common and widespread; circumstances like working inflexible schedules, caring for young children or older adults, lacking reliable transportation, having a serious health issue, speaking a language other than English, and many others. Parent University has always worked to address these barriers so that families can participate. While data on these issues aren't collected on these factors, some "proxy" data can help to approximate how well families with these circumstances were met.

Roughly one-third (34%) of all students qualified for Free and Reduced lunch, 10% had a student with an individualized education plan (IEP), and 10% had limited English proficiency (LEP). These data are related to challenges or barriers for students and families. Reaching a considerable portion of families with these circumstances speaks to the work of families to engage under what may be challenging conditions and the work of the program to reduce barriers to participation.

As noted previously, barriers to participation hit families who were already facing socio-economic challenges disproportionately through the digital divide, over-employment at frontline jobs, and stress from job loss.

By Situation	Change from 2019-20
33.7% Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL)	↓
9.7% Individualized Education Plan (IEP)	=
9.8% Limed English Proficiency (LEP)	↓

BY GEOGRAPHY

Where families live has an important effect on life outcomes. Despite intentional outreach to families that live in zip codes prioritized by County Health, the pandemic put up considerable barriers for attendance in these areas. Surveys showed the zip codes best represented in Parent University were 89436, 89441, and 89521.

Zip Cde	Count	%Of Total*
89436	84	16%
89441	65	13%
89521	57	11%
89503	46	9%
89523	43	8%
89506	41	8%
89433	32	6%
89434	32	6%
89431	25	5%
89502	23	4%

Count of Answer
0   84
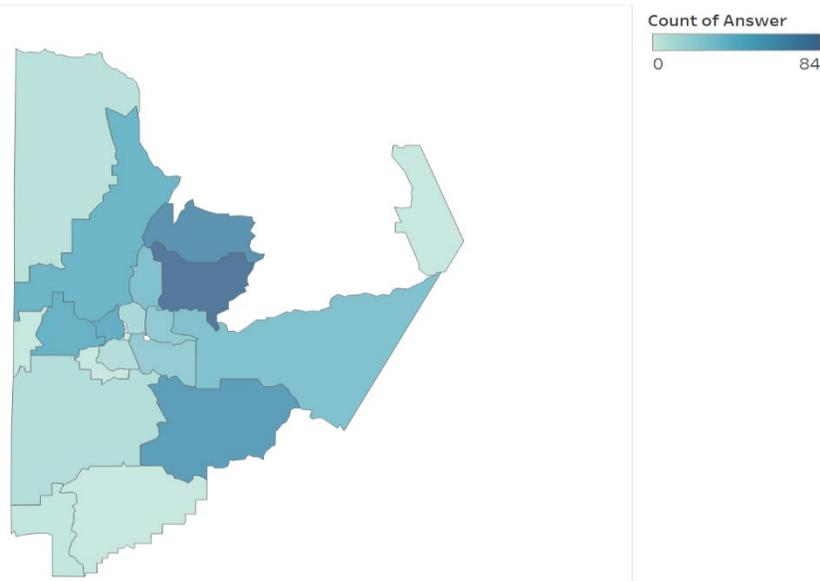
*9 zip codes that had fewer than 3 responses were excluded from the table.

Parent University participants were similar in race and ethnicity compared to the District's population. People who are White were over-represented in Parent University in the 2020-21 school year. People who are Pacific Islander, more than two races, Asian, and American Indian, were well-represented compared to the overall population of WCSD schools. People who are Black, and people who are Hispanic/Latino, were underrepresented compared to the District overall. Compared to the previous year, families attending Parent University in 2020-21 were less representative of the overall population by race and ethnicity.

	Percentage in Parent University	Overall Percentage in WCSD
White	54%	44%
Pacific Islander	4%	1%
Multi-Racial/Two or More Races	8%	6%
Hispanic/Latino	30%	42%
Black/African American	>1%	2%
Asian	6%	4%
American Indian/Alaska Native	1%	1%

EVALUATION QUESTION 3: To what degree has parent university been able to change and adapt processes to fit emerging school and family needs during the pandemic?
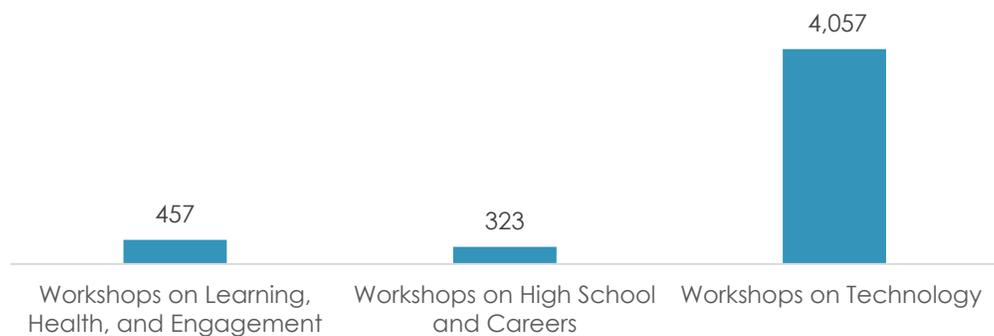
ASSETS AND CHALLENGES IN 2020-21

The start of the school year in 2020 took place amid the COVID-19 pandemic. WCSD responded with several solutions for families, including remote instruction, in-person instruction, and hybrid options.

Parent University adapted in considerable ways to adjust to emerging situations.

Family engagement took place virtually.

- ✓ **Method of Delivery.** When in-person gatherings were not allowable, Parent University moved learning sessions and events online, using platforms like zoom. The program also worked to innovate in-person gatherings that could address the digital divide. In some situations, schools accommodated a very small group of families onsite, logging into a workshop and projecting on the smartboard for families. Other events featured drive-ins, allowing people to gather safely in their cars and receive attention and instruction.
- ✓ **Outreach.** FACE liaisons, teachers, and principals worked hard to encourage families to attend. Some of the outreach included calling families and giving them step-by-step instructions on how to connect.
- ✓ **Content.** Parent University kept many of the same topics important to families but also provided considerable support for families' biggest need: technology support. Data from the asynchronous (recordings) show that over 4,000 people accessed recordings on technology.
- ✓ **Direct Support.** Parent University also delivered learning materials to the school sites for distribution to families.

| | | 4,057 |
| Workshops on Learning, Health, and Engagement (457) | Workshops on High School and Careers (323) | Workshops on Technology (4,057) |

EVALUATION QUESTION 4: To what degree are principals, teachers, face liaisons, and others aware of the resources, both generally and specifically, available to help families through parent university?

Parent University is promoted to families through schools 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 participation.

In 2020-21 FACE Liaisons, teachers, and Principals worked hard to encourage families to attend. Some of the outreach included calling families and giving them step-by-step instructions on how to connect.

Social media provides one data point for general awareness of Parent University.

Followers as of June 2021	1,067	344	268
Percent Change from June 2	28%	NA	NA

PARENT UNIVERSITY BY SCHOOL

Schools listed hosted one or more Parent University event. At these schools, administrators, FACE liaisons, a portion of teachers, and school personnel were actively engaged in outreach to families. Shaded boxes are Title 1 schools in 2020-21.[1]

School	Number of Offerings
Brown ES	●
Damonte Ranch HS	●
Dodson ES	●
Galena High School	●
Lena Juniper ES	●
Lincoln Park ES	●
Maxwell ES	●
Mount Rose ES	●
Risley ES	●
Sparks MS	●
Stead ES	●
Traner MS	●
Mathews ES	◆◆
Bennett ES	◆◆
CTE Signature Academies	◆◆
Desert Heights ES	◆◆
Duncan ES	◆◆
Allen ES	◆◆
Diedrichsen ES	◆◆
Palmer ES	◆◆
Poulakidas ES	◆◆
Smithridge ES	◆◆
Towles ES	◆◆
Winnemucca ES	◆◆
Booth ES	●●●
Hall ES	●●●
Lemelson ES	●●●
Lemmon Valley ES	●●●

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[1] https://www.washoeschools.net/Page/1309

Evaluation Question 5:

Were people satisfied with the information & resources they received?

PROGRAM QUALITY & USEFULNESS

Through surveys, participants rated the quality and usefulness of learning sessions.

The vast majority of participants (89%) rated the workshop quality as outstanding or above average. Within this group, more than three in four participants rated quality as outstanding.

Quality

Poor 2%
Below Average 1%
Average 4%
Above Average 17%
Outstanding 76%

■ Outstanding ■ Above Average ■ Average ■ Below Average ■ Poor
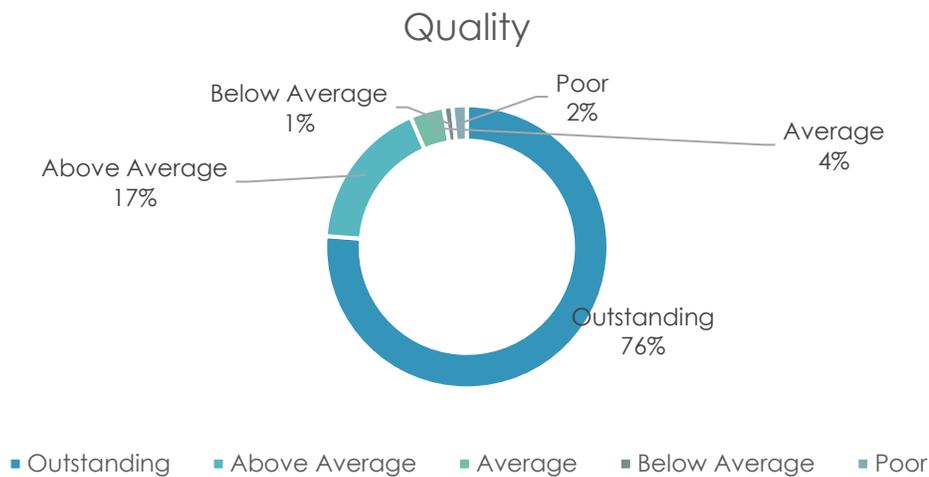
Nearly all participants (91%) rated usefulness as outstanding or above average. More than three in four participants reported usefulness as outstanding.

Usefulness

Average 3%
Below Average 1%
Poor 1%
Above Average 19%
Outstanding 76%

■ Outstanding ■ Above Average ■ Average ■ Below Average ■ Poor
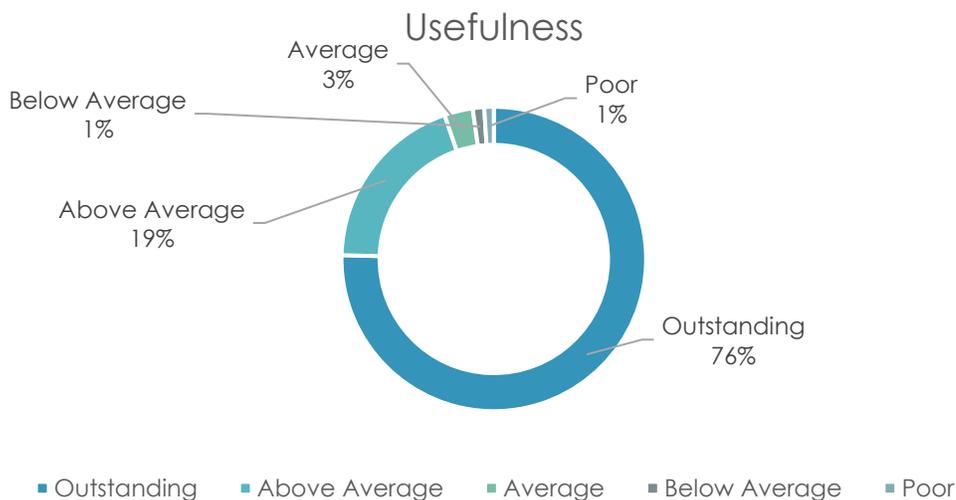
CHANGES IN KNOWLEDGE, AWARENESS, AND CONFIDENCE

After most Parent University sessions, participants were asked to complete an anonymous survey to provide feedback and report any changes because of the session.

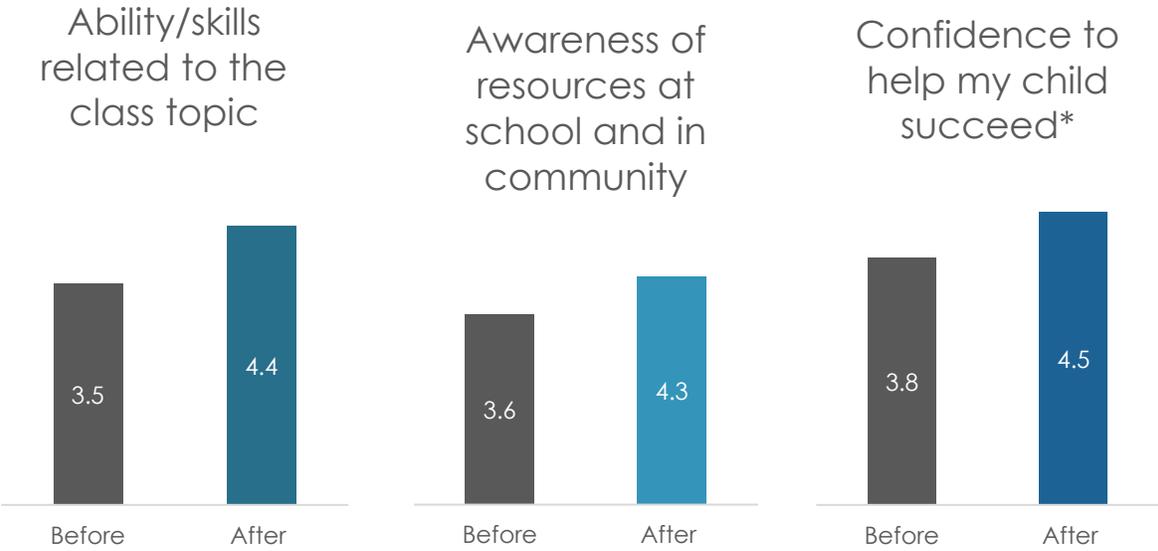Participants reported changes in knowledge awareness and confidence because of learning sessions. The most significant growth was in knowledge change, followed by awareness and confidence. Across the program, these gains were consistent and statistically significant.

Knowledge related to the class topic (Capabilities)

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

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

Ability/skills related to the class topic		Awareness of resources at school and in community		Confidence to help my child succeed*	
3.5	4.4	3.6	4.3	3.8	4.5
Before	After	Before	After	Before	After

LEARNING SPOTLIGHTS

Parent University offers a wide range of events, learning sessions for families and teachers interacting with students of diverse ages and stages. In the program spotlights, several aspects of 2020-21 programming are highlighted.

KINDER KICK-OFFS

In partnership with the District Kindergarten Coordinator, Parent University supported Kindergarten teachers, who have opted int o these supports, to initiate strong, positive relationships with our newest families in WCSD. Kindergarten teachers were supported to create a virtual space for families to connect and build a classroom community. Kinder Kickoff Events took place in August 2020 using zoom technology to accommodate the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic.

PARTICIPATION

Teachers received guidance to develop the virtual kinder kickoffs, including an agenda that prioritized family and child interaction with the events.

An estimated 276 individual families participated. Counts may underestimate total participation, as not all teachers were able to complete sign-in sheets.

> **Kinder Kickoff at a Glance**
>
> Welcoming Ritual
>
> Academic Activities to Extend Learning at Home
>
> "All About Me and My Family" Poster Activity
>
> Closing Activity
>
> Questions and link to an Evaluation

FAMILY LITERACY CLUBS

Family Literacy Clubs provide an in-depth, multi-session connection for teachers, families, and students. The Family Literacy Clubs were offered to families with children in kindergarten through third grade at seven participating schools.

PARTICIPATION

In 2020-21, programming was offered online, using zoom. A minimum of 178 individual families participated, with likely more connecting with programming through sharing at home. Family Literacy Clubs met more than one time, with nearly 400 (duplicated) counted through attendance.

> **Family Literacy Club Session at a Glance**
>
> Welcoming Ritual
>
> Objective
>
> Introduction to Content
>
> Activity
>
> Closing

 Please see the associated reports that provides more detail on Kinder Kickoff and Family Literacy Club in 2020-21.

FAST WEBINAR SERIES FOR FAMILIES

The monthly Families and Staff Together (FAST) for 4 Kids webinar series was developed and implemented in collaboration with various other departments in WCSD, including Nursing, Counseling, Equity & Diversity, Curriculum & Instruction, 21st Century and social emotional learning (SEL). The webinars featured highly engaging speakers for families to learn about key topics to support their child's education for the 20-21 school year.

Topics included

- ✓ FAST #1 Keeping Kids Safe & Healthy During the School Year
- ✓ FAST #2 Main technology learning supports and how to utilize them!
- ✓ FAST #3 Engagement, Behavior, and Support

PARTICIPATION

Attendance of 729 family members was counted through live webinars. Nearly 500 "views" of webinars were also counted after the events. Additional families watched recorded sessions.

TECHNOLOGY SUPPORT DRIVE-IN

The Technology Support Drive-In invited families to attend a learning session in their cars, with a screen projected for all to see and speakers outdoors. The Technology Drive In was held at Vaughn Middle School but focused on supporting families from Booth Elementary School. The Parent University Team and school site invited families who were having difficulties with the technology platforms. The drive-in at Vaughn MS parking lot assisted families and also demonstrated that this method of content delivery could work during the pandemic.

PARTICIPATION

13 families attended the technology drive in at Vaughn.

FAMILY SUPPORT DRIVE-IN

Parent University also organized a drive-in at the El Rancho Drive-In theater. This event provided information to help families monitor their children's grades and assignments, to help their students to stay organized and on track, and modeled discussions with children to support students' assignment, grades. Families learned skills to support motivation and tips to encourage students to do their best.

PARTICIPATION

63 family members attended Technology Support Event, held at El Rancho (theater).

VIRTUAL PASSPORT TO HIGH SCHOOL

Passport to High School Success (Virtual Nights) was offered through Signature and Career & Technical Education Department and supported through Parent University. These virtual nights were designed to help families in middle school navigate the many different options available in high school to WCSD students, including Signature Academies and Career and Technical Education courses.

PARTICIPATION

Through 3 virtual sessions, 284 participants were counted at Virtual passport to High School events. Recordings were also made of these events and viewed online.

COLLEGE AWARENESS WEEK

Description

WCSD presented an opportunity to engage in a series of events related to supporting students by participating, exploring, planning for the next steps as they imagine, and learning about college possibilities. College Awareness Week was held virtually, offering students information typically provided through the Western Association for College Admission Counseling (WACAC) Annual College Fair. Topics included general information about college, financing, applications, and specialized topics for students who are Dreamers (DACA (Deferred Action for Child Arrivals), students who are Native American/American Indian, and students who are the first in their family to apply and attend college.

PARTICIPATION

More than 250 participants engaged "live" in 20 webinars offered throughout the week. Topics on application and financing college had the highest level of attendance.

OTHER TOPICS AND LEARNING SESSIONS

Parent University offered many other learning sessions for families. Titles included:

- ✓ Arts for All
- ✓ Build Strength and Resilience During Uncertain Times
- ✓ Build your own family game
- ✓ Do You know that YOUR public library has tons of FREE resources?
- ✓ Edgenuity & Skills Needed to be Successful with Distance Learning
- ✓ Edgenuity Support
- ✓ Explore Writing Together
- ✓ Family Meeting- Math
- ✓ Family Meeting- RBG3, literacy resources
- ✓ Family Meeting- Resources
- ✓ Family Meeting- SEL
- ✓ Fun ways to practice math with preschoolers
- ✓ Have you Ever Wondered How to Support Your Child's Behavior at Home?
- ✓ How To Help Your Child with Executive Functioning Skills

- ✓ How to Make the Most of Your Parent Teacher Conference
- ✓ Keep Your Culture Alive, Embrace Being Bilingual It's An Asset
- ✓ Let's Discover STEM
- ✓ Literacy Adventures
- ✓ Make Learning Fun During School Breaks
- ✓ Making Learning Fun During School Breaks
- ✓ Math Problem Solving- Activities and Ideas

- ✓ Parent Night @Galena
- ✓ Supporting Literacy Skills at Home- Where Do I Start?
- ✓ Supporting STEM at Home
- ✓ Technology Safety Virtual Night
- ✓ Technology Support
- ✓ Top 3 Ways to Get the Most Out of Distance Learning
- ✓ Transition to Kindergarten
- ✓ Thursday Tech Tips for Families

FINDINGS, DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Since its inception in 2011, the program has cumulatively reached over 40,000 family members through workshops and other learning sessions that help families navigate school systems and connect home and school learning environments. The addition of recorded, online sessions extends this reach even further. [2] Evaluation results from 2020-21 can inform planning as Parent University adapts to changing situations for family engagement.

KEY FINDINGS

REACH

Participation goals were most likely met or exceeded, with 92% of the goal verified through the IC system and hundreds more recorded by facilitators. Additionally, more than 4,000 views of online content were captured.

CONNECTION

Parent University reached people likely to benefit from additional information and resources. However, attention to both reach (number served) and equity (serving those who may need support most) require continued focus.

Information on family race and ethnicity showed that in this year, some groups, such as people who are Hispanic/Latinx, had less representation in Parent University compared to the District population and also compared to previous years.

Among participating families,

- ✓ 12% had a student some risk factors as measured by the District's Early Warning Index (EWI);
- ✓ 34% had a student who qualified for free and reduced lunch (FRL);
- ✓ 10% had a student with limited English proficiency (LEP); and
- ✓ 10% had a student with an individualized education plan (IEP).

Many families engaged in more than one opportunity with Parent University, deepening their experience and connection with teachers and content.

ADAPTING TO CHANGING NEEDS

Parent University staff have a deep understanding of the circumstances and situations that are contributing to disparate educational outcomes and are well-positioned to support families in existing and new ways.

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[2] Includes duplication / total people served.

A great deal of programming was adapted to be provided online. Additional methods to bring people together with very minimal risk were also effective and important innovations to reach families with barriers to online participation.

The topic most suggested for additional assistance was math. Other topics such as assistance with technology and social and emotional learning were also requested by many families.

Parent University adjusted to meet emerging needs and circumstances, including:

- ✓ **Method of Delivery**. When in-person gatherings were not allowable, Parent University moved learning sessions and events online, using platforms like zoom. The program also worked to innovate in-person gatherings for families who were not able to access online offerings at home.
- ✓ **Outreach.** Principals, teachers, and FACE liaisons worked to encourage families to attend offerings at participating schools and online. Examples of innovative outreach included calling families and giving them step-by-step instructions on how to connect to webinars and learning sessions.
- ✓ **Content.** Parent University kept many of the same topics from previous, but also partners to provide considerable support for families' emerging need: technology support. Data from the asynchronous (recordings) show that over 4,000 people accessed recordings related to technology.

Engagement of Schools, Teachers, and Staff

Teachers who worked with Parent University recognized the importance and value of engagement through intentional activities.

- ✓ Programming was offered through **35** schools, resulting in over **100** offerings for families, covering nearly **60** topics. Within these offerings, several consisted of multiple sessions to deepen knowledge, learning, and connections.
- ✓ Classroom and social media tools can be helpful to remind families of activities. Teachers and families have likely grown in their comfort and fluency in using these tools.

SATISFACTION & LEARNING

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.

- ✓ Three in four participants **(76%)** rated program quality and usefulness as **outstanding.**
- ✓ Nearly all participants reported gains in skills and abilities related to the topic, awareness of available resources, and confidence to support their children's goals.
- ✓ Participating families appreciate Parent University. Surveys, including open-ended comments, were largely positive and expressed gratitude and encouragement.

WCSD Parent University

In 2021 and beyond, Parent University's mission--helping families to build upon skills, knowledge, and support systems to advocate for their students' success--is perhaps as urgent as it ever has been. However, there are challenges in reaching families in the same ways as previous years. A changing landscape for education, precipitated by the COVID-19 pandemic, currently includes both in-school and distance learning. Parent University can help to engage and maintain connections between home and school.

The following recommendations are respectfully submitted for consideration for future work. Many of these recommendations reflect work already in progress by Parent University.

> **Stay the Course on Family Engagement: Relationships, Trust, and Information to Connect Home and School**

> **Continue to Experiment and Learn What Works**

> **Focus on Teachers & School Capacity**

> **Continue to Expand Language Opportunities & Cultural Sensitivity**

> **Continue Opportunities to Build Family Leadership**

1. **Stay the Course on Family Engagement:**
   Relationships, Trust, and Information to Connect Home and School.

Discussion

The pandemic has dramatically altered the landscape for families, making engagement with education more difficult for many. At the same time, knowledge, information, and resources are more important than ever to help families navigate school systems.

Parent University reached thousands of family members of students through trust and innovative approaches to engagement. Families reported the information to be high quality and useful.
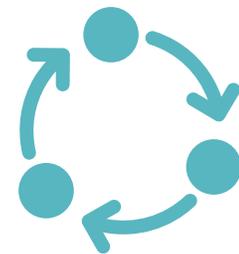
Recommendations

✓ Continue to meet family and school needs through Parent University learning sessions and offerings.
✓ Continue to build relationships between families, teachers, and schools. Opportunities that are offered for the same families more than once, like Family Literacy Clubs, strengthen family, student, and teacher connections.

2. **Continue to Experiment and Learn What Works.**

Discussion

As the school year begins in 2021, some uncertainty for in-person gatherings is likely. Regardless of policies, some families may also minimize social interactions. Real time learning on community needs and preferences will help Parent University to continue to be responsive and relevant.

Recommendations

Results from the evaluation in 2020-21 support:

✓ *Continuing online (remote) offerings in addition to in-person gatherings.* In interviews, teachers noticed both challenges and opportunities with family engagement online. Among the benefits was the ability to reach families when families might prefer or need to be at home. Online experiences can't replace in-person experiences but offer a simple and powerful way to communicate with families in ways that work for many.

- ✓ *Continuing to support pre-recorded materials that can be viewed anytime.* While recorded material is not interactive, it may still help address barriers created by work and childcare schedules that don't easily allow for in-person connections. Passive learning, without registration, may also help families who may be fearful of connecting formally to access information anonymously.
- ✓ *Continuing to support simplified access* through smartphones and other access points; supporting work that closes the digital divide.
- ✓ *Continuing social media and online classroom tools for outreach.* Interviewed teachers are using tools like Class Dojo to keep families informed of important events, activities, and more. These tools could be leveraged to share more opportunities with busy families that appreciate reminders for events.
- ✓ *Expanding drive-Ins and other innovative approaches* when in person gatherings are limited. These activities hold considerable promise in reaching even more families in 2021-22.

3. **Renew Focus on Teachers and School Capacity**.

Discussion

Teachers and administrators have a critical role to play in engaging families (Mapp and *Bergman*'s Dual Capacity framework (See Appendix 1).

Focus groups with teachers (Kinder Kickoffs and Family Literacy Clubs) showed appreciation and leadership development around family engagement provided by Parent University.

Recommendations

- ✓ Teachers may benefit from more information about how to support families. Parent University has extensive experience and knowledge to share and can continue to build capacity of individual teachers and schools.
- ✓ Consider adding a participation goal for teachers and school leadership. Building the capacity of schools to authentically engage with families expands the reach of Parent University aims. Continue to assist teachers and school leadership in building relationships with families through information, training, and tool development.

4. Continue to Promote and Expand Language Opportunities and Cultural Sensitivity.

Discussion

Parent University has worked to reduce communication barriers. These efforts continue to be critical, and even more attention may be needed to overcome intersecting challenges around language, technology, and other family circumstances.

Recommendations

- ✓ Whenever possible, identify and recruit Parent University instructors who are diverse and reflect the race and ethnicity of students and their families.
- ✓ Continue to support Parent University promotion and learning sessions in languages other than English.
- ✓ Continue to identify the assets and needs of families, especially those who are less likely to engage with school systems. Identify partners and strategies that can help to reach families who face barriers to participation.

5. Continue Opportunities to Build Family Leadership

Discussion

Parent University can continue to support family members grow in roles of co-creators, supporters, and models. This is also a key practice according to the Dual Capacity Framework.
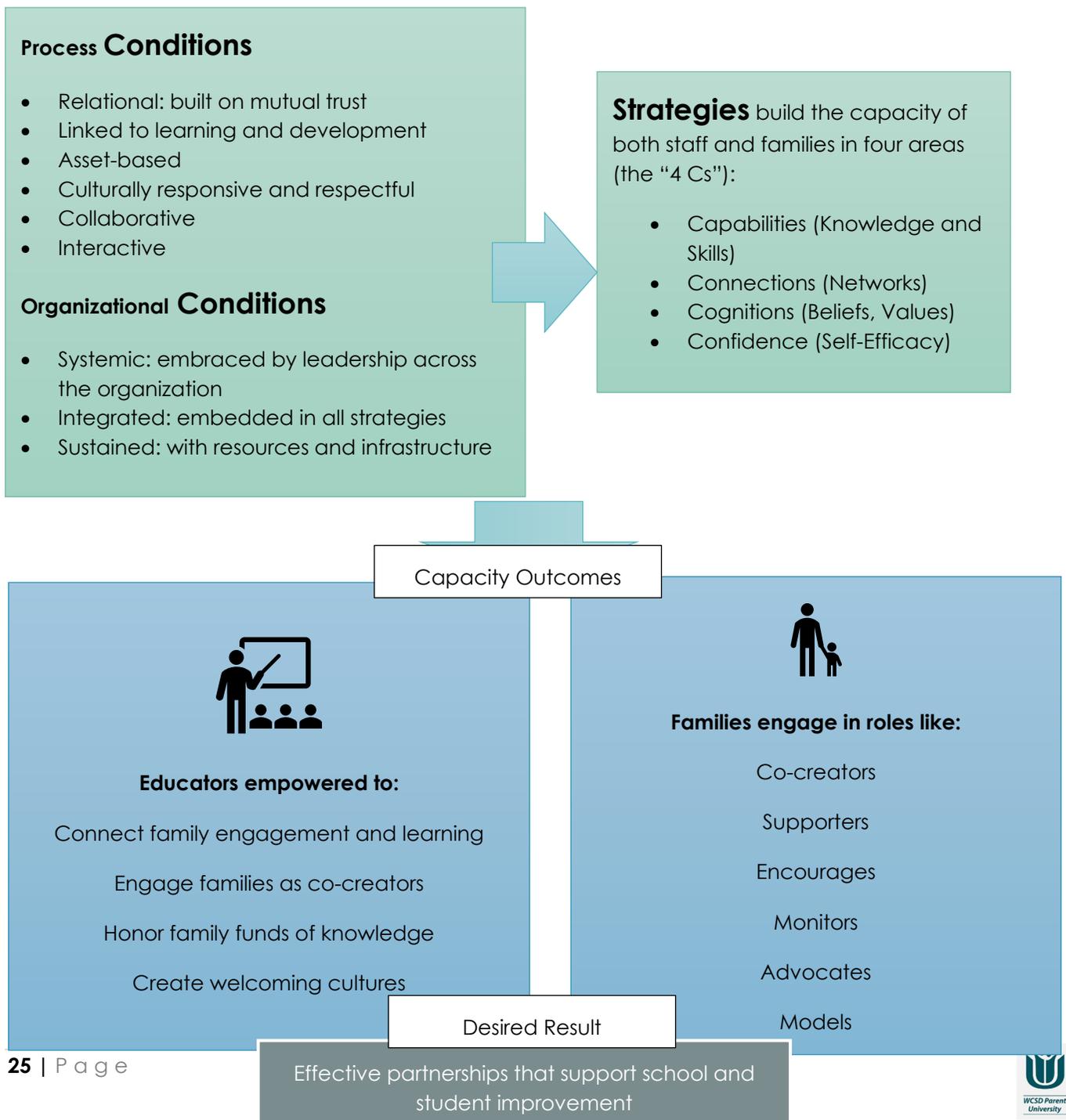
Recommendations

- ✓ Seek out opportunities or relationships with partner organizations that can strengthen families as leaders. Family leaders make changes both for their own families and influence other families to become involved. Families as leaders help to build bridges across cultural and linguistic differences, making engagement with school easier for families who face barriers.

The Dual Capacity Framework by Mapp and Bergman (2019) 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.[3]

Adapted from the *Dual Capacity Framework* *Mapp, K. L. & Bergman, E. (2019). Dual capacity-building framework for family-school partnerships (Version 2). Retrieved from: www.dualcapacity.org.*

Process **Conditions**

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

Organizational **Conditions**

- Systemic: embraced by leadership across the organization
- Integrated: embedded in all strategies
- Sustained: with resources and infrastructure

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)

Capacity Outcomes

Educators empowered to:

Connect family engagement and learning

Engage families as co-creators

Honor family funds of knowledge

Create welcoming cultures

Families engage in roles like:

Co-creators

Supporters

Encourages

Monitors

Advocates

Models

Desired Result

Effective partnerships that support school and student improvement

WCSD Parent University

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

Department of Family-School Partnerships

5450 Riggins Court, Suite #3 Reno, NV 89502

Phone: 775.789.4685 Fax: 775.689.2625

https://www.washoeschools.net/parentu.

This report was developed by Sarah Marschall Strategy.

Phone: (775) 741-5384