

NC ACCESS BEST PRACTICES



Office of Charter Schools
NC ACCESS PROGRAM
NC Department of Public Instruction

Family and Community Engagement

Family Support

Parent University

Implementation Description

East Voyager Academy (EVA), a charter school in Charlotte, is the only Mandarin immersion school in North Carolina. Accessible online learning was a priority before the Covid-19 pandemic; however, the realities of social distancing mandates aided in a fluid and speedy transition to a 100% virtual learning environment. Although EVA was able to successfully transition to an online learning platform, the administration realized families felt disconnected from school programs and procedures. In response to the need, the school launched Parent University, which consists of monthly, virtual sessions to inform and engage families in school activities. These sessions helped families feel more connected to each other and to the school.

Parent University topics were typically researched and presented by the school principal, curriculum coordinator, and student services coordinator. When needed, the administrator reached beyond their school community to include guest speakers. For example, Dr. Yongling Gorke of the Department of Languages and Culture Studies at UNC Charlotte, presented research on bilingual education, and Dr. Trasha Black from Genesis Project 1, spoke of her partnership with EVA to provide counseling services for students and their families. Each session utilized a video communication service such as Zoom and included a slideshow presentation. One designated staff person from EVA would monitor the chat section of the video call and answer written questions from participants in real time. At the end of the presentation, the facilitators allowed time for questions and feedback from families. Finally, the recordings and chat transcript for each session were uploaded to the school website and shared through the school newsletter.

The content of each meeting aligned with significant events on the school calendar. In August, Parent University served as an orientation to online learning, which helped new families understand how to

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About This School

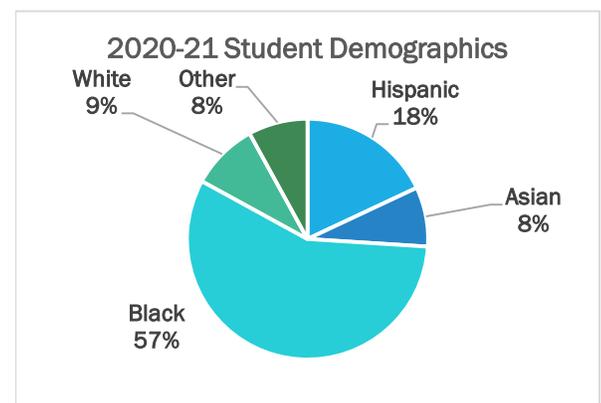
East Voyager Academy of Charlotte

East Voyager Academy of Charlotte is the first Mandarin Immersion school in North Carolina. As a 75/25 one-way model, we teach K-3 in the Mandarin language, and then transition to a 50/50 model in grades 4, 5, and 6 to strengthen students' bilingual skills using ELA and Social Studies as the subjects that are taught in English.

Year School Opened: 2018-19

Grant Awarded: 2019-20

Initial Grade Levels Served: K-4



% ED Student Population: 13 %

Urbanicity: Urban/ Charlotte, NC

Persons in Poverty (Mecklenburg County)⁴: 10.3%

structure a school day at home and create a designated learning environment so their children could thrive. This session also instructed families on how to use school-provided laptops and how to access EVA's virtual learning platforms. Subsequent sessions in the fall promoted family volunteer opportunities and discussed available mental health resources provided by EVA's partnership with Genesis Project 1. As the year progressed, EVA hosted a session introducing iReady, a diagnostic testing program the school purchased by utilizing NC ACCESS funding. This presentation explained the purpose and structure of iReady and offered resources to help students prepare for these upcoming assessments. In the spring, Parent University helped families understand how to interpret testing data and Growth Reports they received from iReady. During recruitment, Parent University focused on the benefits of a Mandarin immersion program which was marketed to prospective as well as current families.

EVA staff was very pleased with the number of attendants at Parent University meetings. There were 60 participants at the first presentation in August, and an average of 30 participants at the following meetings, many representing more than one student enrolled at the school.



Results

Parent University was new this year and feedback data was not collected. However, EVA plans to begin collecting data through family surveys in 2021-22 to measure the impact of Parent University and to continuously improve offerings through this communication outlet.

Challenges

Because of the social distancing protocols necessitated by the Coronavirus pandemic, 2020-21 was a difficult year for connecting and engaging with families and students. Fortunately, EVA developed Parent University to help families stay connected to the school and each other. Parent University also equipped families to better support their child(ren) throughout the challenges of virtual learning.

Future Modifications

EVA will continue Parent University in 2021-22. In order to receive feedback, EVA plans to create and disseminate a parent survey. The survey results will enable school leaders to refine Parent University and ensure the content continues to be relevant for current and prospective families.

Critical Components

Getting Started

All EVA families received laptops in 2019-20, which aided in the accessibility of the Parent University virtual sessions. It was also critical that school staff took the time to discover what topics interested families in order to provide effective support.

Ongoing Supports

As Parent University continues, school staff will continue to ask for feedback from families to ensure that these sessions are successful. It may also be necessary to conduct further research into finding guest speakers for specific topics of interest.

Equity Connections

Family involvement in education has been shown to improve academic performance, “*attitudes toward school,*” and student retention rates, particularly for economically disadvantaged students (Bogenschneider, 2004). Hosting training events, such as EVA’s Parent University, is one way to equip families to be more involved in their child’s education (Cotton & Wikelund, p.3-5, 1989). Collecting feedback from families and providing time for open discussion communicate that the opinions of these families are valuable and necessary for overall school success.

Some lower-income families who would like to be more informed about school programs and activities, are unable to travel to the school building to receive this information because of complicated work schedules or a lack of available transportation (CDC, p.20-1, 2013; Cotton & Wikelund, 1989). Schools can address this need by posting webinars online for convenient access, as EVA did, or by hosting in-person events in the community.

Research

1. Bogenschneider, K. & Johnson, C. (February, 2004). “Family Involvement in Education: How Important Is It? What Can Legislators Do?” University of Wisconsin-Madison University Extension. Policy Institute for Family Impact Seminars. P. 1. Accessed on April 13, 2021. Retrieved from https://www.purdue.edu/hhs/hdfs/fii/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/fia_brchapter_20c02.pdf
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3. Cotton, K. & Wikelund, K. R. (May, 1989). “Parent Involvement in Education”. School Improvement Research Series: Close-Up #6. P. 3-5. Accessed on April 13, 2021. Retrieved from <https://educationnorthwest.org/sites/default/files/parent-involvement-in-education.pdf>
4. United States Census Bureau, Quick Facts North Carolina, Retrieved from <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/NC/PST045219>