

# NEWS RELEASE



For Immediate Release

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## District Launches Parent University Offering More Than 200 Classes

**Reno, NV (Sept. 29, 2011)** – The Washoe County School District is opening its doors to a new group of students for a brand new venture that will enable the District to better connect with its most valuable partners – parents. The classes for Parent University officially started this week with a ribbon cutting ceremony Thursday at Libby Booth Elementary School.

The planning for Parent University began a little more than a year ago and included conversations with many parents and community partners. It is made up of a partnership with 22 community-based organizations, six individuals and 11 WCSD departments. More than 220 free classes are being offered that will help every family increase their knowledge of how to help their children succeed. Classes are offered under the following five categories:

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

Superintendent Heath Morrison said, "Parent University is a key component in our efforts to improve the quality of education in Washoe County. In our strategic plan, *Envision WCSD 2015 – Investing In Our Future*, we make a promise to proactively reach out to our parents and not just talk about parent involvement. We are committed to working together to build stronger learning environments in the form of parent engagement. When we work in collaboration with our parents and we have a true partnership, there is no child we can't educate at high levels."

Any caring adult in the life of a child in Northern Nevada is welcome to attend classes; it is not necessary to be the legal parent or guardian of the student. Community-based partners and several departments within WCSD will be teaching classes in their area of expertise.

The Parent University is sponsored by IGT and United Way of Northern Nevada and the Sierra. Karen Barsell, CEO of United Way, said, "United Way of Northern Nevada and the Sierra is excited about our newest partnership with Washoe County School District that supports Parent University. With education as one of United Way's top three focus areas, this project will bring together schools, families and the community. Together, we intend to improve the graduation rate by effectively engaging and supporting families each step of the way, starting from birth through graduation day."

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The new coordinator of Parent University, Maria Fernandez, said the courses will focus on developing every child's potential as well as on topics such as bullying, Internet safety and healthy eating to give parents more tools to help their child deal with many important and pressing issues. "It is exciting to have this program in our community and we know that it will build the capacity of our families to help their students."

WCSD Trustee Barbara Clark says she is looking forward to seeing parents coming to the classroom. "One key strategy for student achievement is engaging families in the academic success of their children. The Parent University will provide families the knowledge they need to navigate our educational system and support their children's academic needs," Clark said. "Effective family engagement is a great equalizer for students contributing to their increased academic achievement regardless of parents' education level, ethnicity or socioeconomic background."

The Parent Involvement Council also has been an instrumental partner in identifying relevant classes for Parent University. The council is an all-volunteer group of parents, WCSD employees and community members who help shape and develop family engagement policy and programs for the District.

Tracy Sherwood, the Chair of the WCSD Parent Involvement Council, said, "We are celebrating the partnership between the WCSD Parent Involvement Council and the Parent University in bringing quality classes for families to help them help their students succeed. This partnership marks a milestone for WCSD because the school district is now empowering parents to be a powerful voice in their student's academic careers."

A catalog with all of the course descriptions was sent to every household of students at Washoe County School District. You can register for the free classes three ways:

1. Phone – (775) 325-2000
2. Fax – Fax the registration form on page 11 to 333-5372
3. Website – Sign up online at [www.wcsdparentu.com](http://www.wcsdparentu.com)

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**About Washoe County School District:** The Washoe County School District includes the Reno/Sparks metropolitan area, Incline Village, Gerlach, Empire and Wadsworth, Nevada. The District provides each of its 63,000 students with a superior education in a safe and challenging environment and is committed to graduate every child career and college ready. For more information visit [www.washoecountyschools.org](http://www.washoecountyschools.org). Follow us on Twitter at [WCSDTweet](https://twitter.com/WCSDTweet).

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