Report to the Washoe K-12 Education Foundation

Annual Evaluation 2013-14

November 2014

Developed by Social Entrepreneurs Inc. (SEI) and the Office of Family School Partnerships

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Contents

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 the Department, the commitment of community partners is gratefully acknowledged. WCSD, community organizations and families are working together to promote academic achievement for all Washoe County children and youth.

2013-2014 Community Partners

Boys and Girls Club of Truckee Meadows
Community Services Agency – Head Start
Education Alliance of Washoe County
Gifted and Talented Parent Connection (GTPC)
Nevada PEP
Nevada Urban Indian Colony
Park Vista Apartments
Truckee Meadows Community College (TMCC)
United Way of Northern Nevada and the Sierra (UWNNS)
University of Nevada Reno (UNR) – Cooperative Extension
Washoe County Library System

Several Washoe County School District departments also supported this project.
Department of Assessment
Department of Child & Family Services
Department of Counseling Services
Department of Curriculum & Instruction
Department of English Language Learners & World Languages
Department of Fine Arts
Department of Gifted and Talented
Department of Student Services
Information Technology (IT) Department
Multi-tiered Systems of Support/Social and Emotional Learning
Striving Readers
Volunteer Services

WCSD also recognizes the commitment of individual schools and families in these engagement efforts.

Acknowledgements

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"We are participating more and learning as a family."

-Interview with Father at a Learning Session

"I learned about the Earth. I like coming because we do projects together as a family.

-Comments of Child Participating with his Father, age 7

"I like coming because we spend more time with the family. Our parents learn more. It is like being at school with our parents next to us".

-Comments of Child Participating with her Father, age10

(Father's Interview completed in Spanish with interpretation services.)

Executive Summary

This year marked Washoe County School District's third year implementing Parent University. The mission of Parent University is to help families build upon skills, knowledge and support systems to advocate for student success. Parent University accomplishes this through learning sessions offered at schools and community-based locations. This report presents information from program evaluation intended to both identify opportunities for continuous improvement and to demonstrate program outcomes.

Key Findings

1. Parent University Reached Families.

- District-wide participation goals were exceeded, with 3,175 total participants and 2,501 <u>unduplicated</u> participants counted through sign-in sheets. A total of 3,684 students had a parent or family member that attended a Parent University learning session.

- Families that face barriers to accessing the education system were well represented, with at least 63% of Parent University attendees meeting at least one criteria included in the definition of "hard to reach."

- More than half of all families accessing learning sessions were Hispanic/Latino.

- Families represented schools across the District including elementary, middle and high schools. In contrast to previous years, the distribution of student ages was weighted toward younger students (K-8).

- Parents were motivated to attend, in part because their child encouraged them to come. In interviews, many families noted that the reason they had decided to attend was because they had been informed or encouraged by their child.

2. Families were Focused on Student Academic Success.

- Attendance was highest among sessions focusing on achievement data, literacy, and graduation requirements.

- Three Family Access Days were held during the year and brought 425 parents to the University of Nevada Reno campus where they received information and support to help their child on the pathway toward college and highly skilled careers. Parents indicated a very high level of satisfaction with events and reported gains in knowledge, skills, confidence and awareness as a result of their participation.

3. Participants Rated Learning Sessions as Useful, High Quality, and Reported Knowledge Gains.

- Participating families felt that their time was well spent, the content and instructors were easy to understand, and that learning sessions were high quality.

- Participants reported substantial gains in knowledge, skills, abilities, confidence as a parent, and awareness of community information and resources as a result of participation in the class. Parents and instructors reported additional positive outcomes from participating in Parent University sessions for both the parents and their children.

- Families took away different experiences from sessions. In interviews, families were able to articulate meaningful but often different proficiencies from the learning sessions. For example, in the same class, one parent noted new *strategies* for teaching their child at home; another described learning new *content* (that would help them to know more and teach their child). This is important because it suggests that classes provide multiple levels and opportunities for learning.

- In interviews, families reported changes that they planned to make or had already made as a result of attending Parent University. These included stronger involvement in their child's education, working to motivate and prepare their child for college, and emphasizing learning at home.

Recommendations

1. Continue to Focus on Engaging and Serving Diverse Families.

One of the noteworthy successes of WCSD's Parent University is that attending families have largely represented the diversity of the district. The following recommendations are around continued growth and leadership in building trust and capacity to serve diverse families.

- **Strengthen the approach to provide services to both English and Spanish speaking families.** Parent University has consistently delivered content in both English and Spanish. Typically, this has been provided through a class instructor (speaking in English) and an interpreter working to share the information to those that prefer or are able to best learn in Spanish. The result can be effective two-language communication, but some participants have also noted, through surveys, difficulty hearing, understanding, or keeping focused when two languages are happening simultaneously. To address this, Parent University may

consider steps like 1) setting expectations at the beginning of class for the pace of a dual-language learning experience 2) training interpreters in subject matter so that they can deliver content independently when needed during the session, and 3) creating consistent interpreter-instructor teams and empower them to improve the experience of participants together. Interpreters and instructors should feel comfortable pausing to clarify and modifying the pace to ensure the best experience for participants.

- **Continue to provide child care, translation & interpretation supports.** For many families these features make participation possible. Schools can help to support families by soliciting information about best times for sessions, and promoting sessions at events such as back to school nights and other school activities where many families are in attendance.

- **Extend efforts to reach underrepresented racial and ethnic groups.** Reported in staff interviews and supported by demographic data, Parent University has not reached all racial and ethnic minorities at the level expected based on district representation. The program has tried different approaches and will continue to look for ways to strengthen relationships at schools and in the community. Working with employers, places of worship, and in neighborhoods (parks & housing complexes) may be promising approaches to reach families that are not yet engaged.

2. **Build Capacity to Serve More Families.**

As the program intends to serve more families each year, new tools and strategies are needed to build capacity and leverage existing, limited resources. These recommendations are focused on improving infrastructure.

- **Improve data system to simplify entry, analysis and reporting accuracy.** Accurate record keeping is important. The Parent University staff invests considerable time making sure sign-in data is complete and correct. Surveys are also entered manually. Moving forward, investments in data infrastructure should be made for efficiency and accuracy. In the short term improvements can be made to data-capture forms, and in the long term, movement from spreadsheets to a data system will enhance reporting capabilities.

- **Utilize annual evaluation data for future program planning purposes.** To do this, improvements in data collection efforts are necessary to ensure timely access to evaluation information aligned with the program planning timeframe.

- **Extend Parent University participation at school sites.** When school administrators and teachers are excited and energized about engaging families, participation

in learning sessions is stronger. Continue to work to encourage schools to fully partner with both Parent University and families for successful implementation.

3. Enhance Impact.

Early successes over the first three years of implementation offer an opportunity to enhance impact toward district goals.

- **Include families in session selection, leadership and ownership of Parent University.** Families can help to determine the course topics offered at their school. By soliciting input and following through on requests to provide specific content, schools strengthen their relationships with families and help to build leadership and ownership of the program.

- **Set growth targets to increase reach**. The program is currently reaching about 6% of WCSD students through family members. Growth targets are important to extend the reach and impact of Parent University; however it is important to note the program staff is small and additional resources, tools and strategies may be important to ensure quality continues alongside growth.

- **Provide targeted messaging.** Each class is an opportunity to teach new or reinforce existing practices and strategies that help students learn outside the classroom. In learning sessions, maximize these opportunities by 1) helping parents understand the Parent University sessions available 2) sharing with families how they can access information about their student, for example, Infinite Campus, and 3) emphasizing that the parent or family can make a critical difference in their child's education.

- **Provide training and supports for instructors.** Instructors want to provide excellent learning sessions to parents and families every time, and should be provided the support to do so. Identify professional development opportunities for instructors of learning sessions and encourage continued improvements in content and delivery.

- **Use Parent University as a venue to increase parental knowledge about content standards and assessments.** Grow the opportunities to learn about Nevada Academic Content Standards and related changes to assessment. In 2014-15, there are notable changes to student assessment and Parent University offers an excellent opportunity to help families understand changes.

> "*Sometimes we [parents] don't know how to be supportive, and these classes help [with] that.*"
>
> *-Parent Interview*

Introduction to Parent University Year 3

In 2013-14, WCSD's Parent University completed its third year of implementation. The WCSD Office of Family-School Partnerships led planning and implementation of the Parent University program. Each year staff members have worked to improve and develop the program, retaining core components while modifying strategies to benefit more schools, families and students.

Parent University offers learning sessions to help families build upon skills, knowledge and support systems to advocate for student success.

In year 3, program staff and participating schools continued their focus on engaging parents and other caring adults in order to help them build the knowledge and skills needed to support student success (Social Entrepreneurs Inc. and WCSD Office of Family School Partnerships, 2011-12 & 2012-13). In contrast to previous years, a course catalog was not published. Instead, courses were selected and advertised through schools, with information on the web and also printed in flyers and bulletins. This change was intended to provide school leadership opportunities to guide class topics, timing, and outreach strategies. Changes to learning sessions were made to further align content to district goals and strategies.

Parent University also continued work to ensure that families were supported in accessing services by removing as many barriers to participation as possible. To assist families that speak Spanish as their first language, interpreters were present and translated materials distributed. On-site child care was also offered for young children. In some learning sessions, children and youth participated alongside their parent or family member. While not provided by Parent University, many schools assisted participants by offering refreshments.

Attendance goals were set as part of program planning with the Washoe K-12 Foundation. In 2013-2014, Parent University strived to reach the following attendance goals:

1. Reach at least 1,900 unduplicated family members through Parent University offerings

2. Reach 2,750 total participants (including parents that attend more than one class)

3. Ensure that at least 60% of families are considered "hard to reach." 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, Stott, & Kinder, 2004) (Brackhertz, 2007)].

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

- Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL)
- Racial or Ethnic Minority
- English Language Learners (ELL)
- Special Education / Individualized Education Plan (IEP)

About Washoe County School District

WCSD is one of the largest districts in the nation, serving more than 62,000 students each year (Nevada Department of Education, 2012). There are 63 elementary schools, a special education school, 14 middle schools and 13 comprehensive high schools. 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.

Washoe County's School District's student and family population is racially and ethnically diverse. In 2103-14, there were 62,986 students enrolled in WCSD's schools. Nearly half of all students (46%) were white (non-Hispanic). The second largest ethnic group was Hispanic/Latino, making up about 39% of the total population.

	American Indian/Alaska Native	Asian	Hispanic	Black	White	Pacific Islander	Two or More Races
District Percentage (2013-14)	1.6%	4.4%	38.9%	2.4%	46.4%	1.0%	5.4%

*Source: Nevada Report Card Demographic Profile 2013-14

Among individual schools, the race and ethnic make-up of the student population may differ considerably. For example, the percentage of students that are white, non-Hispanic ranged by school between 6.5% and 80.7% in 2013-14.

Families experience circumstances that influence their connection to their child's school and education including children's special needs, limited English proficiency, and knowledge of the education system. Student data shows that in 2013-14, more than one in ten (13.5%) students had an Individualized Education Plan (IEP); 15.9% were English Language Learners (ELL); and 47.7% were low income and served through the Free and Reduced Lunch Program (FRL). Similar to the racial and ethnic distribution for the district and by school, averages mask the wide range of student circumstances by school. For example, the percentage of students with FRL varies from less than 3%

(Hunsberger) to 100% (Loder, Kate Smith, Duncan Stem Academy, Mathews, Natchez, Sierra Vista) (Washoe County School District, 2014).

Family Engagement

The Envision WCSD 2015 strategic plan identifies as a goal that "families and community members will be in strong relationships that have meaningful opportunities to increase expertise, trust, and share responsibility for student success." This focus on families is supported by extensive research that documents the connection between parent and family involvement and improved educational outcomes for all students, regardless of background. Studies 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).

> **WCSD Family Engagement**
>
> Parent University is one of several strategies to successfully engage families. Parent Teacher Home Visits, Academic Parent Teacher Teams (ATTP), Parent Involvement Facilitators and other programs at the district and school level are provided to assist parents engage in their child's education. The Infinite Campus parent portal is another resource available to all families, providing access to information about grades, attendance, and homework.

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 [e.g.(Antunez, 2001) (Epstein, 2001) (Jeynes, 2013)]. Additionally, trust between home and school creates a context that supports student achievement, even in the face of poverty (Goddard, Tschnanen-Moran, & Hoy, 2001). In other words, students perform better when their families are involved in their learning.

The activities and characteristics of family engagement programs vary among and within school districts across the country. A recent meta-analysis of 51 parental involvement programs found four types of programs to be associated with positive student academic achievement outcomes. Specifically these programs:

- encourage parents and children to read together;
- promote parent-teacher partnerships that treat parents and teachers as equal partners in improving student academic and behavior outcomes;
- encourage parents to check their child's homework daily; and
- employ school-based efforts to increase communication between parents and teachers were all associated with positive student outcomes (Jeynes, 2013).

Introduction to Parent University Year 3

While many families readily engage in their children's education, others face barriers. School districts and communities can help to address barriers to engagement by reaching out to families, making purposeful connections to learning, and investing in high quality programming and staff. In addition, 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 has seen recent increases in its graduation rate, but there are still considerable disparities in achievement among specific groups of students. Students who have a disability, are limited in their English proficiency, and/or those that come from households with lower socio-economic resources are less likely to graduate than their peers who do not have these attributes (Washoe County School District, 2012). Family engagement is an important strategy to improve student achievement.

Parent University recognizes that all parents bring strengths to their child's education and that specific skills, practices and knowledge can enhance their efforts in helping their child achieve his or her potential.

> "If you would have asked me what I expected and what I got, it was more. My expectations were exceeded."
>
> *-Parent Interview*

Evaluation Questions

The purpose of the Parent University evaluation is to answer questions about the initiative during the 2013-14 school year. Key evaluation questions and data sources to answer the questions are summarized in the chart below.

Evaluation Questions	Data Sources / Evaluation Activities
1. What are the *overall goals and objectives* of Parent University in 2013-14? How does the structure and content of Parent University enable these goals?	**Department Staff.** SEI held project meetings to understand programmatic changes. **Parent University Master List of Classes.** Staff maintained a spreadsheet with learning sessions offered at each school. This sheet was cross-referenced with surveys and sign-in sheets. **Class Observations.** SEI staff observed a selection of core offerings to understand content, structure, delivery, and participation.
2. How do families learn about classes? What can be learned about family engagement from these efforts?	**Sign-in Sheets.** Sign-in sheets collected data on 'how the participant heard about the service.' **Infinite Campus.** Data is collected when families log into Infinite Campus. This data was provided for analysis. **School Reports.** For the first time, Parent University information for each individual school was analyzed and reported. The purpose of this information was to provide transparency, support schools in developing their Family Engagement Plans, and share family responses to the program.
3. How many families attended Parent University classes? Were attendance goals met? Did families that are typically "hard to reach" attend Parent University Classes?	**Sign-in Sheets.** At each class, the instructor provided a sign-in sheet and asked that all participants sign in. Department staff kept an electronic record of participants up to date. **Database of Enrollment**. Sign-in sheet data was kept in a spreadsheet. WCSD staff used family information to associate the parent with at least one WCSD student. Summaries of student demographics were provided to inform the evaluation question.
4. What are lessons learned in Year 3? What aspects of Parent University worked best?	**Stakeholder Meetings.** Information on what worked well and lessons learned came from a variety of sources and evaluation activities. Two planning sessions were held with a group of families, administrators, Parent University facilitators and others. Information on strengths, weaknesses opportunities, and threats was gathered.
5. What do participants (families) gain as a result of their participation? What are the short-term outcomes of Parent University?	**Participant Surveys.** Participants completed a short questionnaire after each class to note changes in knowledge, skills, confidence, and access to resources as a result of the class. This information was summarized at the class level, school level, and aggregated for all of Parent University. **Onsite Observation.** Observation helped to document attendance and engagement at a Parent University event. **Participant Interviews**. Participants were selected randomly to participate in interviews.
6. What are the mid-range indicators for Parent University? Now that it is in its 3rd year, do we see progress toward meeting the goals as describe in the WCSD strategic plan?	**Results of Standardized Tests.** Test scores of students of participating families (including those participating in previous years') were compared to District scores. Over time, it is expected that Parent University will impact outcomes such as student achievement in standardized tests and graduation rates. In 2014, WCSD evaluation staff have planned a propensity match to compare scores of Parent University participants with non-participating families that have similar demographic characteristics.

Notes and Limitations

Evaluation should be considered with the following data limitations:

❖ Sign-in sheets are the main source of participant counts. However, sign-in data was not always complete. Reasons for incomplete data include participants that joined class late and neglected to sign-in, as well as circumstances in which instructors may have forgotten to circulate the sign-in sheet. For this reason, participant counts should be considered conservative; actual participation may have been higher than what was reported. In the process of completing school-specific reports many (but not all) errors related to sign-in sheets were identified and corrected.

❖ Participant surveys may be missing data (e.g., a person left a question blank). Percentages utilize the number completing the question (valid percent) unless otherwise noted. Not all participants answered surveys.

❖ Participant surveys may include duplications or omissions. The evaluation utilized multiple sources to help reduce error and strengthen the reliability of findings.

❖ Information from individual interviews should be considered one source of information and not representative of all stakeholders.

❖ Demographic data from students of participating adults were compared to the corresponding WCSD student population to identify how well the program accomplished serving a representative distribution. Demographic information on families was not directly collected.

Results

Participation Goals

Data from sign-in sheets showed that Parent University met its third year participation goals. A total of 3,079 participants were counted through sign-in sheets at Parent University offerings including both learning sessions at schools and Family Access Days. Of this total, 2,501 were unduplicated participants. These counts are understood to be conservative estimates, as some sessions did not collect sign-in data. Of the total participants, 2,153 unique WCSD families were identified, and a total of 3,684 students (6% of WCSD school population) had one or more participating family member.

Measure	Total Count	Goal	Definition and Method
% of Total Attendance Goal 108%	3,079	2,750	Total Parent Attendance Based on Count of All Signed In

Measure	Total Count	Goal	Definition and Method
% of Unduplicated Parent Goal 132%	2,501	1,900	Total Unduplicated Parent Attendance Unique Parents, Corrected with Duplications Removed for Multiple Classes Attended, Using Perm #

Attendance goals also specified populations to reach. In 2013-14 Parent University exceeded its goal to ensure that at least 60% of participants served had children who met at least one criterion included in the "hard to reach" definition. Hard to reach includes FRL, Racial or Ethnic Minority, Special Education (IEP), or LEP Status:

- ❖ 57% of students whose families participated were enrolled in the free/reduced lunch program (FRL).
- ❖ 63% of students whose families participated were a race or ethnicity other than white.
- ❖ 11% of students whose families participated were in special education programs (have an individualized education plan or IEP).
- ❖ 24% of students whose families participated had a child that has a designation of limited English proficiency (LEP).

These groups are important to engage because data suggests that District graduation rates are considerably lower for these subpopulations, and the gap in achievement starts early. Engaging families helps to close gaps in opportunity and achievement by providing information, tools and resources critical to academic success.

Student Demographics

Demographic data from students of participating families were compared to the WCSD student population to identify how well the program accomplished serving a representative distribution. WCSD families that are Hispanic / Latino were strongly represented among Parent University participants compared to the District. WCSD families that are multi-racial and American Indian were represented in proportions very similar to the District population. Families that are Asian, Pacific Islander, African American or White were below their representation in the District.

Comparison of Race and Ethnicity

	Parent University Demographics*	Representation in District (2013-14)**
Hispanic / Latino	50.8%	38.9%
White (not Hispanic/Latino)	36.8%	46.4%
Multi-racial	5.3%	5.4%
Asian	3.8%	4.4%
African American	1.5%	2.4%
American Indian	1.4%	1.6%
Pacific Islander	0.3%	1.0%

*Parent University information for WCSD families; percentage based on the child listed on sign-in sheets; n=2,153 ** District Data is from Nevada Report Card, Nevada Department of Education for 2013-14.

Families with students receiving free/reduced lunch (FRL) and families of students with limited English proficiency were strongly represented compared to the district population; families with a child with an IEP were under-represented.

Comparison of Special Populations

	Representation in Parent University (2013-14)*	Representation in District (2013-14)**
Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL)	57%	48%
Limited English Proficiency (LEP)	24%	16%
Individualized Education Plan (IEP)	11%	14%

*Parent University information for WCSD families; percentage based on the child listed on sign-in sheets; n=2,154. **Data on the District is from Nevada Report Card, Nevada Department of Education

Results

Assessment Comparison

Data suggests that families involved in Parent University are more likely to have students that are proficient (based on academic assessments) compared to the district as a whole. High School Proficiency Exams (HSPE) and Criterion Referenced Tests (CRTs) were compared between students of Parent University participants and district averages. This information supports the association between family engagement and achievement, although, additional study is needed to understand the relationship between the program and student test outcomes.

Comparison of Test Scores of Children of Parent University Participants and District*

Assessment Type		Passed
HSPE Writing (n=135)	**Parent University**	**92%**
	District Percentage 2013-14	80%
HSPE Reading (n=150)	**Parent University**	**95%**
	District Percentage 2013-14	84%
HSPE Science (n=188)	**Parent University**	**92%**
	District Percentage 2013-14	80%
8th Grade CRT Reading (n=193)	**Parent University**	**74%**
	District Percentage 2013-14	58%

*Test scores provided by WCSD for child listed on sign-in sheets of Parent University participants & District-wide scores; percentage based on students that completed the corresponding test during the 2013-14 school year using information from Nevada Report Card.

Parent Portal Logins

About 14% (296) of families attending Parent University accessed the Infinite Campus Parent Portal, averaging 3.07 logins each (median of 2). For the high school population only, this rate was slightly higher (16%). Further analysis is needed to understand and validate this result.

Participation by Class Topic

According to sign-in sheet data, Washoe County families attended sessions in 57 topic areas. The best-attended class was *How is My Child Doing? Understanding Your Child's Achievement Data.* The top 10 best attended sessions by topic are shown below:

Results

Class Topics with Highest Overall Attendance	# of participants
How is My Child Doing? Understanding Your Child's Achievement Data	202
Promoting Literacy in the Home for P-3	182
Data Night	153
High School Graduation Requirements	141
Understanding the Emotional Impact of GT	121
Infinite Campus Parent Portal	115
Common Core: An Introduction	112
High School Options Signature Academy	102
How to Make the Most Out of Your Parent Teacher Conference	85
Discovering a Gifted and Talented Child	85

Participation by Class Location

With the exception of Family Access Day, most Parent University sessions took place at District schools and were offered during the school day and in the evenings. Families were welcome to attend sessions at any location. According to sign-in sheet data, parents attended sessions at 74 schools and community organizations throughout the area[1]. Schools with the highest attendance are listed below.

Top 20% Elementary Schools

1. Bennett Elementary (206)
2. Dunn Elementary (122)
3. Corbett Elementary (89)
4. Kate Smith Elementary (82)
5. Anderson Elementary (65)
6. Drake Elementary (58)
7. Mitchell (53)
8. Smithridge Elementary (51)
9. Booth (46)
10. Palmer (46)
11. Lemelson Elementary (45)
12. Lemmon Valley (44)
13. Mount Rose Elementary (44)

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[1] School reports were issued at year-end with specific information including participant counts. Some changes are reflected in this report based on additional information compiled after school reports were completed.

Top 20% Middle Schools

- Dilworth (104)
- Cold Springs (100)
- O'Brien (100)

Top 20% High Schools

- McQueen High School (167)
- Academy for Arts, Careers and Technology (AACT) (102)
- Reno High School (45)

Participation by Oldest Child's School

The following lists show schools with the strongest participation as counted based on the oldest child's school (regardless of which location the parent attended the class).

Top 20% Elementary Schools

1. Bennett Elementary (203)
2. Dunn Elementary (118)
3. Kate Smith Elementary (83)
4. Corbett Elementary (80)
5. Anderson Elementary (61)
6. Palmer Elementary (60)
7. Drake Elementary (59)
8. Smithridge Elementary (55)
9. Mitchell Elementary (53)
10. Gomm Elementary (50)
11. Cannan Elementary (46)
12. Lemelson (43)
13. Mount Rose (41)

Top 20% Middle Schools
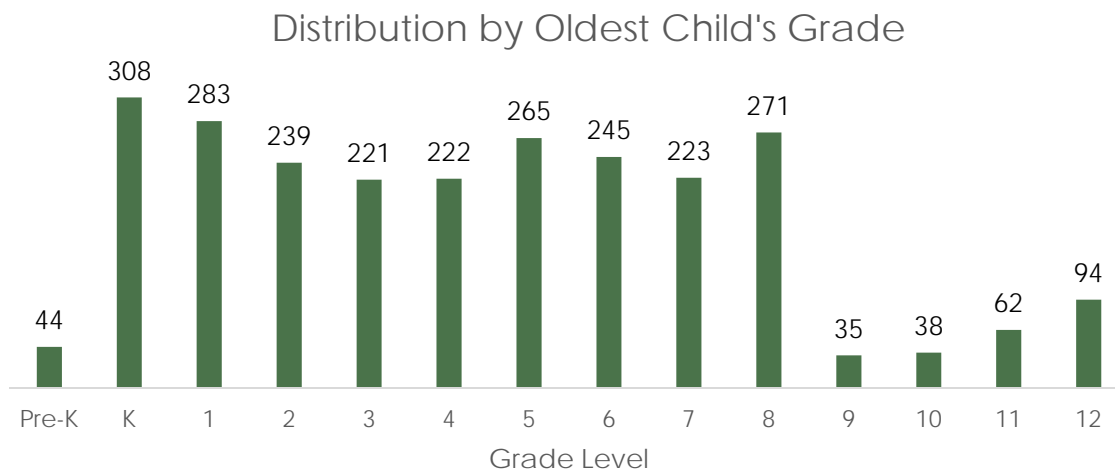
- Cold Springs (100)
- O'Brien (90)
- Clayton (81)

Top 20% High Schools

- Reno High School (45)
- Academy for Arts, Careers and Technology (AACT) (41)
- Reed High School (31)

Students Served

A total of 2,153 unique WCSD students were identified in sign-in sheets. Families only indicate one (oldest) student during sign-in. Other children in the household are also likely to benefit from parent participation. When siblings are included, this number increases to 3,684 served.

Data from sign-ins show that Parent University is impacting the families of children at every grade level, but weighted toward younger students. Other children in the household are not considered in this analysis.

Distribution by Oldest Child's Grade

Grade Level	Value
Pre-K	44
K	308
1	283
2	239
3	221
4	222
5	265
6	245
7	223
8	271
9	35
10	38
11	62
12	94

How Parents Learned about Parent University

Parents were asked on sign-in sheets to provide information on how they learned about Parent University; 1,128 parents completed this field. More than half (62%) noted their child's school as their source for information about Parent University, underscoring the importance of administrator, teacher, and staff awareness and support for Parent University. Via interviews, the importance of child's encouragement to attend sessions was an important factor for families. Many parents reported that their child had asked or encouraged them to attend a class or event, and this was a considerable motivation.

Learned about Parent U via school communication: 62%

Social Media	Printed Media	Word of Mouth	Other
13%	12%	2%	10%

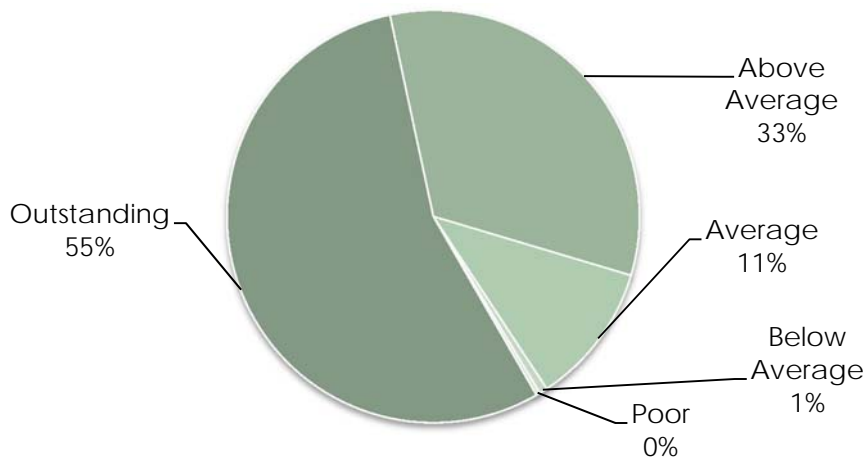*Source: Parent University class sign-in sheets

> *"My daughter wanted me to be here; she encouraged me."*
>
> *-Parent Interview*

Results

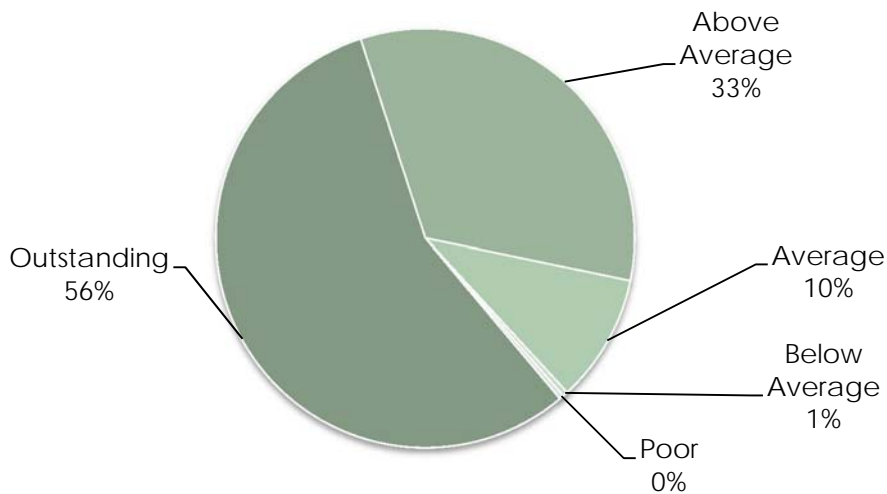## Perceptions of Parent University Class Quality and Usefulness

Nearly all respondents to the parent survey indicated that they would recommend the class to another parent (98%).

Across all sessions offered, families rated sessions very highly in terms of quality and usefulness. The majority of participants (88%) described the class *usefulness* as outstanding or above average and 89% described the class *quality* as outstanding or above average.

Usefulness of the Class

Outstanding 55%
Above Average 33%
Average 11%
Below Average 1%
Poor 0%

Quality of Class

Outstanding 56%
Above Average 33%
Average 10%
Below Average 1%
Poor 0%

Results

Participant Outcomes

Through interviews, families were able to describe outcomes of their participation. All interviewees were able to articulate what they had learned, and most identified specific changes they would implement as a result of their attendance. Responses fell into several major themes. Families learned:

- ❖ new ways to support academic learning at home

  "They taught us a cool card game to learn called math paths. Put out 5 cards and add, multiply, etc. It was something I hadn't learned about. It was cool to learn about different games and things to teach."

- ❖ how to understand school data and other aspects of the school system like credits

  "Aprendí a leer los reportes de la escuela, el significado que tienen los colores y las letras (Spring, Fall, etc.). Aprendí a leer los resultados de las calificaciones de mi hija." (I learned how to read school reports, and the meaning that colors and letters have (Spring, Fall, etc.). I learned to read the results of my daughter´s grades.)

- ❖ resources and connections to make for their child

  "Aprendí donde puedo ir para obtener asistencia financiera. Aprendí que debo preguntarle al maestro en que clase necesita ayuda mi hijo y cómo lo puedo ayudar en casa y el maestro en la escuela." (I learned where to go to get financial assistance. I also learned that I have to ask the teacher in which class my son needs help and how could I help him at home and how the teacher will help him at school).

- ❖ how to remove barriers to college

  "I thought that they were awesome. We don't really know what to do to help them to get ready for college - we needed the tools to help. We got some great tools and tips and websites to look at."

Many families also had experiences that helped them gain confidence and feel supported. Examples of themes are provided below:

- ❖ The importance of the parent's participation in their child's education
- ❖ The opportunities available to their child that they did not know existed before
- ❖ A feeling that their voice is important and that they can advocate for their child

All parents that were interviewed (n=31) shared changes they anticipated making after the day's class. A summary of themes from interviews is provided below.

What Parents Plan to Change After Class:

Increase participation at school and involvement in child's performance.
Increase learning techniques and share resources with my child.
Motivate my child to go to college.
Better prepare my child for college.
Put more emphasis on studying rather than working.
Pursue financial aid for child's higher education.

Parents that were interviewed after completing at least two 2013-14 Parent University sessions shared changes they *had seen or made since their first Parent University class.* Themes from interviews are listed below.
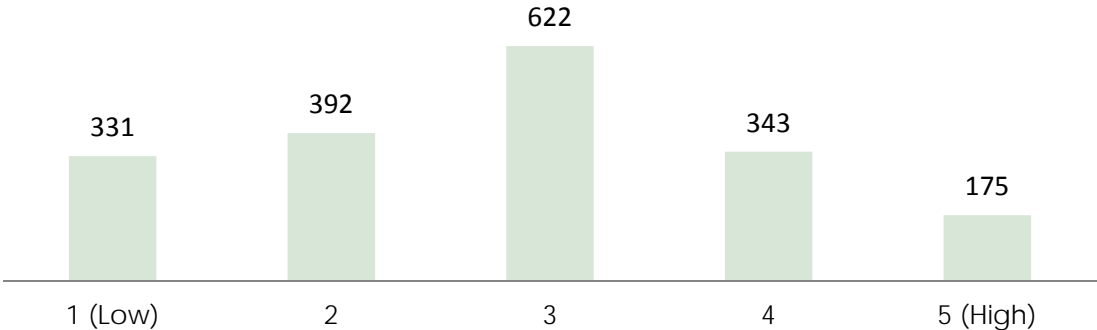
Changes Parents Have Seen or Made Since their First Parent University Class

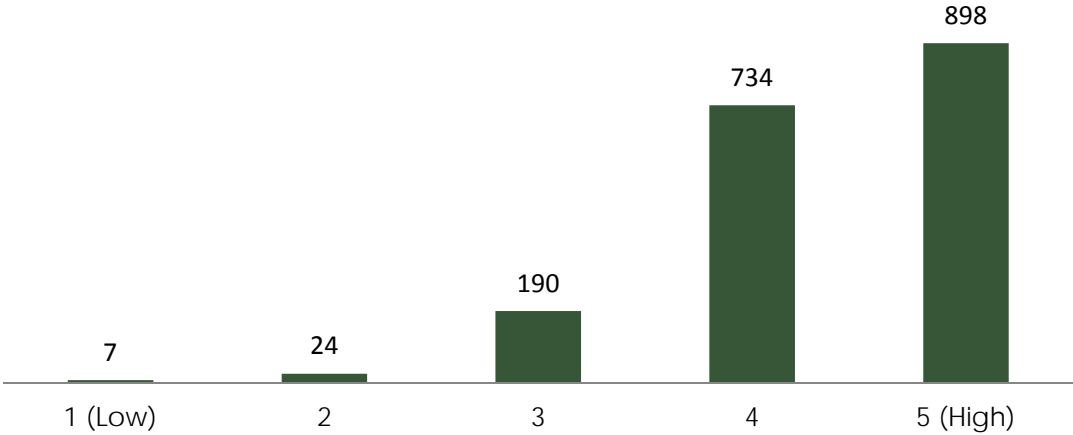| Changes Seen in Child	Improved communication skills and attendance at school
	Improved family involvement
	Improved reading skills
	Improved performance at school
Changes Parents Have Made	Increased involvement in child's learning process
	Improved family involvement
	Start preparing child for college
	Motivate child to get involved with the community

Self-Reported Changes in Knowledge, Skills, Confidence, and Awareness

Parent University class participants reported significant changes in knowledge, skills / abilities, confidence as a parent, and awareness of community information and resources as a result of the class participation and topic. Families rated themselves retrospectively using a 5 point scale, where 1 = low or little and 5 = high. On the following pages, profiles of participants' knowledge, skills, confidence and awareness are shown before and after classes. Note that participants reported that their level of knowledge, skills, confidence and awareness had increased as a result of attendance.

Results

Knowledge BEFORE the Class
(n= 1,863)

331	392	622	343	175
1 (Low)	2	3	4	5 (High)

Knowledge AFTER the Class
(n=1,853)

7	24	190	734	898
1 (Low)	2	3	4	5 (High)

Results

Skills or Abilities BEFORE the Class
(n=1,851)

280	383	635	371	182
1 (Low)	2	3	4	5 (High)
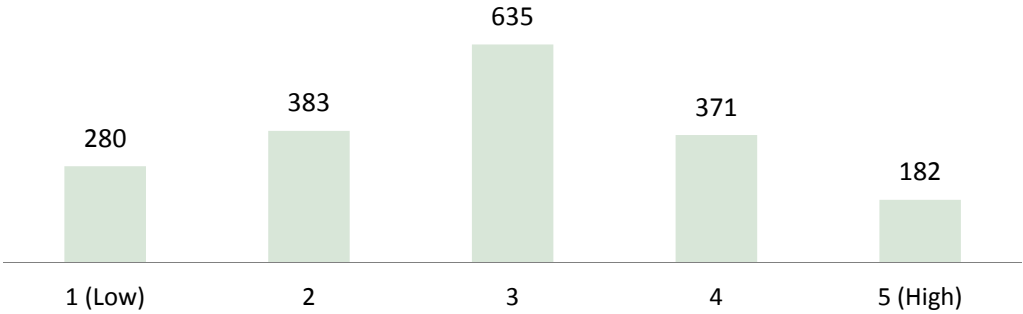
Skills or Abilities AFTER the Class
(n=1,854)

6	31	219	732	866
1 (Low)	2	3	4	5 (High)

Results
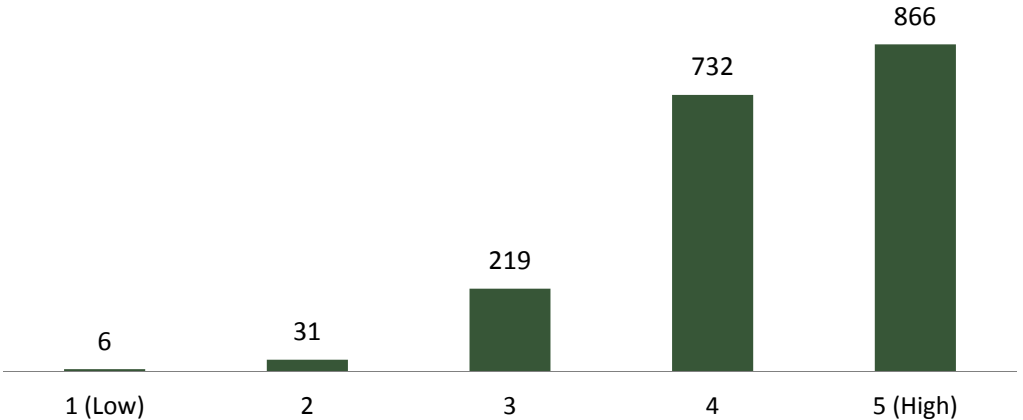
Confidence BEFORE the Class
(n=1,830)

		607		
			402	
271	310			240
1 (Low)	2	3	4	5 (High)
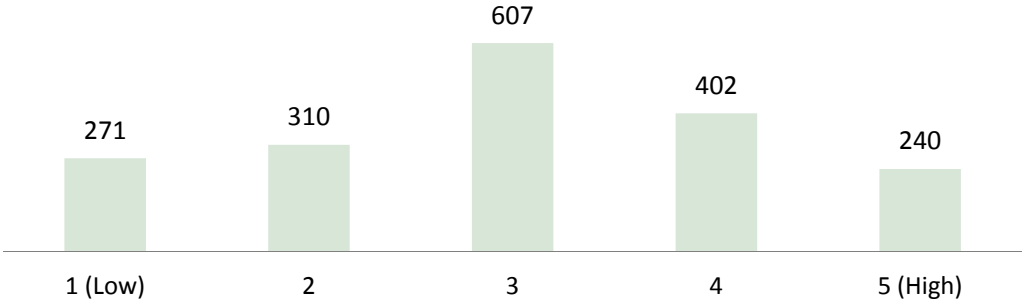
Confidence AFTER the Class
(n=1,851)

				989
			634	
		183		
16	29			
1 (Low)	2	3	4	5 (High)
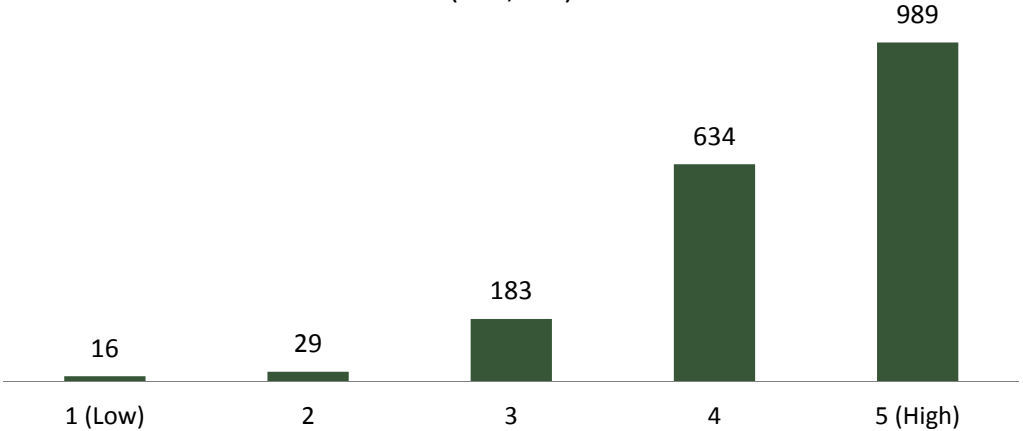
**Awareness BEFORE the Class
(n=1,832)**

	1 (Low)	2	3	4	5 (High)
Value	323	402	553	356	198
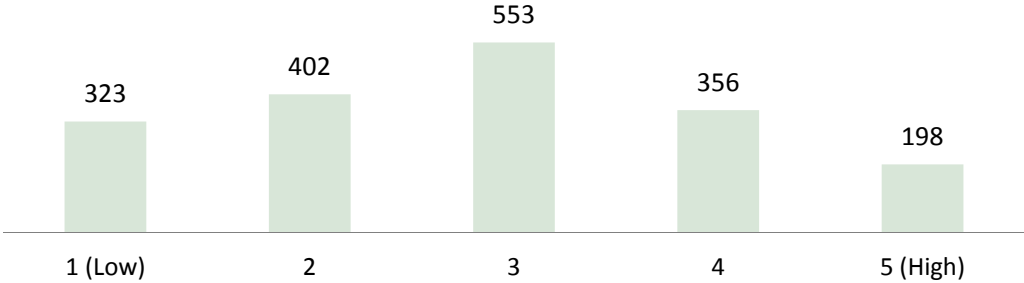
**Awareness AFTER the Class
(n=1,832)**

	1 (Low)	2	3	4	5 (High)
Value	19	48	216	597	971

Results
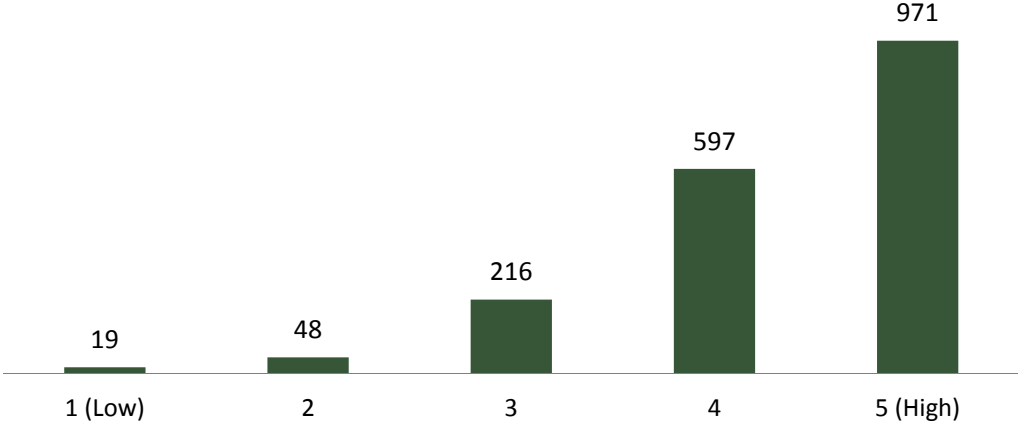
Summary of Findings & Recommendations

Key Findings

1. Parent University Reached Families.

- District-wide participation goals were exceeded, with 3,079 total participants and 2,501 <u>unduplicated</u> participants counted through sign-in sheets. A total of 3,684 students had a parent or family member that attended a Parent University learning session.

- Families that face barriers to accessing the education system were well represented, with at least 63% of Parent University attendees meeting at least one criteria included in the definition of "hard to reach."

- More than half of all families accessing learning sessions were Hispanic/Latino.

- Families represented schools across the District including elementary, middle and high schools. In contrast to previous years, the distribution of student ages was weighted toward younger students (K-8).

- Parents were motivated to attend, in part because their child encouraged them to come. In interviews, many families noted that the reason they had decided to attend was because they had been informed or encouraged by their child.

2. Families were Focused on Student Academic Success.

- Attendance was highest among sessions focusing on achievement data, literacy, and graduation requirements.

- Three Family Access Days were held during the year and brought 425 parents to the University of Nevada Reno campus where they received information and support to help their child on the pathway toward college and highly skilled careers. Parents indicated a very high level of satisfaction with events and reported gains in knowledge, skills, confidence and awareness as a result of their participation.

3. Participants Rated Learning Sessions as Useful, High Quality, and Reported Knowledge Gains.

- Participating families felt that their time was well spent, the content and instructors were easy to understand, and that learning sessions were high quality.

- Participants reported substantial gains in knowledge, skills, abilities, confidence as a parent, and awareness of community information and resources as a result

of participation in the class. Parents and instructors reported additional positive outcomes from participating in Parent University sessions for both the parents and their children.

- Families took away different experiences from sessions. In interviews, families were able to articulate meaningful but often different experiences from the learning sessions. For example, in the same class, one parent noted new *strategies* for teaching their child at home; another described learning new *content* (that would help them to know more and teach their child). This is important because it suggests that classes provide multiple levels and opportunities for learning.

- In interviews, families reported changes that they planned to make or had already made as a result of attending Parent University. These included stronger involvement in their child's education, working to motivate and prepare their child for college, and emphasizing learning at home.

Recommendations

1. **Continue to Focus on Engaging and Serving Diverse Families.**

One of the noteworthy successes of WCSD's Parent University is that attending families have largely represented the diversity of the district. The following recommendations are around continued growth and leadership in building trust and capacity to serve diverse families.

- **Strengthen the approach to provide services to both English and Spanish speaking families.** Parent University has consistently delivered content in both English and Spanish. Typically, this has been provided through a class instructor (speaking in English) and an interpreter working to share the information to those that prefer or are able to best learn in Spanish. The result can be effective two-language communication, but some participants have also noted, through surveys, difficulty hearing, understanding, or keeping focused when two languages are happening simultaneously. To address this, Parent University many consider steps like 1) setting expectations at the beginning of class for the pace of a dual-language learning experience 2) training interpreters in subject matter so that they can deliver content independently if needed during the session and 3) creating consistent interpreter-instructor teams and empower them to improve the experience of participants together. Interpreters and instructors should feel comfortable pausing to clarify and modifying the pace to ensure the best experience for participants.

Summary of Findings & Recommendations

- **Continue to provide child care, translation & interpretation supports.** For many families these features make participation possible. Schools can help to support families by soliciting information about best times for sessions, and promoting sessions at events such as back to school nights and other school activities where many families are in attendance.

- **Extend efforts to reach underrepresented racial and ethnic groups.** Reported in staff interviews and supported by demographic data, Parent University has not reached all racial and ethnic minorities at the level expected based on district representation. The program has tried different approaches and will continue to look for ways to strengthen relationships at schools and in the community. Working with employers, places of worship, and in neighborhoods (parks & housing complexes) may be promising approaches to reach families that are not yet engaged.

2. **Build Capacity to Serve More Families.**

    As the program intends to serve more families each year, new tools and strategies are needed to build capacity and leverage existing, limited resources. These recommendations are focused on improving infrastructure.

    - **Improve data system to simplify entry, analysis and reporting accuracy.** Accurate record keeping is important. The Parent University staff invests considerable time making sure sign-in data is complete and correct. Surveys are also entered manually. Moving forward, investments in data infrastructure should be made for efficiency and accuracy. In the short term improvements can be made to data-capture forms, and in the long term, movement from spreadsheets to a data system will enhance reporting capabilities.

    - **Utilize annual evaluation data for future program planning purposes.** To do this, improvements in data collection efforts are necessary to ensure timely access to evaluation information aligned with the program planning timeframe.

    - **Extend Parent University participation at school sites.** When school administrators and teachers are excited and energized about engaging families, participation in learning sessions is stronger. Continue to work to encourage schools to fully partner with both Parent University and families for successful implementation.

3. **Enhance Impact.**

Early successes over the first three years of implementation offer an opportunity to enhance impact toward district goals.

- **Include families in session selection, leadership and ownership of Parent University.** Families can help to determine the course topics offered at their

Summary of Findings & Recommendations

school. By soliciting input and following through on requests to provide specific content, schools strengthen their relationships with families and help to build leadership and ownership of the program.

- **Set growth targets to increase reach**. The program is currently reaching about 6% of WCSD students through family members. Growth targets are important to extend the reach and impact of Parent University; however it is important to note the program staff is small and additional resources, tools and strategies may be important to ensure quality continues alongside growth.

- **Provide targeted messaging.** Each class is an opportunity to teach new or reinforce existing practices and strategies that help students learn outside the classroom. In learning sessions, maximize these opportunities by 1) helping parents understand the Parent University sessions available 2) sharing with families how they can access information about their student, for example, Infinite Campus, and 3) emphasizing that the parent or family can make a critical difference in their child's education.

- **Provide training and supports for instructors.** Instructors want to provide excellent learning sessions to parents and families every time, and should be provided the support to do so. Identify professional development opportunities for instructors of learning sessions and encourage continued improvements in content and delivery.

- **Use Parent University as a venue to increase parental knowledge about content standards and assessments.** Grow the opportunities to learn about Nevada Academic Content Standards and related changes to assessment. In 2014-15, there are notable changes to student assessment and Parent University offers an excellent opportunity to help families understand changes.

Summary of Findings & Recommendations

Appendix: Methodology
Participant Surveys

After each learning session instructors provided participants an evaluation form. It is important to note that while there was strong participation in the survey, completion of the tool was voluntary and not collected at every class or from every participant.

Sign-in Data

At each learning session the instructor circulated a sign-in sheet. This is the main way that class participation was counted and validated. It is important to note that sign-in data is likely to be an undercount of true participation. Sometimes participants entered late and did not sign-in, and there were situations where instructors did not complete sign-in sheets.

Student Data

Using data from sign-in sheets, student information associated with adult participants was requested from the data department and analyzed.

In-Person Interviews and Class Observation

SEI staff attended Parent University sessions (n=2) in April and May of 2014, and Family Access Day (n=2) in February and March 2014. Here, parent engagement in sessions, overall program processes, and immediate outcomes of participants were observed. Participants were invited to complete a survey (n=31) in English (42%) or Spanish (58%) immediately following their participation in a class. Interviews in Spanish were conducted by Spanish-speaking staff or with the aid of an interpreter. Questions were analyzed and coded for important themes.

Informal Interviews

Throughout the year, the evaluator connected with program staff to understand progress, challenges and successes. At year end (June) a planning session was held with Parent University stakeholders, which provided feedback and suggestions for improvement.

Session Feedback Forms

Following each learning session held at Family Access Day, participants answered questions specifically about the class to provide feedback on content and satisfaction. This information was used to improve session offerings.

Appendix: Methodology

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