



## EVALUATION REPORT

### *Washoe County School District*

## PARENT UNIVERSITY

2011-12



**WCSD Parent  
University**

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Parent University is a project of Washoe County School District (WCSD) and is coordinated through the Department of Family-School Partnerships. On behalf of the District and Department of Family-School Partnerships, the extensive work and commitment of community partners is gratefully acknowledged. In working together, WCSD and community partners have succeeded in reaching Northern Nevada families through classes focused on a common goal: supporting children's academic achievement.

Community partners that provided funding for this project are also gratefully acknowledged. United Way of Northern Nevada and the Sierra (UWNNS) and International Gaming Technology (IGT) were important in making this project possible.



United Way of Northern  
Nevada and the Sierra



*Washoe County School District*  
Every Child, By Name And Face, To Graduation



Report by Social Entrepreneurs Inc.

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“It impacted my life and also my children’s life because we are spending more time together doing homework and activities at the house.”

--Parent Interview

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2011, Washoe County School District (WCSD) introduced and launched a new district-wide parent engagement initiative called Parent University. Classes were offered across the district to provide knowledge and skills that are critical to engaging parents and other caring adults to support their children's academics. This evaluation of Parent University focused on 1) understanding how to enhance and improve Parent University in Year 1; 2) determining whether the program goals and objectives were met; and 3) providing information to inform planning and improvement for subsequent years.

## PARENT UNIVERSITY DESCRIPTION

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In its first year, Parent University brought together more than 22 community-based organizations, six individuals and 11 WCSD departments to provide information to families. Classes began in September, 2011 and concluded in May, 2012. A total of 248 individual classes were provided, to include 79 different courses in five content areas:

- ❖ Learning at Home and Navigating the Educational System
- ❖ Leadership and Advocacy
- ❖ Parenting
- ❖ Health and Wellness
- ❖ Parent's Personal Growth and Development

Classes were held at 91 unique locations throughout the community. Parent University included additional supports to help make classes accessible to all families.

- ❖ Classes were offered at no cost to participants.
- ❖ Most classes were offered at school sites; others were offered at community organizations.
- ❖ Childcare was available at every class offered.

- ❖ Spanish translation and interpretation services were provided at classes offered.

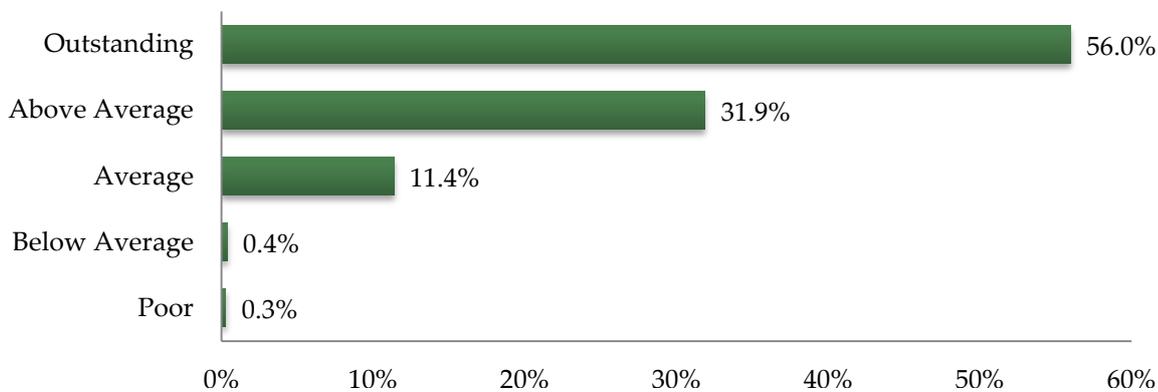
## GOALS AND IMPACT

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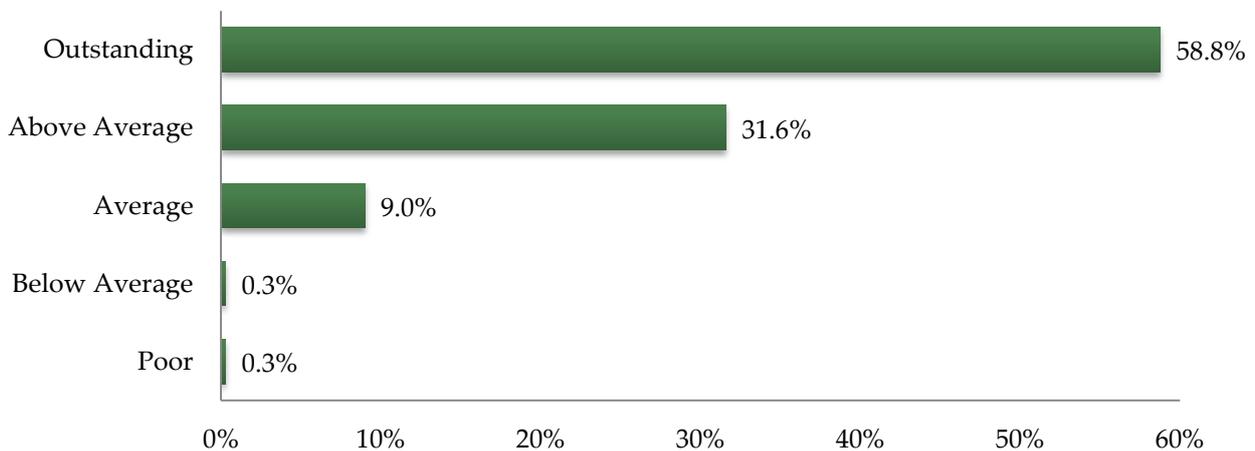
In its first year, Parent University had more than 1,000 participants. Many of these family members took more than one class. A total of 604 *unduplicated* families were counted from WCSD schools. Parent University met its attendance goal for “hard to reach” populations, with 78% of participating families with a child that met at least one of three identified criteria: racial or ethnic minority, low socioeconomic status, or limited in English proficiency.

Across all classes offered, families rated classes very highly in terms of quality and usefulness. The majority of participants (89%) described class **usefulness** as outstanding or above average. The majority of participants (92%) also described class **quality** as outstanding or above average.

### Usefulness of the Class



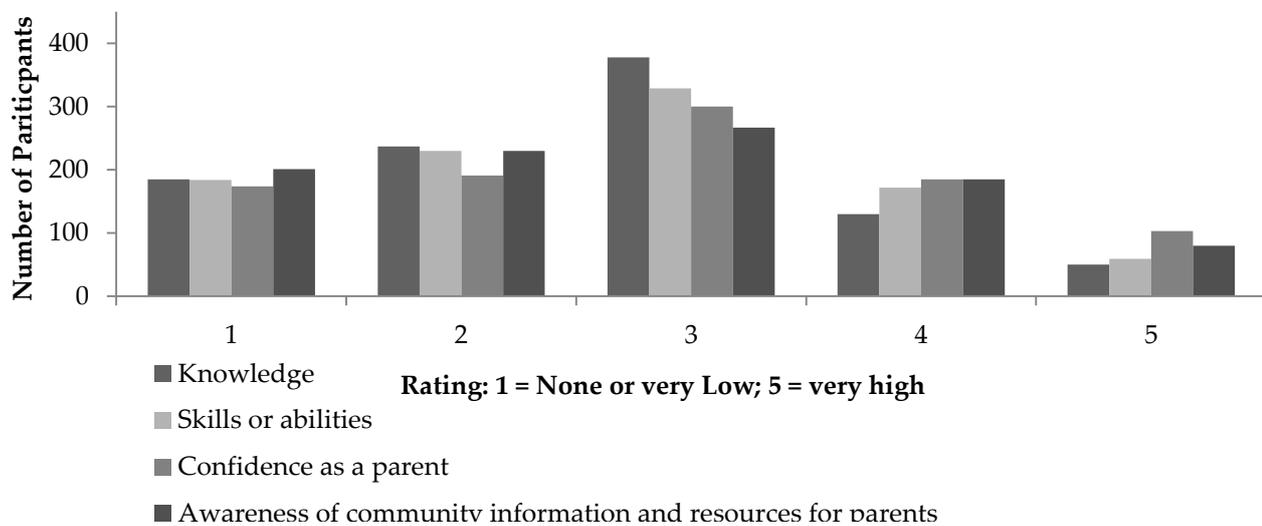
### Quality of the Class



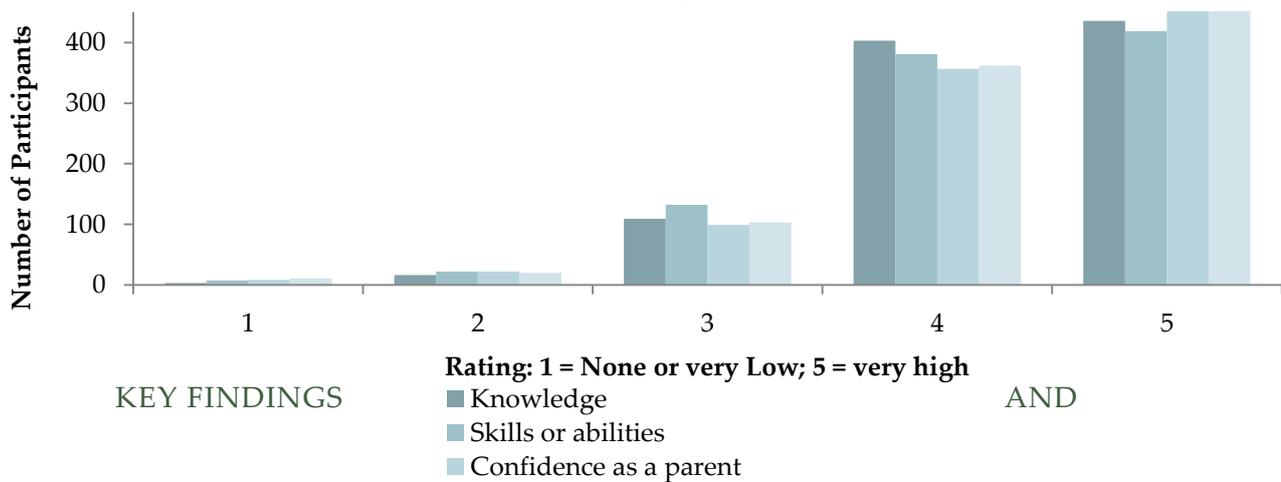
Family Surveys, n = 1,018

Classes were successful in significantly increasing knowledge, skills, confidence, and awareness of resources as they related to the class topic.<sup>1</sup> Gains were highest in knowledge, where prior to the class, 24% of participants rated their knowledge in the class topic as a four or five (high or very high). After the class, 83% of participants rated their skills and abilities as four or five (high or very high).

Self-Reported Knowledge, Skills, Confidence and Awareness  
*Before Class,*  
As Relates to Class Topic  
n = 987\*



Self-Reported Knowledge, Skills, Confidence and Awareness *After Class,*  
As Relates to Class Topic  
n = 972\*



KEY FINDINGS

AND

<sup>1</sup> ( $\chi^2$ ; 4,  $p = .005$ ).

## RECOMMENDATIONS

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Community partners and participating families made suggestions for improvement. Recommendations took into account information from all evaluation sources, including input from community partners, participating families, and other data.

## KEY FINDINGS

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1. Parent University exceeded its goal of 60% attendance of “hard to reach” families – 78% of families that attended met one or more of the identified criteria. The district’s intentional focus on reaching these families was critical to exceeding the goal. Parent University did not achieve its goal of 1,000 *unduplicated* families of WCSD enrolled students. Strategies to engage target populations may be different than strategies needed to attract *more* families overall.
2. Outreach is critical to attracting families to classes. While nearly all families that participated indicated that they would refer other families to Parent University, participants were most likely to report hearing about the opportunities through the school, mailings, and other school and district-initiated outreach.
3. Families represented the district’s diversity. Families that are Hispanic / Latino were best represented.
4. Classes were offered district wide, and families could attend a class in any location. However, families that attended just one class were most likely to attend it at their child’s school than another location. This appears to underscore the importance of familiarity and neighborhood in attendance. Community-based locations, such as classes held at the Boys and Girls Club and the Children’s Cabinet attracted families from multiple schools.
5. Families attended classes in every topic area. Destination University - Destino a la Universidad and Basic Computer Classes were two of the best attended classes, together attracting more than 200 or approximately 20% of the total participants. Other classes with very high attendance included Positive Discipline for Adolescents, Black Student College Education

Series, Understanding Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD), Infinite Campus, How to Talk to your Child about Bullying, and Making the Most of Your Parent Teacher Conference.

6. Participant feedback was **overwhelmingly positive** across all indicators. Families felt that their time was well-spent and that the classes were of high quality.
7. Participants made significant gains in knowledge, skills/abilities, confidence as a parent, and awareness of community information and resources related as a result of the class participation and topic.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

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1. **Planning.** Data from evaluation shows that classes are effective in increasing knowledge, skills and abilities, confidence and awareness related to the class topic. Develop ambitious goals and objectives for Year 2 to expand the reach of the initiative. Consider the needs of groups that may have been under-represented in Year 1, such as families of middle school youth, and families of racial and ethnic minorities other than families that are Hispanic/Latino. If goals are set for both target populations and overall attendance, plan different approaches to meet each goal. For example, maintaining and expanding strategies used in Year 1 to attract “hard to reach” families is likely to be successful. To reach a larger absolute number of families, pilot new approaches.
2. **Supports.** Maintain the supports provided to parents in Year 1 including no-cost classes, childcare, interpretation and translation. Consider opportunities to overcome transportation barriers; data suggests that schools attract their own families to classes. Ideally all classes would be offered at all schools; since this is not feasible, supports to overcome transportation barriers may be important for particular classes and events.
3. **Outreach and Referral.** Consider new strategies to engage teachers and other school personnel. Data suggests that schools

are the most common way that families learned about Parent University. Templates and communication materials may help to encourage both schools and community-based organizations to further participate in outreach and referral. Improvements to streamline data collection will help to provide information on what is working in terms of outreach.

4. **Content Delivery.** 1) Expand series of classes so that families build on new knowledge, as both participants and partnering agencies indicated that families are interested in continuing their growth in the topic area. 2) Pilot at least one online course, to expand reach of Parent University (and collect data to measure its reach, audience, and effectiveness). 3) Consider the importance of individual schools in attracting families to Parent University classes and target content delivery that matches family needs by school.
5. **Evaluation.** Map evaluation to planning efforts to ensure that information is available to report on goals, objectives, and, toward overall impact of Parent University. Improvement of data collection tools is recommended; modifications will allow more accessible information in “real-time” so that Parent University data can be used to improve efforts over the course of Year 2. For many of the courses offered, data collection could be integrated into classes toward measuring outcomes. For example, an actual assessment of knowledge may be appropriate for some class curricula; this data would provide additional information to support whether the class objectives were met.

# EVALUATION REPORT

## INTRODUCTION TO PARENT UNIVERSITY

In 2011, Washoe County School District (WCSD), introduced and launched a new district-wide parent engagement initiative called Parent University. The goal of Parent University is to engage parents and other caring adults in order to help them build the knowledge and skills they need to better support their children. Courses were created and offered that fell within five areas of knowledge and skills identified as being critical to achieving this goal:

- ❖ Supporting Learning and Navigating the System
- ❖ Leadership and Advocacy
- ❖ Parenting
- ❖ Family Health and Wellness
- ❖ Parent's Personal Growth and Development

Parent University was designed to serve Washoe County School District (WCSD) and is also open to all Northern Nevada Families.

The WCSD Office of Family-School Partnerships led planning and implementation of Parent University. Prior to its first year, participation targets were set. The 2011-12 participation goals were:

1. 1,000 parents from the Washoe County School District Schools would participate in 2011-12.
2. Of the 1,000 parents participating, 60% (or 600 parents) will be considered "hard to reach" families.

"Hard to reach" families are defined as families with students who fall into **one or more of the following demographic categories:**

- Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL)
- Racial or Ethnic Minority
- English Language Learners (ELL)

## WASHOE COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT

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WCSD is one of the largest districts in the nation, serving more than 62,000 students each year (Nevada Department of Education, 2011). There are 63 elementary schools, a special education school, 14 middle schools and 13 comprehensive high schools in the district. Most of the district's population is within the Reno/Sparks metropolitan area; schools also serve the communities of Incline Village, Gerlach, Empire and Wadsworth.

A large percentage of the students that WCSD serves are members of "hard to reach" populations. In the context of public education, a "hard to reach" population is a group that has either been traditionally underserved by the educational system, or is difficult to involve in public participation (Doherty et al., 2004; Brackertz, 2007). The WCSD operationally defines "hard to reach" students as having one or more of the following characteristics:

- ❖ Free or Reduced Lunch (FRL)
- ❖ Racial or Ethnic Minority
- ❖ English Language Learner (ELL)

Students and families of WCSD are diverse. During the 2010-11 school year 45% of WCSD students qualified for the free or reduced lunch program, 51% of students identified themselves as belonging to a minority racial or ethnic group and 17% had limited English proficiency. More than one in every ten children (13.0%) had an individualized education plan for a special need or disability. These groups are important, as data suggests that positive educational outcomes such as graduation may be less likely for individuals in these groups (Washoe County School District , 2012).

## FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

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WCSD's investment in parent engagement is supported by extensive research that documents the connection between parent and family involvement and improved educational outcomes for all students, regardless of background. While it may seem counter-intuitive to begin

new projects and programs when districts across Nevada and the nation have faced considerable cuts, research suggests that family engagement can be a powerful intervention that is considerably less costly than other programs or incentives. For example, schools would have to spend \$1,000 more per pupil to reap the same gains in student achievement that an involved parent brings (Westmorland, et al., 2009 p. 1).

In fact, there are more than four decades of research that demonstrate a strong link between family involvement and student achievement. Studies show that when caring adults are involved in their children's educations, there is higher student achievement, better attitudes toward learning, lower dropout rates, and increased community support for education; regardless of socio-economic status, ethnic or racial background, or parents' education level (Antunez, 2000; Epstein, 2001). Additionally, trust between home and school creates a context that supports student achievement, even in the face of poverty (Goddard, Tschannen-Moran, & Hoy, 2001). In other words, students perform better when their families are involved in their learning.

While many families readily engage in their children's education, others face barriers. School districts and communities can help to address barriers to engagement. Reaching out to engage families; making purposeful connections to learning; and investing in high quality programming and staff, communication systems, and evaluation for accountability and continuous learning are examples of important large-scale improvements that can be made by districts and schools (Westmorland, et al., 2009).

WCSD currently provides many tools that can help parents engage with their child's education, but these tools are underutilized. For example, during the 2011-12 school year, less than one-third (32%) of students had one parent or guardian who logged on to the Infinite Campus Parent Portal, an online tool that allows parents instant access to accurate, current, and confidential information about their child's school attendance, grades, class assignments and more. Family literacy and numeracy, internet access at home, family knowledge of the

educational system, and a family's understanding of their educational rights are some of the barriers that stand in the way of families helping their students to be academically successful.

WCSD has seen recent increases to the graduation rate, but, there are also considerable disparities in achievement among groups. Students who have a disability, are limited in their English proficiency, and who come from households of lower socio-economic resources are less likely to graduate than their peers who don't have these factors (Washoe County School District , 2012). Family engagement, including meaningful communication with families that are typically hard to reach is an important strategy to improving student achievement.

## EVALUATION

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The purpose of Parent University evaluation is to answer questions about the initiative during its first year of operation: the 2011-12 school year. Key evaluation questions include:

1. What did Parent University look like in its first year? What was implemented?
2. Who attended Parent University classes? Were attendance goals met? Were families engaged that are typically "hard to reach" through traditional engagement methods?
3. What aspects of Parent University could be improved? What aspects worked particularly well that should be maintained?
4. What were the short-term outcomes of family participation? What was learned? Did families find the courses valuable?

Several objectives are also identified. Evaluation in Year 1 is important to:

- ❖ Establish a baseline for the program that can be used to set new goals and measure progress over years.
- ❖ Identify strategies for improvement that can be implemented during the target year as well as future years.
- ❖ Provide accountability toward reaching identified goals.

The evaluation utilized multiple sources of information to answer the key evaluation questions and to reach evaluation objectives.

<b>Evaluation Questions and Associated Data Collection Methods</b>	
Evaluation Questions	Source of Data
<p>1. What did Parent University look like in its first year? What classes were provided?</p>	<p><b>Parent University Course Catalog.</b> The course catalog describes the classes offered, location, and age groups for which the classes are targeted.</p> <p><b>Parent University Course Offerings Spreadsheet.</b> This document tracked the individual classes offered by site.</p>
<p>2. Who attended Parent University classes? Were attendance goals met? Were families engaged that are typically “hard to reach” through engagement methods?</p>	<p><b>Database of Enrollment.</b> Families registered for classes and this registration list was maintained in a database. De-identified data from the Infinite Campus system was provided to evaluators for analysis.</p> <p><b>Participant Surveys.</b> Participants in classes answered a survey to provide their perspectives on the class. Zip code information from surveys was used to view participation by area.</p>
<p>3. What aspects of Parent University could be improved? What aspects worked particularly well, that should be maintained?</p>	<p><b>Meeting and Survey of Partners.</b> In February 2012, WCSD partners provided input about process and class delivery best practices and improvements. Also, principals at participating schools completed a survey that provided feedback about course offerings, site use, etc.</p> <p><b>Participant Surveys.</b> Participants in classes offered information about what could be improved.</p> <p><b>Participant Interviews.</b> Participants were randomly selected for an interview. A total of 14 interviews were completed by phone.</p>
<p>4. What were the short-term outcomes of family participation? What was learned? Did families find courses valuable?</p>	<p><b>Participant Survey.</b> Class participants completed a survey at the end of their sessions that reported on the quality of the class, perceived changes in knowledge, skills, and confidence as a result of the session. A total of 1,018 surveys were completed.</p> <p><b>Participant Interviews.</b> Participants were randomly selected for an interview. A total of 14 interviews were completed by phone.</p>

## EVALUATION NOTES AND LIMITATIONS

Evaluation should be considered with the following limitations of data:

- ❖ Data from one year of data is limited in terms of its power to inform reporting of long-term outcomes, for example, student achievement in standardized tests, and graduation rates.
- ❖ In some cases there may be missing data (e.g., a person left a question blank). Percentages utilize the number completing the question (valid percent) unless otherwise noted.
- ❖ Participant surveys may include duplication or omissions. The evaluation utilized multiple sources of data rather than one source to quantify error within a particular source; duplication is a source of error, but, is minimal.
- ❖ A conservative method was used to count unduplicated families in WCSD (meaning, if there is error related to total unduplicated families, there were likely to be more than are reported here.).

## RESULTS

### PARENT UNIVERSITY ACTIVITIES

In its first year, Parent University, implemented by the Department of Family-School Partnerships (FSP), brought together more than 22 community-based organizations, six individuals and 11 WCSD departments to teach courses to families on a diverse set of topics. Classes were offered beginning September, 2011 and extended through May, 2012.

To announce class offerings, a 40-page catalog was mailed to all WCSD families. The catalog was available in both English and Spanish.

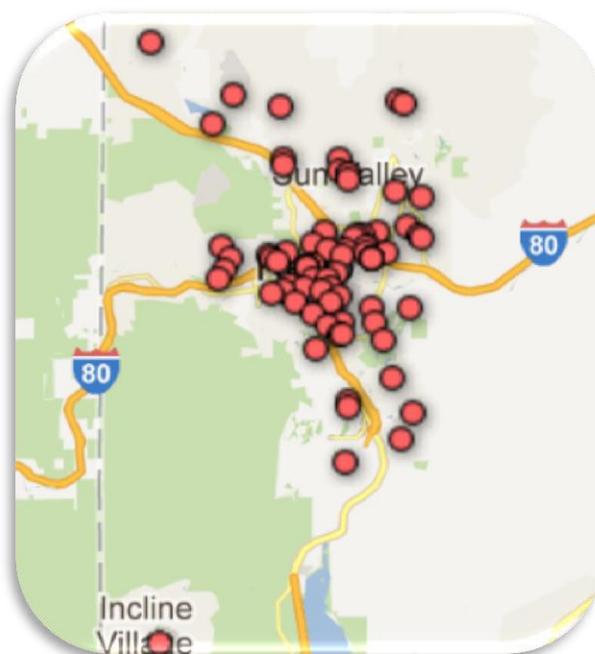


Figure 1. Distribution of Community Sites and Schools Offering Parent University Classes in 2011-12

The WCSD Department of Family-School Partnerships initiated many additional activities to build awareness about Parent University. The department worked with school-based Parent Involvement Facilitators (PIFs) to provide one-to-one outreach, provided schools with flyers for individual workshops and sent postcards home for several individual classes. Parent Ambassadors were also trained to outreach in neighborhoods. FSP staff trained the Parent Ambassador volunteers on how to promote Parent University in their churches, at community meetings and to their neighbors. Staff from FSP also hosted an information booth at various community events including: Hispanic

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*“Gracias yo a prendi muchisimo y aprendi como ser un mejor lider en mi casa escuela y comunida. (Thank you very much; My knowledge increased and I learned to be a better leader in my school and home communities.)”*

*–Family Survey, Liderazgo*

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Heritage Day, Boys & Girls Club Lights On, Head Start Health & Family Literacy Fair and Día del Niño. A registration fair was held in January and parents were provided bus transportation to the fair. At this event, community-based partners hosted information tables at the fair about their classes and all families had a chance to learn about upcoming classes in the spring.

#### CLASSES

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Over the 2011-12 school year, 248 individual classes were held that covered 79 different topics at 91 different locations throughout the community. In most cases, classes addressed a topic in one session; however, series of classes were also offered (Strengthening Families, Smart Shopper and Family Wellness). Every class was offered in both English and Spanish. Most classes were presented in English, with an

interpreter available. A few classes were offered only in Spanish (Motivacion, Liderazgo, Autoestima), or, in separate English and Spanish classes (e.g. Nevada's Pre-K Standards). Childcare was provided onsite during the classes at no cost to families.

Classes were provided in five key areas.

### **1. Supporting Learning and Navigating the System**

Classes in this category aimed to help families support student learning at home, better understand the educational system, and navigate policies and programs for their children. Examples of courses in this category: *The 10 Best Ways to Save for College; Basics of Secondary Education – Getting to Know My Child's School; Promoting Literacy With Your Child.*

### **2. Leadership and Advocacy**

Leadership and advocacy classes sought to help empower parents who were previously unfamiliar with the methods they could use to advocate for their children. Examples of courses in this category: *Skills for Effective Advocacy; The Right Question; Being Involved in a Parent Group and Your Child's School.*

### **3. Parenting**

Classes in this category presented approaches and assistance on issues commonly faced by parents. Examples of courses in this category: *The Importance of Fatherhood; Positive Discipline for Adolescents; Keeping Your Kids Safe on the Internet.*

### **4. Family Health and Wellness**

Classes in the Family Health and Wellness category provided parents with information on topics like nutrition, stress, and exercise. Examples of courses in this category: *Stress Reduction for Families; Drug and Alcohol Prevention; Helping a Child with Substance Abuse Problems.*

## 5. Parents' Personal Growth and Development

Courses in this category provided assistance and skills for parents' own education and improvement. Examples of courses in this category: *Anger Management for Adults; Money Management; Basic Computer Classes.*

A complete course list is located in the appendix.

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### ATTENDANCE AND DEMOGRAPHICS

Program data shows that 1,131 people attended Parent University in 2011-12. Of this total, 788 were unique, unduplicated participants. Of the 788, 604 unique families were matched to a student attending a WCSD school.

Participating families had more than one child. Including these children in the count of those served, estimates are that 792 WCSD children were impacted through their parent's participation. Together, the estimate of total individuals in households reached by Parent University in Year 1 was 1,850.

- Total Guardians in Households Reached: 1,058
- Total Students in Households Reached: 792
- **Total Individuals in Households Reached: 1,850**

Overall attendance exceeded 1,000 family members; however, the goal of 1,000 attendees that were *unduplicated WCSD families* was not met in 2011-12.

Families that may experience barriers to traditional forms of school engagement, or families that are "hard to reach" participated in Parent University. Participation by this group exceeded the identified goal (60% meeting the criteria of FRL Status, Racial or Ethnic Minority Status, or ELL Status).

- ❖ About one in three families (33%) has a child that has a designation of limited English proficiency.

- ❖ Two in three families (64%) participate in the free/reduced lunch program.
- ❖ 58% had a child that is of racial or ethnic identity other than white (non-Hispanic/Latino).
- ❖ Parent University met its attendance goal for “hard to reach” populations, with 78% meeting one or more of the identified criteria.

Families that are Hispanic / Latino or Black / African American were very well represented among Parent University participants. All other groups were below their representation in the district.

*Comparison of Special Populations in Parent University and District*

	Representation in Parent University (2011-12)*	Representation in District (2010-11)**
Free and Reduced Lunch	64%	45%
Limited English Proficiency	33%	17%
Racial or Ethnic Minority	58%	51%
Individualized Education Plan	7%	13%

\*Parent University information for WCSD families; percentage based on the oldest child; n=604

\*\*Data on the district is from Nevada Report Card, Nevada Department of Education

*Comparison of Race and Ethnicity in Parent University and District*

	Parent University Demographics*	Representation in District (2010-11)**
Black / African American	4.6%	2.6%
American Indian	0.7%	1.8%
Asian	2.5%	4.7%
Hispanic / Latino	60.0%	37.5%
Multi-Racial	3.3%	4.4%
Pacific Islander	0.7%	0.9%
White (Not Hispanic/Latino)	28.0%	48.1%

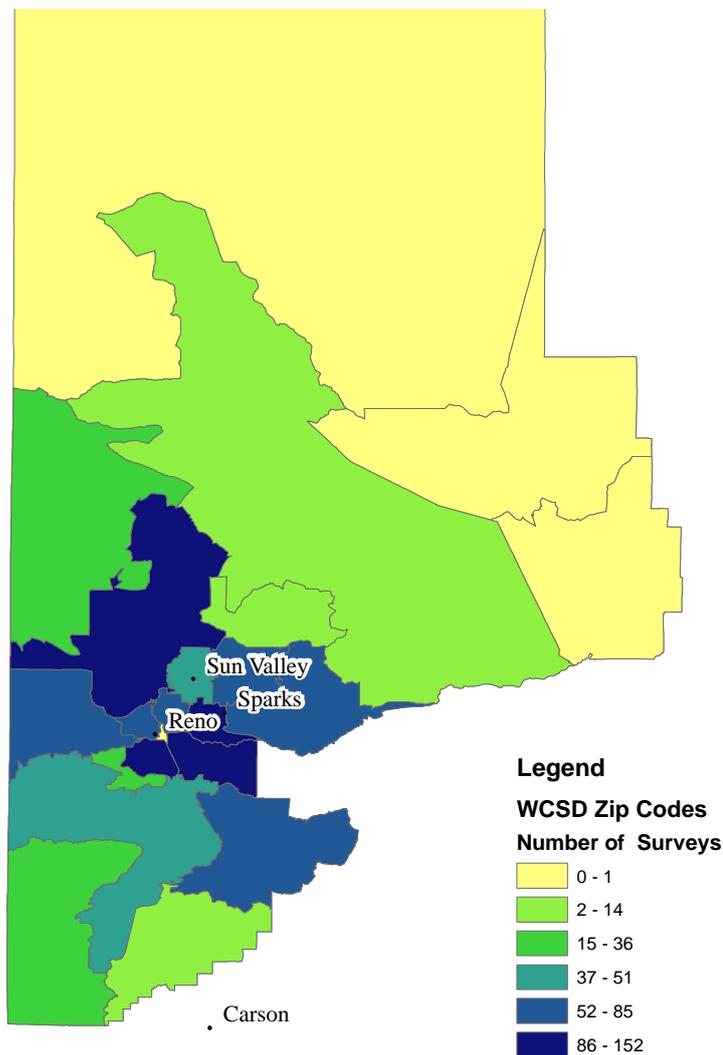
\*Parent University information for WCSD families; percentage based on the oldest child; n=604

\*\*Data on the district is from Nevada Report Card, Nevada Department of Education

Families represented a broad geographic distribution from within the county. Families had a child at 87 different schools (based on oldest

child's attendance). This means that parents represented nearly all schools in Washoe County (87 of 90, or 97%). More than two-thirds of the total population was from one of six zip code areas (89502, 89431, 89512, 89506, 89511, and 89521).<sup>2</sup>

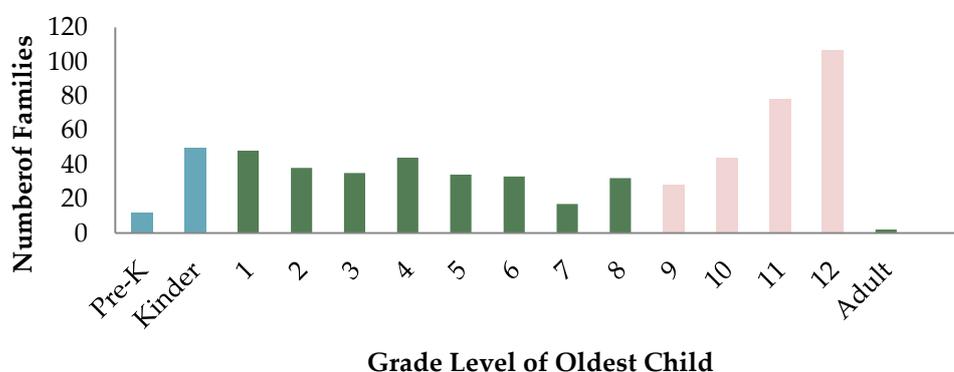
### Distribution of Participant Surveys by Home Zip Code



<sup>2</sup> Summary based on data from participant satisfaction surveys; 943 of 1,018 total surveys included information on their home zip code. Of the 943, 627 (67%) were from the zip code areas.

Parent University attracted families with children ages preschool through adult. Families that had their oldest child in high school (grades 9-12) made up the largest school group (43%) of Parent University.

### WCSD Parent University Families Grade Level of Oldest Child



Data available indicates that the Parent University population was skewed toward high school-age youth.<sup>3</sup> Engagement of parents of pre-K aged children and parents of 7<sup>th</sup> graders were lowest overall.

Age Group	Oldest Child of Parent or Guardian Enrolled in Family (Parent University 2011-12)		District Enrollment (2010-11)	
	#	%	#	%
Pre-K	12	2%	650	1%
Kindergarten (K)	50	8%	4,639	7%
Elementary (1-6)	232	38%	30,040	46%
Secondary (7-12)	306	51%	39,353	45%
Ungraded			73	<1%
Adult	4	<1%		

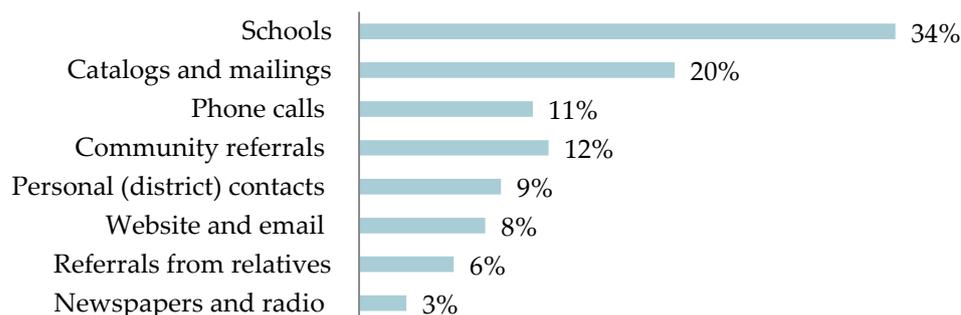
<sup>3</sup> Data presented is based on the oldest child in the household; some families have more than one child, and, if this data were included, it may change the distribution by age of the Parent University representation.

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CONNECTION TO PARENT UNIVERSITY AND CLASSES  
ATTENDED

Schools were the most common way that families reported learning about Parent University. About one in three (34%) reported learning about Parent University from teachers, Parent Involvement Facilitators (PIF), counselors, school newsletters, and other communications through the school. Catalogs and mailings were also important ways that families learned about Parent University (20%). Other sources of information included phone calls; referrals from community organizations, employers, etc.; contacts at the district; website and email; referrals from relatives; and newspaper/radio.

## How Families Find Out about Parent University



Participation by classes varied greatly. Some classes were very small with only a few participants. The classes with highest overall attendance included:

- ❖ Destination University - Destino a la Universidad (137)
- ❖ Basic Computer Classes (60)
- ❖ Positive Discipline for Adolescents (48)
- ❖ Black Student College Education Series (39)
- ❖ Understanding Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (40)
- ❖ Infinite Campus (36)
- ❖ How to Talk to your Child about Bullying (33)
- ❖ Making the Most of Your Parent Teacher Conference (31)

Many of these classes were offered at multiple times throughout the year at different school sites.

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*“It helped so much that now I can see my daughter’s records.*

*Thank you.”*

*--Family Survey, Basic Computer Class*

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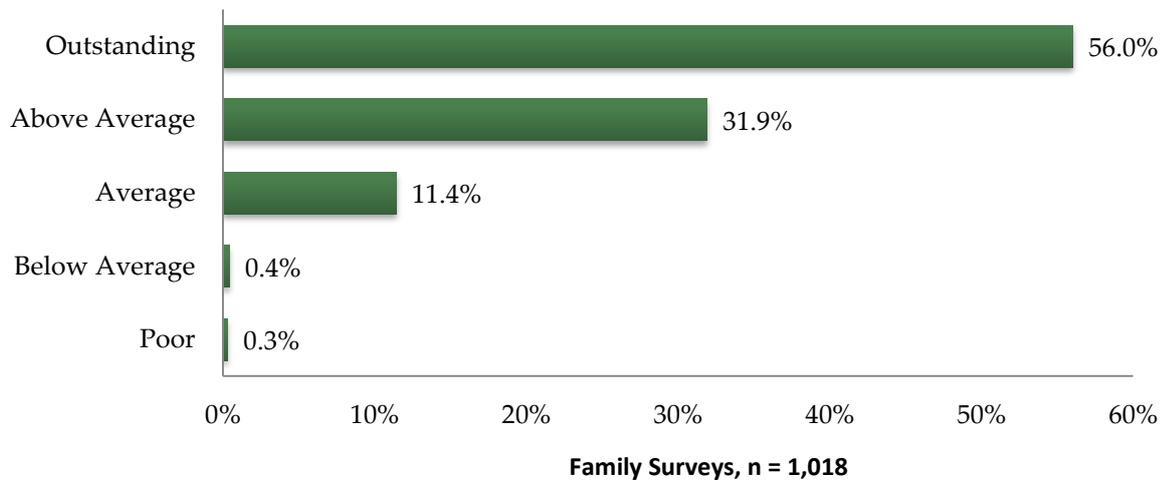
#### COURSE QUALITY AND PARTICIPANT GAINS

More than 1,000 (1,018) surveys were completed after Parent University courses. This reflects 90% of total enrollment (1,131). Approximately two-thirds were completed in English (65%) and one-third (35%) in Spanish. Most survey respondents (79%) indicated that they were completing the survey after their first Parent University class. These surveys show that families found classes to be useful, of very high quality, and would recommend the classes to others.

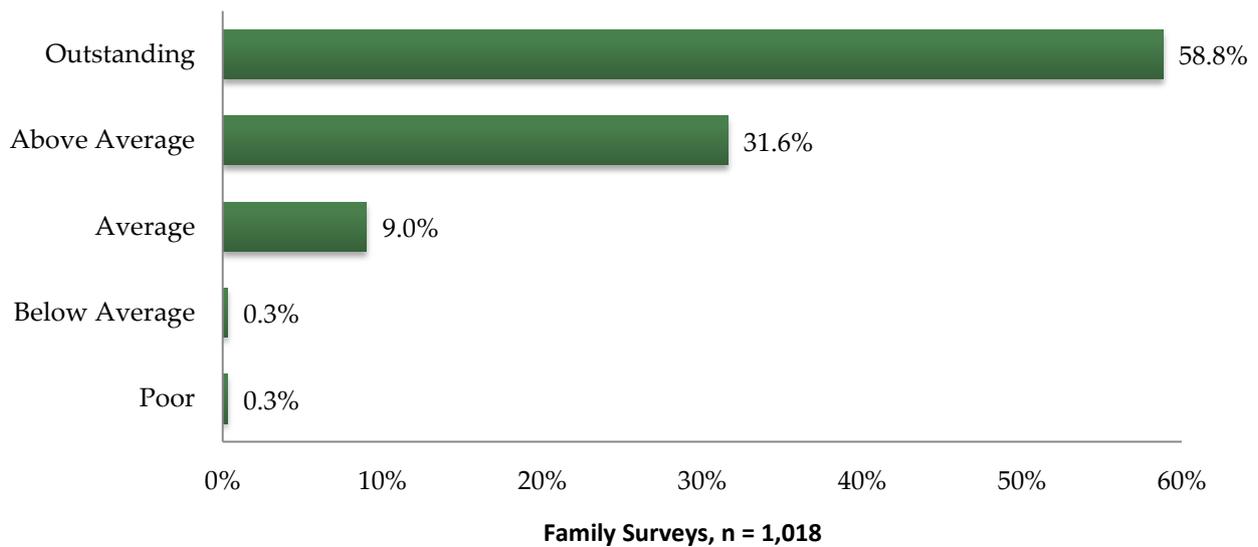
The majority of participants (89%) described class **usefulness** as “outstanding” or above average. The majority of participants (92%) described class **quality** as outstanding or above average.

- ❖ Nearly all participants (98%) would recommend this course to another family member.
- ❖ Most participants (93%) indicated that they planned to enroll in another class during the year.

## Usefulness of the Class



## Quality of the Class



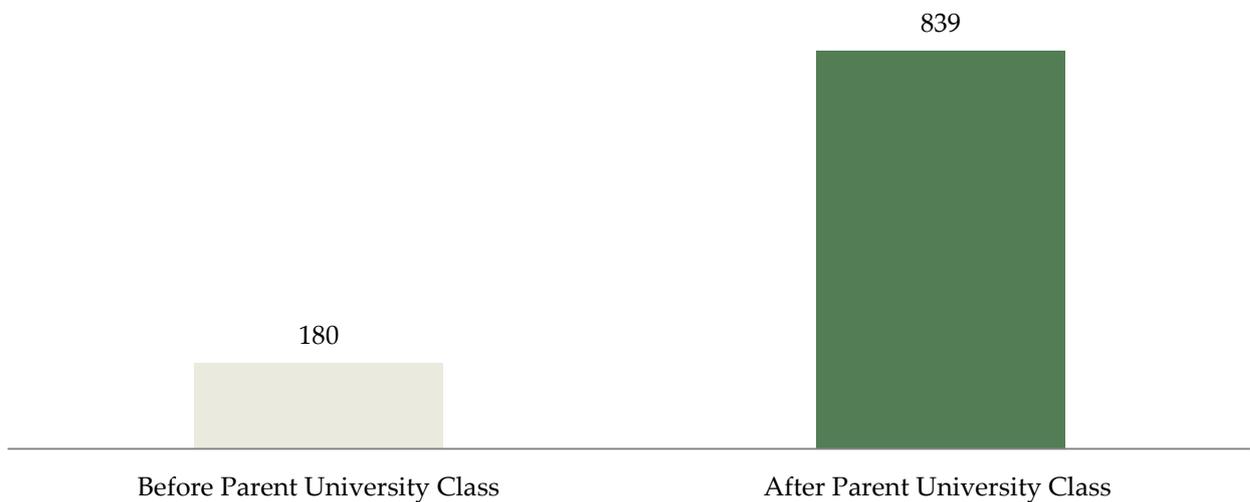
Families reported gains that were significant<sup>4</sup> in knowledge, skills, awareness and confidence related to the class, as a result of their experience with Parent University.

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<sup>4</sup>  $X^2 (p = .005)$

**Change in Knowledge.** Prior to the class, 13% of participants rated their knowledge in the class topic as a four or five (high or very high). After the class, 87% of participants rated themselves as having high or

**Reporting Related Knowledge  
as "High" or "Very High"**



very high knowledge. Following Parent University, less than 2% of participants rated their knowledge as either low or very low.

**Change in Skills and Abilities.** Prior to the class, 24% of participants rated their skills in the class topic as a four or five (high or very high). After the class, 83% of participants rated their skills and abilities as four or five (high or very high). Following Parent University, 3% rated their skills and abilities as low or very low.

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*“Our teacher was great. High energy, great communication, non-judgmental, stuck to class agenda and allowed free-speech.”*

*--Family Survey, Parenting the Older Child*

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**Reporting Related Skills and Abilities  
as "High" or "Very High"**



**Change in Confidence as Parent, related to the Class Topic.** Prior to the class, 30% of participants rated their skills in the class topic as a four or five (high or very high). After the class, 86% of participants rated themselves as four or five (high or very high). Following Parent University, 3% rated their skills and abilities as low or very low.

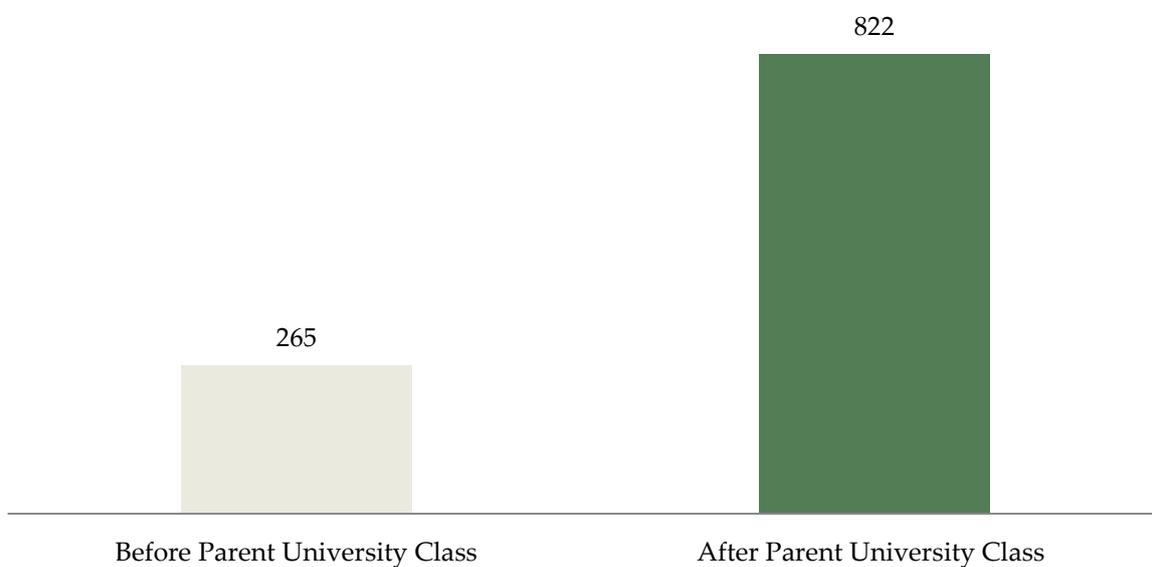
**Reporting Related Confidence as Parent  
as "High" or "Very High"**



### **Change in Awareness of Available Information and Resources**

**Related to the Class Topic.** Prior to the class, 28% of participants rated their skills in the class topic as four or five (high or very high). After the class, 86% of participants rated themselves four or five (high or very high). Following Parent University, 3% rated their skills and abilities as low or very low.

### **Reporting Awareness of Community Information and Resources as "High" or "Very High"**



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*“Me gustaria que se a repetir estas clases, es muy interesante! Gracias.”*

*(I would like to repeat these classes; very interesting! Thanks)*

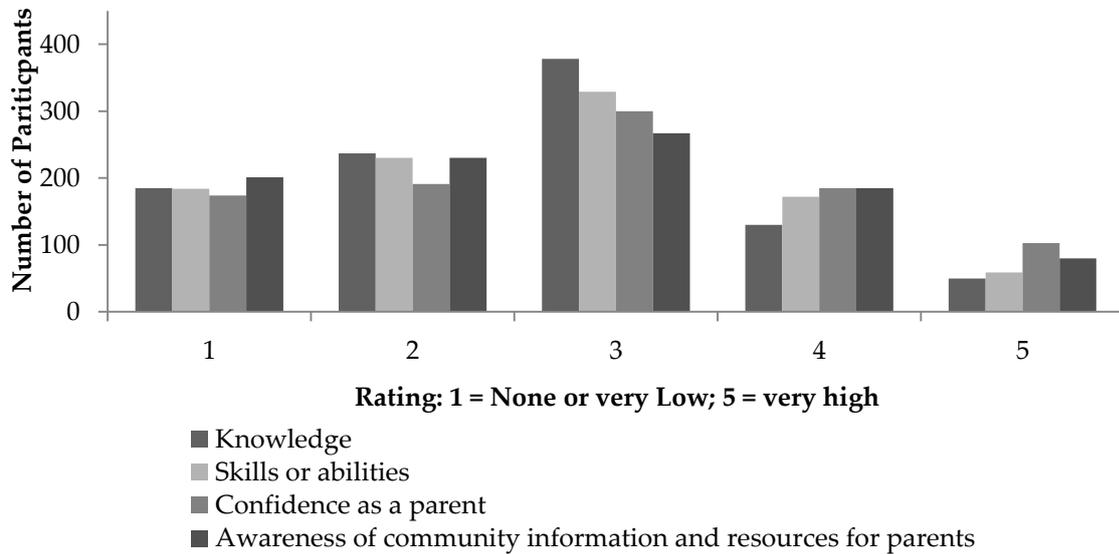
*--Family Survey, English Language Learners Busting the Myths about Learning at Home*

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## Self-Reported Knowledge, Skills, Confidence and Awareness *Before Class*,

As Relates to Class Topic

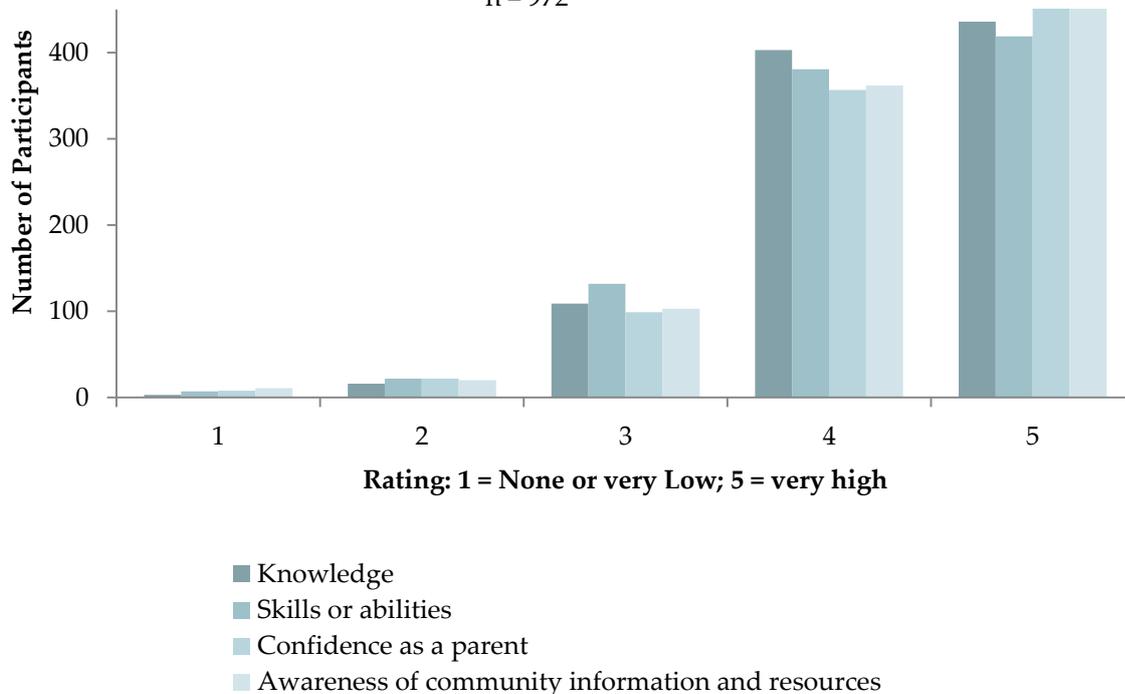
n = 987\*



## Self-Reported Knowledge, Skills, Confidence and Awareness *After Class*,

As Relates to Class Topic

n = 972\*



\*A total of 1,018 surveys were collected. Not

## KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### KEY FINDINGS

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1. Parent University exceeded its goal of 60% attendance of “hard to reach” families – 78% of families that attended met one or more of the identified criteria. The district’s intentional focus on reaching these families was critical to exceeding the goal. Parent University did not achieve its goal of 1,000 *unduplicated* families of WCSD enrolled student. Strategies to engage target populations may be different than strategies needed to attract *more* families overall.
2. Outreach is critical to attracting families to classes. While nearly all families that participated indicated that they would refer other families to Parent University, participants were most likely to report hearing about the opportunities through the school, mailings, and other school and district-initiated outreach.
3. Families represented the district’s diversity. Families that are Hispanic / Latino were best represented; other racial and ethnic groups were below their district representation.
4. Classes were offered district wide, and families could attend a class in any location. However, families that attended just one class were most likely to attend it at their child’s school than another location. This appears to underscore the importance of familiarity and neighborhood in attendance. Community-based locations, such as classes held at the Boys and Girls Club and the Children’s Cabinet attracted families from multiple schools.
5. Families attended classes in every topic area. Destination University - Destino a la Universidad and Basic Computer Classes were two of the best attended classes, together attracting more than 200 or approximately 20% of the total participants. Other classes with very high attendance included Positive Discipline for Adolescents, Black Student College Education Series, Understanding Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD), Infinite Campus, How to Talk to your Child about

Bullying, and Making the Most of Your Parent Teacher Conference.

6. Participant feedback was **overwhelmingly positive** across all indicators. Families felt that their time was well-spent and that the classes were of high quality.
7. Participants made significant gains in knowledge, skills / abilities, confidence as a parent, and awareness of community information and resources related as a result of the class participation and topic.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

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1. **Planning.** Data from evaluation shows that classes are effective in increasing knowledge, skills and abilities, confidence and awareness related to the class topic. Develop ambitious goals and objectives for Year 2 to expand the reach of the initiative. Consider the needs of groups that may have been under-represented in Year 1, such as families of middle school youth, and families of racial and ethnic minorities other than families that are Hispanic/Latino. If goals are set for both target populations and overall attendance, plan different approaches to meet each goal. For example, maintaining and expanding strategies used in Year 1 to attract “hard to reach” families is likely to be successful. To reach a larger absolute number of families, pilot new approaches.
2. **Supports.** Maintain the supports provided to parents in Year 1 including no-cost classes, childcare, interpretation and translation. Consider opportunities to overcome transportation barriers; data suggests that schools attract their own families to classes. Ideally all classes would be offered at all schools; since this is not feasible, supports to overcome transportation barriers may be important for particular classes and events.
3. **Outreach and Referral.** Consider new strategies to engage teachers and other school personnel. Data suggests that schools are the most common way that families learned about Parent University. Templates and communication materials may help to

encourage both schools and community-based organizations to further participate in outreach and referral. Improvements to streamline data collection will help to provide information on what is working in terms of outreach.

4. **Content Delivery.** 1) Expand series of classes so that families build on new knowledge, as both participants and partnering agencies indicated that families are interested in continuing their growth in the topic area. 2) Pilot at least one online course, to expand reach of Parent University (and collect data to measure its reach, audience, and effectiveness). 3) Consider the importance of individual schools in attracting families to Parent University classes and target content delivery that matches family needs by school.
5. **Evaluation.** Map evaluation to planning efforts to ensure that information is available to report on goals, objectives, and, toward overall impact of Parent University. Improvement of data collection tools is recommended; modifications will allow more accessible information in “real-time” so that Parent University data can be used to improve efforts over the course of Year 2. For many of the courses offered, data collection could be integrated into classes toward measuring outcomes. For example, an actual assessment of knowledge may be appropriate for some class curricula; this data would provide additional information to support whether the class objectives were met.

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*“I enjoyed every minute of this class. I now have great resources to help my son who is going to be a senior next year. I also know what to do to help my freshman be successful in school. Thank you. Mrs. Wanda and Mrs. Tiffany. Thank you.”*

*--Family Survey, Black Student College Education Series*

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## APPENDICES

### I. COMPLETE COURSE LISTING 2011-12

The following table lists all of the courses that were offered by Parent University during the 2011-12 school year. They are organized according to the following five content areas: 1) Supporting Learning and Navigating the System; 2) Leadership and Advocacy; 3) Parenting; 4) Family Health and Wellness; and 5) Parents' Personal Growth and Development. In some cases, the title is a series (rather than a one-time class).

#### **Supporting Learning and Navigating the System**

- ❖ A Parent's Guide to the NV Pre-K Standards
- ❖ Advanced Topics in Lowering College Costs
- ❖ Basics of Elementary Education - Communicating with My Child's School
- ❖ Basics of Elementary Education - Educational Rights and Responsibilities
- ❖ Basics of Elementary Education- Getting to Know My Child's School
- ❖ Basics of Secondary Education - Getting to Know My Child's School
- ❖ Basics of Secondary Education - Graduation Requirements
- ❖ Basics of Secondary Education - Monitoring My Child's Progress
- ❖ Basics of Secondary Education- Graduation Requirements
- ❖ Basics of the Formal College Financial Aid Process
- ❖ Black Student College Education Series
- ❖ Bridging the High School Arts Experience to Become College and Career Ready
- ❖ Career and Information Night
- ❖ Destination University - Destino a la Universidad
- ❖ Discovering a Gifted & Talented (GT) Child
- ❖ English Language Learners: Busting the Myths about Learning at Home
- ❖ Everyone Can Learn Through the Arts Prek-2nd Grade
- ❖ Family Literacy Experience (FLITE) - Our Solar System
- ❖ Family Literacy Experience (FLITE): Did You Hear That?
- ❖ Family Literacy Experience (FLITE): Inside the Earth
- ❖ Family Literacy Experience (FLITE): Lemony Learning
- ❖ Family Storyteller
- ❖ Get Ready for Kindergarten with Virtual Pre-K
- ❖ High School Career Internship
- ❖ How to Make the Most Out of Your Parent-Teacher Conference
- ❖ How to Read Your Child's Assessment Scores
- ❖ IEP Clinic (Individual Education Program)

- ❖ Infinite Campus
- ❖ Learning More Through the Arts Grade 3-4
- ❖ Making a Successful Transition to High School
- ❖ Math & Parent Partnerships - Problem Solving - K-4
- ❖ Math & Parent Partnerships - Problem Solving for 5- 8
- ❖ Math & Parent Partnerships - What is Multiplication?
- ❖ Math & Parent Partnerships - Wrap It Up! Geometry for 5-8
- ❖ Navigation Tools - Fine Arts: Grades 5 - 9
- ❖ Parent Resource Fair
- ❖ Pathway to Graduation
- ❖ Perfectionism and the Gifted Child
- ❖ Preparing for the College Application Process
- ❖ Process to Obtain Help for a Child
- ❖ Promoting Literacy with Your Child
- ❖ The 10 Best Ways to Save for College
- ❖ The Road to College - How to Pay for College
- ❖ The Road to College-Why College
- ❖ Transition to Middle School
- ❖ Washoe County Library System: Keeping You Connected

#### **Leadership and Advocacy**

- ❖ Advocacy
- ❖ Being Involved in a Parent Group and Your Child's School - Foundation for Leadership
- ❖ Family Engagement
- ❖ Liderazgo
- ❖ Skills for Effective Advocacy
- ❖ Starting a Physical Education Club at Your Child's School
- ❖ The Right Question

#### **Parenting**

- ❖ Born Learning
- ❖ Conflict Resolution
- ❖ Empowering Parents to Parent
- ❖ Helping Kids Cope with a Parents Deployment
- ❖ How to Talk to Your Child About Bullying
- ❖ Keeping your kids safe on the Internet
- ❖ MediaWise
- ❖ Positive Discipline for Adolescents
- ❖ Shaken Baby/Abusive Head Trauma
- ❖ Strengthening Families Program
- ❖ The Importance of Fatherhood

- ❖ Understanding Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

### **Family Health & Wellness**

- ❖ Advocacy-Health Resources and Information for Children with Special Needs
- ❖ Drug and Alcohol Prevention
- ❖ Family Wellness
- ❖ Gang Resistance Intervention Program (GRIP)
- ❖ Helping a Child with Substance Abuse Problems
- ❖ How to Talk to Your Children About Sex
- ❖ Parenting the Older Child
- ❖ Smart Shopper
- ❖ Sports Nutrition
- ❖ Stress Reduction for families
- ❖ Tips and Tools for Successful Family Meals

### **Parent's Personal Growth & Development**

- ❖ Addressing Racial/Ethnic Conflict in Your School
- ❖ Anger Management for Adults
- ❖ Autoestima
- ❖ Basic Computer Classes
- ❖ Money Management
- ❖ Motivación
- ❖ Parenting While Plugged In: How to Manage Your Use of Media

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*“Yo primero, agradezco a la joven por habernos traído sus ideas y conocimientos para poder seguir ayudando a nuestros hijos. Me gustaría tener más clases con ella porque son interesantes y productivas.”*

*(First, I thank the young lady for having brought us her ideas and knowledge to be able to continue helping our children. I would like to have more classes with her because they are interesting and productive.)*

*--Family Survey, English Language Learners Busting the Myths about Learning at Home*

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## II. NOTES FROM PARTNER MEETING

Community partners and participating schools offered feedback about what they thought had worked and offered suggestions about what could be improved. These suggestions are provided below.

### **How can we reach more of our target audience, and increase enrollment?**

- Families are telling us and the feedback that we get in the room [sic]. They are happy to have the information and it was a valuable experience.
- Observation. Some of the parents are not able to attend because of their special needs children.
- Would Skype be an opportunity to reach people at their homes or people who are homebound? Do technological solutions exist?
- The Parent U staff is making it very easy. Childcare, everything about the experience made it easy to participate/teach.
- Translators were excellent and helped to pace the class – Keep it moving.
- When it comes to leaving the room as we found it – all can work on this. When we have childcare providers [sic] need to be very engaged with the children and close supervision. [sic] Right providers there.
- The event at Sparks on the 27<sup>th</sup>. It was a great way to make one on one contact with families. The purpose of the fair was to reach out to more families. The food, raffle, etc. provided incentives and great information for them to receive. Hoping to see new families. Family friendly – children had something to do and the children had fun.
- Some frustrated parents came and it is a great success that they came to the office as a result of the class. They felt comfortable and confident.
- Parents seem to like continued learning. Lots of families would like continued learning on that topic, not just a one and one half hour event or session –
- I had a parent that went to one of the classes that was focused on GATE – went to see if it was new information – what she was really looking for was how to get more from classes. It might be great to bring together families and work together. Families aren't totally sure what to expect. Even though the descriptions were good, they may want something more or different. They verbalize that to families but not necessarily on an evaluation.

### **What else do you want to know regarding evaluation?**

- Some want to see a higher turnout to justify small groups. Are there other ways to outreach to have a larger turnout? Go to where families already are? Like a church?

- A financial budgeting class teacher felt that the classes didn't have high enough attendance. Survey doesn't get to the question – how to increase participation? How can we attract more people?
- What is the effect of the environment on learning? E.g. School chairs aren't very comfortable.
- What is the ROI on teacher time?
- Our organizations utilize webinars – having a link and watch the videos and track attendance; that might be a solution to reach more people. We can send links to high schools, [sic] get teachers.
- We have attendance – some are small and some are really small.
- We have heard that this is a middleclass, high education type of process for enrollment. The fair is a solution to make it less formal and [sic] more easy to engage. Internally, Parent U is trying to address this but we do want your time to be valuable. Another thing we have started is, parent ambassadors – parent to parent outreach. Recruitment is encouraged through stipends. If there are groups of people we can come to and sell it, but person to person is what it takes.
- Is there a way in the next catalog – did you pick out a class that you can't attend? Can you tell us why? – To learn barriers – There may be information about how to focus classes or offerings.
- Coming up with good descriptions is difficult... contacted the school and asked them to send an invitation through the PIC and also contacted the feeder schools. I looked at the community and did some outreach including a flyer. The schools can help to promote. She has seen good results from this type of outreach.
- There are teachers who are doing their own flyers. We also have a template and Parent U can do translation. Nevada PEP puts information on their websites and encourages them to come to the schools.

**Given where you are now, what would you want in terms of additional support or changes?**

- Are all of the classes set for the year planned? – Yes, because of childcare, interpretation and budgeting.
- How do you advertise? We have a Facebook site, people who can help us with flyers, distribute the calendars, people can do calls – our office doesn't have the capacity for [sic] that many connect ED – Parent Involvement Facilitators can help to make calls. Some of our community partners – they send out through their email distribution. Working to promote to other groups, for example, school psychologists and early childhood personnel.
- We found with our classes that sometimes we have a really good turnout, and other times fewer. We don't necessarily know why. Signups don't seem related to actual attendance.

- One of the classes that were heavily pushed by the PIF was really well attended. So we know that is important and gets people in the door.
- I had great feedback at the fair – maybe we should do an in-service for the PIFs so that we help them promote with more knowledge about the classes that they can use relationships to encourage and make recommendations.
- PIFs did have information and continue to share tips – and classes at Palmer have had 25 attendees. Lots of personal outreach... tried to highlight that success so that it will encourage others. We also share attendance with area superintendents.
- Our interpreter offered to be our liaison and will help us outreach and since she'll be there she will be a familiar face and help to bring people.
- We refer to it as parent training – some may be intimidated by the word “University”.
- Is there a PSA? The radio station and TV will advertise for free.
- It can be difficult to do this, because the logistics are difficult. It takes additional partners to make some of these ideas happen.
- For the radio/TV – they need a script and will read it on the air and will translate if needed. A new videographer for the district is maybe coming on and could be a resource.
- Parents in the district might lose their catalog – I know they are expensive but I know they get misplaced. We have to get that information back out to them.
- Next year, we will do a fall catalog and then do a spring catalog. We are working on having information at the buses.
- Two cases to libraries. That was in the fall – we could refresh in the fall.
- The flyers that go to the principals need to go all over the school, and kids were encouraging parents. They need to be in visible areas for parents – outside of schools – 6<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders passed on the information.
- We could ask on the survey, how did you learn about or decide to come?
- Classes are not school-centric – someone might want to attend from across town.
- Sites were selected where families could walk to them, where we knew they would be.
- The reality is that we don't get people from different neighborhoods/across town.
- It is hard to find families that we haven't already talked to – it can be a challenge to outreach to the siblings.

**What language can we use to promote and protect?**

- For Born Learning – Can we get them to preschools? They are not attending.
- We now know that we can advertise our own class.
- Do the PIFs know of the classes if they are not at the school site? Yes, they have awareness of what's being offered.

- Get Partners a list of the PIFs so that they can encourage outreach? Took a map of the school district and provided them with a list of what's in the region. Can we get a copy?
- Are we making it easy for the PIFs – they have all of the information. They should know Parent U classes that are available. It is recurring. The PIFs have a lot of responsibilities, so they may not have everything they need. This is the community's program. We want it to be owned.
- First-year – for enrollment more than halfway to reaching that goal.
- We are seeing glimmers of success and expansion for the future. Looking at opportunities to look at service delivery.
- I am so impressed by the work of Maria and others in the office to do all of this work.
- Food, raffle, fun and stuff to do – this could maybe connect to class. How do we apply some of the things we do at the fair, in the classroom. There is something about entertainment that helps to bring people to better themselves and their families.
- Integrate coffee/cookies if we can bring food.
- Rotating class on a Saturday where you have more classes in 20 different classrooms and rotate, food, fun... etc. People could have shorter classes. Food can be a good incentive.
- We have these classes to help – we provide childcare. The motivation is to be educated.
- Maybe there is an event just to kickoff or raise enthusiasm to get people in the door, and then get back to a learning environment. People were really excited about the fair. There was a sense of community – where you stay because you have a sense of community.
- Neighborhood seems to be a barrier.
- About half of the families that came to the event came on buses. This has costs/ resources needed. PIFs invited and gathered and brought parents in. It was a fun night out for families. We could do a few events per year. A different model – Boston – a few times a year they have a big summit and then there are ongoing classes.

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*“It helped so much that now I can see my daughter's records.*

*Thanks so much.”*

*--Family Survey, Basic Computer Class*

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### III. CONSTRUCTIVE FEEDBACK FROM PARTICIPANT SURVEYS

Overwhelmingly, parent surveys provided positive feedback on surveys. Some participants provided suggestions for improvement. A summary of feedback is provided below.

- **More depth.** Many identified that a longer class (multiple sessions) or more in-depth information could or should be provided.
- **Improved outreach or communication.** Many appreciated their class but wished more families were present. To increase participation, suggestions included reminder email.
- **More times and days.** Suggestions included Saturdays and different later evening times.
- **Slower Pace.** In a few cases, families indicated that there was too much information presented in one session.
- **Handouts or take home materials.** Many noted that they would like copies of the materials or presentation.
- **Comments for the instructor.** Some provided criticism of the presentation, or asked for specific changes such as more interaction and discussion.
- **Invite or engage school personnel.** A few identified a desire to include teachers or counselors in the topic for discussion.
- **Issues with interpretation.** A few identified that it would be helpful to have English and Spanish.

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*“This class was something good. I think that all parents with special needs children should attend. There was so much I didn’t know.”*

*--Family Survey, Advocacy - Health Resources and Information for Children with Special Healthcare Needs*

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## IV. COMMUNITY PARTNERS

On behalf of the District and Department of Family School Partnerships, the extensive work and commitment of community partners is gratefully acknowledged. In working together, Parent University has been able to succeed in reaching Northern Nevada Families and providing them with a rich catalog of classes focused on a common goal: supporting children's academic achievement. Partners agreed to provide workshops for parents leveraging existing funding sources.

### Parent University Partners 2011-12

- Boys and Girls Club of Truckee Meadows
- Family Resource Center
- Washoe County Library System
- Nevada Parent Teacher Association
- Tune In To Kids
- United Way of Northern Nevada and the Sierra
- The Children's Cabinet
- Family Ties of Nevada
- Familias Unidas
- Food Bank of Northern Nevada
- Nevada State Parent Information and Resource Center (PIRC) – Education Alliance
- College Planning and Funding Advisor (CFPA)
- GetHealthyWashoe.Com
- Join Together Northern Nevada
- Northern Nevada Literacy Council
- Truckee Meadows Community College
- University of Nevada, Reno Cooperative Extension
- Community Services Agency
- Hispanic Scholarship Fund
- Nevada PEP (Parents Encouraging Parents)
- Parent Leaders For Education
- Terry Lee Wells Nevada Discovery Museum
- Nevada Urban Indians
- Gifted and Talented Parent Connections
- Wendy Damonte
- Patricia Carroll
- Nevada Hispanic Services
- Reno – Sparks Indian Colony

