

Report to the Washoe K-12 Education Foundation

Annual Evaluation 2014-15

August 2015



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

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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.

2014-15 Community Partners

Boys and Girls Club of Truckee Meadows
Community Services Agency – Head Start
Education Alliance of Washoe County
Truckee Meadows Community College (TMCC)
University of Nevada Reno (UNR) – Cooperative Extension
Washoe County Library System
Nevada PEP
Park Vista Apartments
Gifted and Talented Parent Connection (GTPC)
Little Flower Catholic Church
Reno-Sparks Indian Colony
Sierra Nevada Journeys
RISE Academy for Adult Achievement
Greater New Hope Baptist Church

Several Washoe County School District departments also supported this project.

Information Technology (IT) Department
Department of Student Services
Department of Assessment
Department of Counseling Services
Volunteer Services
Department of Child & Family Services
Volunteer Services
Department of Fine Arts
Department of English Language Learners & World Languages
Department of Curriculum & Instruction
Striving Readers
Department of Gifted and Talented

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

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“...I wanted to attend to learn how to support [our children] as parents, to be guided, and give our children this teaching, so they can achieve their goals and dreams... **We are thankful for the program, because we learn how to help our children.**”

// ... Quise venir para aprender como padre, orientarnos, y darles esta enseñanza a nuestros hijos para que ellos en el futuro puedan cumplir sus metas y sueños... Estamos agradecidos del programa, porque aprendemos como ayudar a nuestros hijos...”

Parent Interview

Parent University - Family Access Day

Report Summary

The mission of Parent University is to help families build upon skills, knowledge, and support systems to advocate for their student's success. Since 2011, Parent University has provided learning sessions at schools and community-based locations in Washoe County to fulfill its mission. This report demonstrates program outcomes and identifies opportunities for continuous improvement using information from the 2014-15 program evaluation.

2014-15 Parent University at a Glance

Together with 14 Community Partners and 10 District Departments, Parent University:

- Offered **347** learning sessions across the district in **57** academically-focused topics;
- Held **2** full-day Family Access Days at the University of Nevada Reno where families learned strategies to support their child's pathway to college;
- Engaged **2,849** unique participants, with total attendance of **6,553**. The students of these families represented the district's diverse population; and
- Connected with **3,192** students through one or more family participants, or roughly 5% of WCSD's student population.

Among Parent University Participants:

- 80% described learning session **usefulness** as outstanding or above average.
- 78% described learning session **quality** as outstanding or above average.
- 98% of survey respondents indicated that they would recommend the session to another parent.
- 22% of participants rated their knowledge in the subject area as high or very high (4 or 5 on a 5-point scale) *before* the learning session; 75% rated their knowledge as high or very high *after* the learning session.

Parent University is Important to Families.

"...We can educate ourselves in things we didn't know before and then we can help our children. [Parent University is] important to help us grow as parents. // Porque así nosotros nos educamos en cosas que antes no sabíamos y así podemos ayudar a nuestros hijos. [Es] importante para uno mismo y así ayudarnos a crecer como padres."

Parent interview
Mariposa Academy

Key Findings

1. Parent University is Reaching More Families than in Previous Years, and Families are Attending More Often and Engaging with More Depth.

- Each year, Parent University leadership and the Washoe K-12 Foundation set attendance goals. In 2014-15, the overall district-wide participation goal of 3,400 was greatly exceeded, with a total of 6,553 participants attending one or more Parent University learning sessions. This marks a five-fold increase since the program's inception in 2011. The goal to reach 2,600 unduplicated participants was also exceeded, with 2,849 unique parents identified. The goal to reach 3,550 students through their family participation was not met, with 3,192 students of families counted and validated.
- Nearly half of total participants (49%) attended the RISE learning sessions, *Building Your English Language Skills to Prepare for College*. These families experienced multiple sessions and engaged with information regularly including how to navigate the educational system for their children.
- Families were asked about other class topics they would be interested in attending. The most frequently requested topics were related to English language proficiency, computers, and math. Other common suggestions included nutrition, reading, bullying, behavior, and college.

2. Participating Families Value Parent University.

- In interviews and written responses, families stated that Parent University provided them with opportunities to better support their children's education.
- For the fourth year in a row, the vast majority of participants rated learning sessions as useful and high quality.
- Participants reported substantial gains in knowledge, skills, abilities, confidence, and awareness of community resources as a result of the learning session. Participants also identified specific positive changes they planned to make in response to what they learned.
- Over the four years that Parent University has been in place, it has grown and changed. Results from program evaluation have been consistent in that the vast majority of participants have provided very positive feedback. Many express great appreciation for the opportunities to learn and support their child's education.

3. Parent University is A Leader in Connecting with Families.

- Parent University effectively reached families that may face barriers accessing the education system. At a minimum, 66% of Parent University attendees had a student that met one or more criteria considered “hard to reach.”¹
- The district’s diversity was well reflected in Parent University. Demographic data showed that Parent University reached diverse race and ethnic groups at levels similar to the proportions in the district. More than half of all participants were family members of children that are Hispanic / Latino.
- Two Family Access Day events were held at the University of Nevada Reno and brought 437 parents to campus. Through these events parents received information and support to help their child on the pathway toward college and highly skilled careers. As in previous years, parents indicated a very high level of satisfaction with the event and reported gains in knowledge, skills, confidence, and awareness as a result of participation.
- While most participation goals were met, a number of sessions had no attendance. The topic, location, and strategies for session promotion likely contributed to variations in attendance.

Recommendations

1. Make Sustainability a Focus in Year 5

- Parent University has demonstrated value to families in Washoe County schools, and Washoe County School District has been recognized nationally for its family engagement efforts. Results from evaluation have been consistent – families value this program and report that it helps them to better support their children’s educational pathways. In order to see long-term system change, continued investments in family engagement including Parent University are needed. Strategies for sustainability may include:
 - Identify key champions that can promote Parent University within the district and community to attract both participation and funding;
 - Strategically and intentionally connect Parent University to other school and district family engagement activities;

¹ “Hard to reach” families were defined as families with students who fell into one or more of the following demographic categories: Free/ Reduced Lunch (FRL); Racial or Ethnic Minority; English Language Learners (ELL) and Individualized Education Plan (IEP). This rate is the lower estimate; data privacy prohibits analysis to provide the actual count.

- Communicate broadly about Parent University including its successes;
- Continue to partner with community-based organizations and district departments toward common goals, and
- Document these activities in a sustainability plan.

2. Leverage Success in Reaching Families

- Identify opportunities to further engage with families that attend classes. Provide standard information at each class, including announcements about upcoming Parent University events and information about the Infinite Campus Parent Portal. Parents may also benefit from learning about opportunities such as Academic Parent Teacher Teams, The Parent Teacher Home Visit Project, and other engagement opportunities at school and in the community.
- Nearly all participants identify they would refer other families to Parent University, and many participants are learning about Parent University from family, friends, and church. These referrals can be strengthened by providing families with simple tools to share information and to encourage others to attend.

3. Continue Development of the Program to Meet Emerging District and Family Needs.

- Strive toward continued growth and efficiency. A feedback form from the instructor or Parent University staff may be useful to identify what could have made the difference in terms of attendance or to improve class quality. Attempting new strategies for outreach and documenting lessons learned may help with real-time improvements.
- Assist families to develop skills including English language proficiency and computers. These topics have been identified by current participants as an important need to support their children's educational success.
- Encourage schools and teachers to promote Parent University and help shape the session topics and offerings.

Background

About Washoe County School District (WCSD)

WCSD in Nevada is one of the largest districts in the nation, serving nearly 63,000 students in the last year (Nevada Department of Education). The district has 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.

The district’s student and family population is racially and ethnically diverse. In 2013-14, nearly half of all students (46.4%) were white (non-Hispanic). The second largest ethnic group was students that were Hispanic / Latino, making up 38.9% of the total, followed by students that were two or more races (5.4%), Asian (4.4%) Black or African American (2.4%), or Pacific Islander (1.0%).

WCSD Student Race and Ethnicity

	American Indian / Alaska Native	Asian	Hispanic / Latino	Black / African American	White	Pacific Islander	Two or More Races
Percentage	1.6%	4.4%	38.9%	2.4%	46.4%	1.0%	5.4%

Nevada Report Card, Nevada Department of Education

Among individual schools, the racial and ethnic makeup of the student population may differ considerably. For example, the percentage of students that were white, non-Hispanic, ranged by school between 4.2% and 83.1% in 2013-14.

Families experience circumstances that influence connection to their child’s school and education, including children’s special needs, limited English proficiency, and access to resources. In 2013-14, more than one in ten (13.5%) students had an Individualized Education Plan (IEP); 15.9% of students were English Language Learners (ELL); and 47.7% were served through the Free / Reduced Lunch Program (FRL), a proxy for poverty.² Similar to the racial and ethnic makeup of individual schools, district averages mask differences in neighborhoods and schools. For example, the percentage of students with FRL varied last year from less than 2.5% to 100%.³

² The free/reduced price lunch data are frequently used by education researchers as a proxy for school poverty since this count is generally available at the school level, while the poverty rate is typically not available. Because the free/reduced price lunch eligibility is derived from the federal poverty level, and therefore highly related to it, the free/reduced price lunch percentage is useful to researchers from an analytic perspective. It is important to note that the rate of eligibility in free/reduced price lunch is typically larger than the actual poverty rate (Snyder & Musu-Gillette, 2015).

³ Hunsberger ES had 2.5% enrolled in FRL. The following schools had 100% in FRL: Agnes Risley Es, Allen ES, Anderson ES, Booth ES, Cannan ES, Corbett ES, Duncan STEM Academy, Greenbrae ES, Kate M Smith ES,

The Promise of Family Engagement

The Envision WCSD 2015 strategic plan identified a goal that families and community members will be in strong relationships, have meaningful opportunities to increase expertise, trust, and [will] share responsibility for student success. This focus on family engagement is based on extensive research that documents the connection between parent and family involvement and improved educational outcomes for all students. Studies suggest 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). Efforts to build capacity of families recognizes that all parents bring strengths to their child's education and specific skills, practices, and knowledge can enhance their role in helping their child achieve his or her potential.

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 education, 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). 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. The following activities were all associated with positive student outcomes (Jeynes, 2013):

1. Encouraging parents and children to read together,
2. Promoting parent-teacher partnerships that treat parents and teachers as equal partners in improving student academic and behavior outcomes,
3. Encouraging parents to check their child's homework daily, and
4. Employing school-based efforts to increase communication between parents and teachers.

While many families readily engage in their children's education, others face barriers. Schools, districts, and communities, can help to address barriers to engagement by

Lincoln Park ES, Loder Academy ES, Mathews ES, Natchez ES, Smithridge STEM Academy ES, Sun Valley ES, Veterans Memorial STEM Academy, Traner MS, Hug HS, Mariposa Dual Language Academy (Washoe County School District, 2014).

reaching out to families, making purposeful connections, and investing in high quality programming and qualified 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).

Considerable disparities in achievement exist among groups. Students who have a disability or are limited in their English proficiency are less likely to graduate than their peers (Washoe County School District, 2012).

Students of all racial and ethnic minorities, with the exception of students that are Asian, were less likely to graduate than students that are White (not Hispanic) (State of Nevada Department of Education, n.d.). Finally, students who have experienced extended poverty have been shown to be less likely to graduate from high school than their peers that did not experience poverty. In a study of students across the US, “22% of children who lived in poverty did not graduate from high school compared to 6% that had never been poor.” Among children who spent half their childhood in poverty, 32% did not graduate from high school (Hernandez, 2011).

“I reward [my daughter] a lot, but now I want to push her a little bit more and never stop supporting her. // Yo la premio bastante [a mi hija], pero ahora quiero empujarla un poco más y nunca dejar de apoyarla.”

Parent interview
Echo Loder

In recent years, Washoe County Schools and community partners including private philanthropy have invested in family engagement (Reid, 2015). Washoe County has also seen recent increases in the graduation rate, but there is still considerable work to ensure all students graduate from high school and are on a path to college and careers.

Parent University as a Strategy to Reach Families

Parent University was envisioned, planned, and implemented in 2011 to help families engage with their children’s learning. Through the support of the district, qualified staff and outside investment, Parent University has completed its fourth year. The WCSD Department of Family-School Partnerships led planning and implementation of Parent University. Each year, program staff members have worked to improve and develop the program, retaining core components and also changing strategies to help more schools, families and students benefit from the investment.

Parent University is founded on an understanding that all families want their children to be successful, but they may not have the tools and knowledge to support them in reaching their academic potential. Program staff and participating schools engage parents and other caring adults to build knowledge and skills that support success. While learning sessions are open to all families, Parent University intentionally works to

engage families that have been traditionally underserved or hard to reach. They accomplish this by providing classes at schools (an accessible location), take down barriers (including language and child care), and use multiple strategies to connect and inform families about Parent University offerings.

This year Parent University continued efforts to lower attendance barriers. As in previous years, interpreters were available and translated materials were provided to families that speak Spanish as their first or preferred language. On-site child care was also offered for young children. In some classes children and youth participated alongside their parent(s) or family member(s). For two Family Access Days at UNR, transportation assistance was provided.

Attendance goals have been set as part of program planning with the Washoe K-12 Foundation. In 2014-2015 Parent University strived to reach the following attendance goals:

1. Reach at least 2,600 unduplicated family members through Parent University offerings
2. Reach 3,400 total participants (including parents that attend more than one class)
3. Ensure that at least 60% of families were 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 / Reduced Lunch (FRL)
- Racial or Ethnic Minority
- English Language Learners (ELL)
- Individual Education Plan (IEP)

Parent University is one of several strategies to successfully engage families. Parent Teacher Home Visits, Action Team for Parents (ATP), Parent Involvement Facilitators and other programs at the district and school level are provided to assist parents in engaging in their child’s education. Infinite Campus parent portal is another resource to all families, providing access to information about grades, attendance, and homework.

Results

Student Demographics

WCSD families of students that are Hispanic / Latino, multi-racial, or Black / African American, were well represented among Parent University participants when compared to the district. Families of students that are Pacific Islander and Asian were slightly under-represented compared to the district population.

Comparison of Race and Ethnicity in Parent University and District

	Parent University Demographics*	Representation in District (2013-14)**
Hispanic / Latino	51.3%	38.9%
White (not Hispanic / Latino)	33.8%	46.4%
Multi-racial	5.5%	5.4%
Asian	3.7%	4.4%
African American	3.0%	2.4%
American Indian	1.9%	1.6%
Pacific Islander	0.7%	1.0%

*Parent University information for WCSD families; percentage based on the child listed on sign-in sheets; n=2,216..

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

Families with students receiving Free / Reduced Lunch (FRL), families of students with Limited English Proficiency (LEP), and families with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) were well represented.

Comparison of Special Student Populations in Parent University and District

	Representation in Parent University (2014-15)*	Representation in District (2013-14)**
Free / Reduced Lunch (FRL)	56.4%	47.7%
English-Language Learner – ELL or Limited English Proficient (LEP)	25.4%	15.9%
Individualized Education Plan (IEP)	13.4%	13.5%

*Parent University information for WCSD families; percentage based on the child listed on sign-in sheets; n=2,216.

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

Participation Goals

Parent University met two of three participation goals. A total of 6,553 participants were counted through sign-in sheets at Parent University offerings including individual learning sessions and Family Access Days. Of this total, 2,849 were unduplicated (unique participants). Of the total participants, 2,216 WCSD families were identified, and a total of 3,192 students in families potentially impacted by their parent’s participation.

<u>Measure</u>	<u>Total Count</u>	<u>Goal</u>	<u>Definition and Method</u>
% of Total Attendance Goal 193%	6,553	3,400	Total Parent Attendance <i>Based on Count of All Signed In</i>

<u>Measure</u>	<u>Total Count</u>	<u>Goal</u>	<u>Definition and Method</u>
% of Unduplicated Parent Goal 110%	2,849	2,600	Total Unduplicated Parent Attendance <i>Duplications Removed for Multiple Classes Attended</i>

<u>Measure</u>	<u>Total Count</u>	<u>Goal</u>	<u>Definition and Method</u>
% of Student Goal 90%	3,192	3,550	Count of All Children in Household <i>Based on Total Unduplicated Parent Attendance and Connection to Students in Household</i>

Leadership also set a goal that at least 60% of the population served would be considered hard to reach based on one or more factors. Hard to reach included FRL Status, Racial or Ethnic Minority Status, ELL Status, or IEP Status. Parent University met this goal with a minimum of 66% of families meeting one of the identified criteria. Note that 66% is a low estimate; data privacy protects individual records and does not allow for the true percentage to be calculated. Information that informed this goal is presented here:

- 65.9% of students whose parents participated were a race or ethnicity other than white.
- 15.9% of students whose families attended Parent University had a child that has a designation of English Language Learners (ELL).
- 47.7% of students whose parents went to Parent University families participated in the Free / Reduced Lunch Program (FRL).
- 13.5% of students whose parents went to Parent University are in special education programs (have an Individualized Education Plan - IEP).

“You can learn new things or update old skills. Smart researchers keep finding ways to help parents help our kids.”

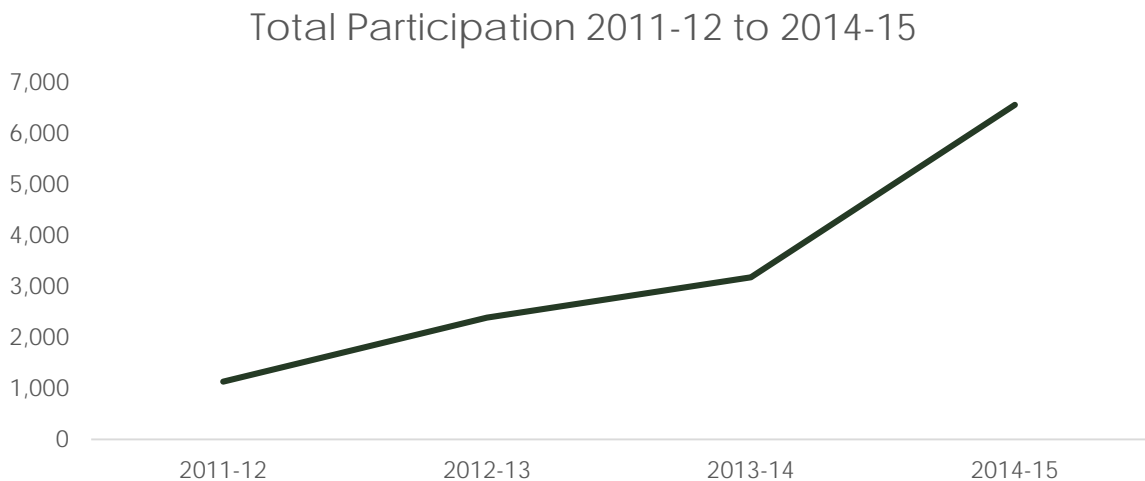
Parent interview
Echo Loder

Participants Over the Years

Parent University has tremendously increased the number of parents reached through its four year history, from a total of 1,131 participants in 2011-12 to 6,553 in 2014-15.

Parent University Participation 2011-12 through 2014-15

	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
Total Participation	1,131	2,386	3,175	6,553



Learning Sessions Offered

Parent University offered 357 learning sessions over the school year in 57 topic areas. Among the sessions offered, 49 or 14% had no record of attendance. The best-attended learning session was *Building Your English Language Skills to Prepare for College* which was a course consisting of several classes, followed by *Choices for Your Child's Future - High School Options*. The top 10 best attended classes are shown below:

Class Topics with Highest Overall Attendance	# of participants
<i>Building Your English Language Skills to Prepare for College</i>	3,222
<i>Choices for Your Child's Future - High School Options</i>	345
<i>Study Skills, Critical Thinking and MORE!</i>	205
<i>How is My Child Doing? Understanding Your Child's Achievement Data</i>	143
<i>Infinite Campus Parent Portal</i>	135
<i>College and Career Readiness Night</i>	127
<i>Setting the Bar High and Helping your Child to Reach it!</i>	101

"[I learned] How to encourage them--with daily tasks--to learn math. They gave me a lot of examples that were very effective for our children. // [Aprendí a] Como incentivarlos -con labores diarias- a que aprendan matemáticas. Me dieron muchos ejemplos que fueron muy efectivos para nuestros hijos."

Parent Interview
Family Access Day

How Participants Learned about Parent University

Parents were asked to provide information on how they learned about Parent University. A total of 3,382 parents completed this field. School continued to be the main channel through which parents learned about Parent University classes, with different means such as e-mails, phone, texts, voice messages, flyers, bulletins, and teachers or administrative staff noted. Other commonly noted sources were friends and family members, Washoe County School District, ConnectEd, work, church, Head Start, internet, newspaper, and radio.

Test Scores

Families with high school students involved in Parent University were more likely to pass proficiency exams compared to the district as a whole. High School Proficiency Exams (HSPE) were compared between students of Parent University participants and district averages.⁴

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

Assessment Type		Passed	Did not pass	Not taken
HSPE Writing (n=172)	Parent University	88.4%	7.6%	4.1%
	District	80.1%	--	--
HSPE Reading (n=172)	Parent University	90.1%	7.6%	2.3%
	District	84.2%	--	--
HSPE Science (n=172)	Parent University	88.4%	8.1%	3.5%
	District	79.6%	--	--

*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. These results are preliminary.

Parent Portal Logins

The Parent Portal is a helpful tool available through the District’s Infinite Campus website for families to keep track of student attendance and progress. About 88% (1,954) of families attending Parent University accessed the Infinite Campus Parent Portal at least once during the school year. Of that total 15% accessed once, 11% accessed twice, 17% accessed three to five times, and 45% accessed more than five times. Only about 12% (262) never accessed the portal during the year. Access to Parent Portal among Parent University participants was considerably higher than the previous year.⁵

[We will] Play dominos, chutes and ladders, board games, to practice mathematics. I also will use the materials they gave us to put into practice the new techniques we learned. // Jugar al dominó, serpientes y escaleras, juegos de mesa, para practicar matemáticas. También utilizaré los materiales que nos dieron para poner en práctica las técnicas nuevas que aprendí.

Parent Interview
Anderson Elementary

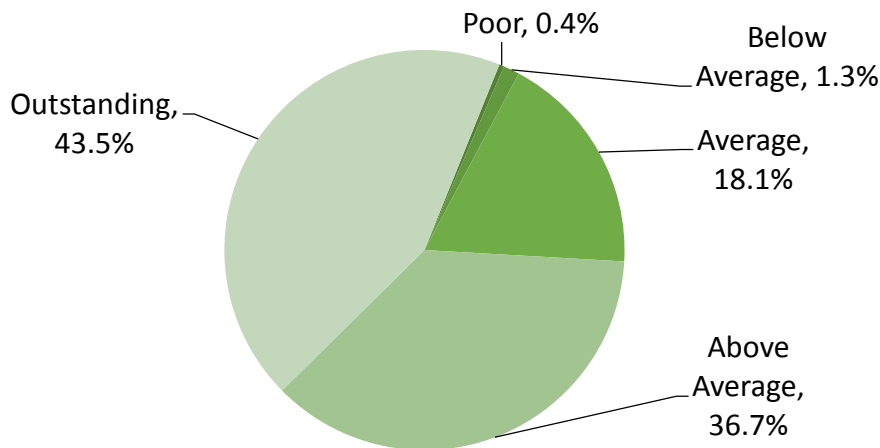
⁴ Test score comparisons were limited in 2014-15 due to changes in methodology and reporting. These results should be considered as preliminary.

⁵ This finding may be due to data changes year to year. This result should also be considered preliminary.

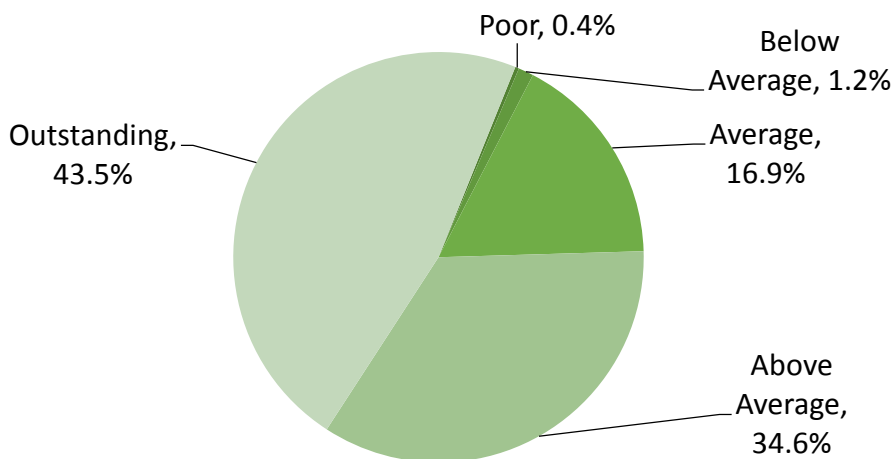
Perceptions of Parent University Class Quality and Usefulness

Nearly all respondents to the parent survey indicated that they would recommend the learning session to another parent (98%). Across all learning sessions offered, families rated classes very highly in terms of quality and usefulness. The majority of participants (80%) described the session **usefulness** as outstanding or above average and 78% described the session **quality** as outstanding or above average. A portion (18% and 17%) described classes as average in terms of **usefulness** and **quality**. Classes with a low or average rating were reviewed at year end to identify opportunities for improvements.

Usefulness of the Class



Quality of the Class



Participant Outcomes

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

- ❖ New ways to support and encourage academic learning at home
- ❖ How to understand school data including academic performance at all levels
- ❖ Resources and connections to make for their child
- ❖ How to remove barriers to college

Many families also had experiences that helped them to gain confidence and feel supported. For example, they noted:

- ❖ 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.

Additionally, in interviews conducted with participants, parents shared changes they planned to make based on the information they learned in class. For example:

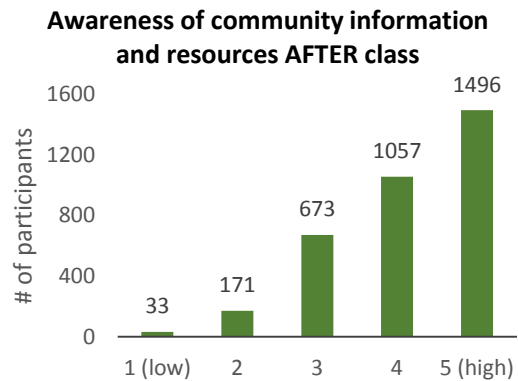
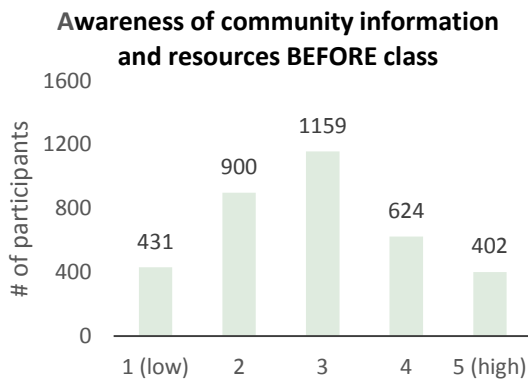
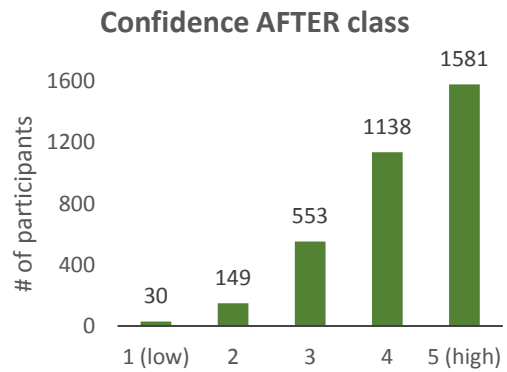
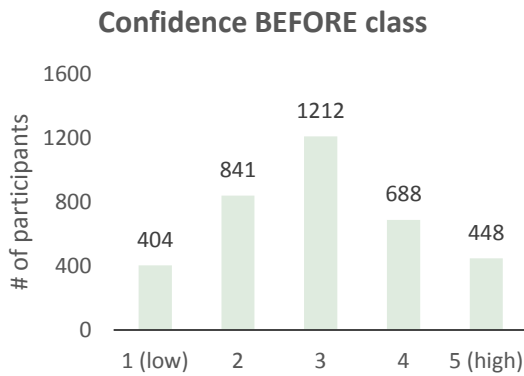
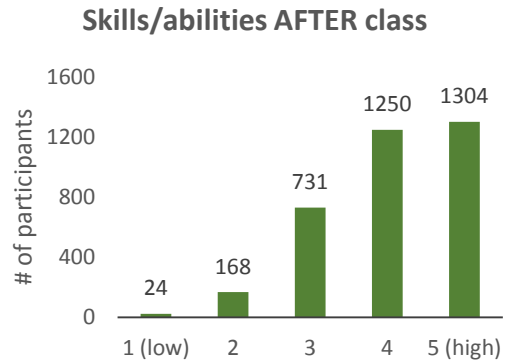
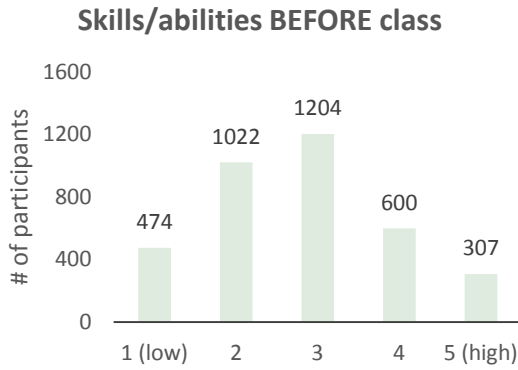
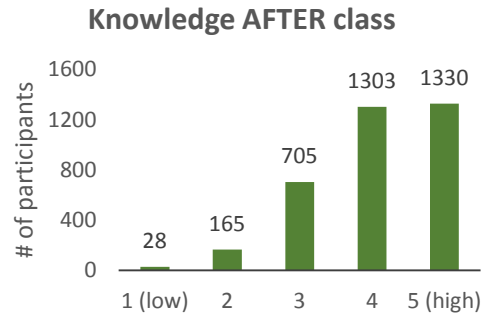
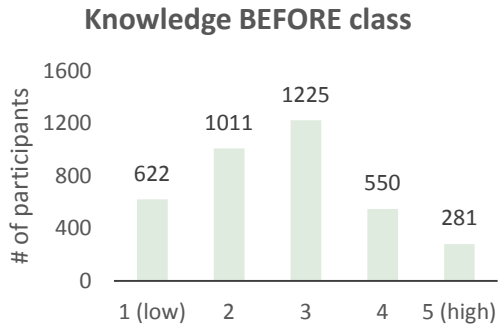
- ❖ Ways to motivate their children to study, and learn while playing
- ❖ How to praise them and keep them motivated in learning
- ❖ Planning for the future; ways to set goals and achieve them;
- ❖ Every child is different in their learning process and parents can and should customize their approach to best assist them.

All parents that were interviewed (n=34) shared changes they anticipated making after the day's class. Response themes included:

- ❖ Use new teaching techniques to support their children learning
- ❖ Better communicate; talking and listening
- ❖ Provide more attention
- ❖ Implement strategies to keep students motivated to study and achieve

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

Parent University participants reported significant changes in knowledge, skills, confidence, and awareness of community resources as a result of their participation. Comparisons in each area are shown on the following page.



Summary of Findings & Recommendations

The following findings from the evaluation are summarized below, followed by recommendations.

1. Parent University is Reaching More Families than in Previous Years, and Families are Attending More Often and Engaging with More Depth.

- Each year, Parent University leadership and the Washoe K-12 Foundation set attendance goals. In 2014-15, the overall district-wide participation goal of 3,400 was greatly exceeded, with a total of 6,553 participants attending one or more Parent University learning sessions. This marks a five-fold increase since the program's inception in 2011. The goal to reach 2,600 unduplicated participants was also exceeded, with 2,849 unique parents identified. The goal to reach 3,550 students through their family participation was not met, with 3,192 students of families counted and validated.
- Nearly half of total participants (49%) attended the RISE learning sessions, *Building Your English Language Skills to Prepare for College*. These families experienced multiple sessions and engaged with information regularly including how to navigate the educational system for their children.
- Families were asked about other class topics they would be interested in attending. The most frequently requested topics were related to English language proficiency, computers, and math. Other common suggestions included nutrition, reading, bullying, behavior, and college.

2. Participating Families Value Parent University.

- In interviews and written responses, families stated that Parent University provided them with opportunities to better support their children's education.
- For the fourth year in a row, the vast majority of participants rated learning sessions as useful and high quality.
- Participants reported substantial gains in knowledge, skills, abilities, confidence, and awareness of community resources as a result of the learning session. Participants also identified specific positive changes they planned to make in response to what they learned.
- Over the four years that Parent University has been in place, it has grown and changed. Results from program evaluation have been consistent in that the vast majority of participants have provided very positive feedback. Many express great appreciation for the opportunities to learn and support their child's education.

3. Parent University is A Leader in Connecting with Families.

- Parent University effectively reached families that may face barriers accessing the education system. At a minimum, 66% of Parent University attendees had a student that met one or more criteria considered “hard to reach.”⁶
- The district’s diversity was well reflected in Parent University. Demographic data showed that Parent University reached diverse race and ethnic groups at levels similar to the proportions in the district. More than half of all participants were family members of children that are Hispanic / Latino.
- Two Family Access Day events were held at the University of Nevada Reno and brought 437 parents to campus. Through these events parents received information and support to help their child on the pathway toward college and highly skilled careers. As in previous years, parents indicated a very high level of satisfaction with the event and reported gains in knowledge, skills, confidence, and awareness as a result of participation.
- While most participation goals were met, a number of sessions had no attendance. The topic, location, and strategies for session promotion likely contributed to variations in attendance.

Recommendations

1. Make Sustainability a Focus in Year 5

- Parent University has demonstrated value to families in Washoe County schools, and Washoe County School District has been recognized nationally for its family engagement efforts. Results from evaluation have been consistent – families value this program and report that it helps them to better support their children’s educational pathways. In order to see long-term system change, continued investments in family engagement including Parent University are needed. Strategies for sustainability may include:
 - Identify key champions that can promote Parent University within the district and community to attract both participation and funding;
 - Strategically and intentionally connect Parent University to other school and district family engagement activities;

⁶ “Hard to reach” families were defined as families with students who fell into one or more of the following demographic categories: Free/ Reduced Lunch (FRL); Racial or Ethnic Minority; English Language Learners (ELL) and Individualized Education Plan (IEP). This rate is the lower estimate; data privacy prohibits analysis to provide the actual count.

- Communicate broadly about Parent University including its successes;
- Continue to partner with community-based organizations and district departments toward common goals, and
- Document these activities in a sustainability plan.

2. Leverage Success in Reaching Families

- Identify opportunities to further engage with families that attend classes. Provide standard information at each class, including announcements about upcoming Parent University events and information about the Infinite Campus Parent Portal. Parents may also benefit from learning about opportunities such as Academic Parent Teacher Teams, The Parent Teacher Home Visit Project, and other engagement opportunities at school and in the community.
- Nearly all participants identify they would refer other families to Parent University, and many participants are learning about Parent University from family, friends, and church. These referrals can be strengthened by providing families with simple tools to share information and to encourage others to attend.

3. Continue Development of the Program to Meet Emerging District and Family Needs.

- Strive toward continued growth and efficiency. A feedback form from the instructor or Parent University staff may be useful to identify what could have made the difference in terms of attendance or to improve class quality. Attempting new strategies for outreach and documenting lessons learned may help with real-time improvements.
- Assist families to develop skills including English language proficiency and computers. These topics have been identified by current participants as an important need to support their children's educational success.
- Encourage schools and teachers to promote Parent University and help shape the session topics and offerings.

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, it is voluntary and not collected at every class or from every participant. A total of 3,788 class evaluation surveys were taken, out of which 1,575 were in English and 2,206 in Spanish.

Sign-in Data

At each learning session the instructor circulated a sign-in sheet. This was 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, associated student information was requested from the data department and analyzed.

In-Person Interviews and Class Observation

SEI staff attended Parent University classes (n=5) in March and April of 2015, and Family Access Day (n=2) in November 2014 and January 2015. Parent engagement in classes, overall program processes, and immediate outcomes of participants were observed. Participants were invited to complete a survey (n=34) in English (n=12) or Spanish (n=22) 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.

Master Schedule

A schedule of all planned classes was updated based on participation.

School Reports

Data from evaluation was used to generate a report for every participating school site. Information was provided back to school personnel at year end.

Notes and Limitations

Evaluation should be considered with the following limitations of data:

- ❖ Comparisons to district data are typically separated by one year, with current data available for Parent University and the previous year's data available for the district as a whole.
- ❖ Test score comparisons were limited in 2014-15 due to changes in methodology and reporting. These results should be considered preliminary.
- ❖ Sign-in sheets are the main source of participant data. However, sign-in data was not always complete. Reasons include that some participants joined late and missed the sign-in sheet, or, in some circumstances instructors may have forgotten to circulate it. This means that participant counts are conservative. Actual participation may have been higher than counted.
- ❖ 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 answers 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. Quotes featured in reports may be corrected for grammar and punctuation.

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