

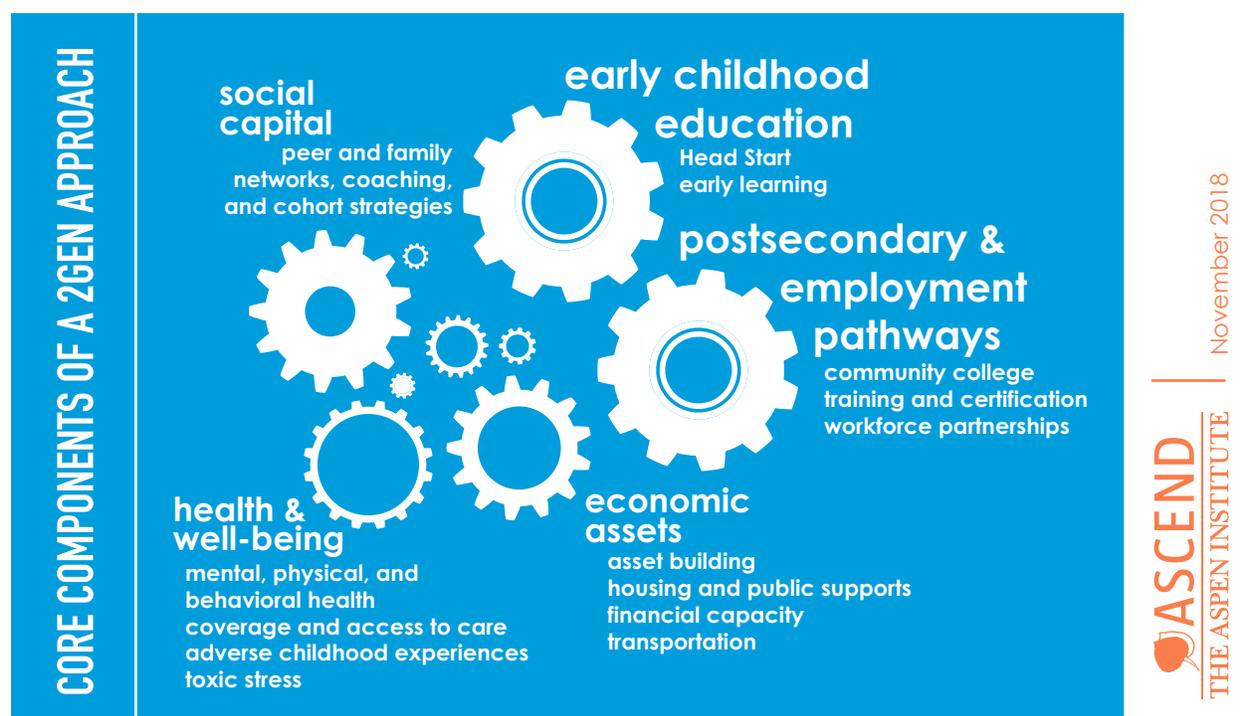
Accelerating POSTSECONDARY SUCCESS for PARENTS

Leveraging the Two-Generation Approach in Practice

Introduction and Context

Parents know what researchers have documented: Education, especially postsecondary education, is the most promising path toward economic stability for families because it can lead to jobs and careers with living wages. Research has shown the impact of a parent's education, economic stability, and overall health on a child's well-being (Dubow, Boxer, & Husemann, 2009; Duncan, Ziol-Guest, & Kalil, 2010). Similarly, children's education and healthy development are powerful catalysts for parents. Two-generational approaches create opportunities for and address needs of both children and the adults in their lives together and build on the power of this mutual motivation. That is why postsecondary education is a core component of the 2Gen approach, which meets the needs of parents with low incomes and their children simultaneously, supporting families in making progress together.

Why are postsecondary students who are parents deserving of specific attention? Parents are resilient, have mutual motivation to succeed, but have major constraints on time. A recent study published in the *Journal of Higher Education* discusses the "time poverty" that students who are parents face (Wladis, Hachey, & Conway, 2018). According to the study, students who were raising preschool-age children had about



My biggest fear is that I won't be able to break all the curses against me for my children.

—Rynn Bell, Parent Advisor

10 hours per day to dedicate to academics, sleeping, eating, and leisure activities, compared to the 21 hours available for childless students. Unsurprisingly, child care requires significant time and

resources. Education consultant Entangled Solutions recently released *Parent Learners: Insights for Innovation*, a report that found that time was “shredded” for students who are parents (Horn, Salisbury, Ashburn, Schiener, & Pizer, 2018). In addition to time pressures, students who are parents must often address challenges with affordable child care, stable housing, finances, institutional racism, and trauma. Parents deserve access to resources and opportunities that can address their financial and time constraints as well as other challenges to allow them to better themselves and improve the economic trajectory of their families.

Aspen Postsecondary Success for Parents Initiative

In 2018, Ascend deepened its work on postsecondary success for parents to identify and develop solutions, political will, and leadership to accelerate the economic and educational success of students who are parents. The work taps leaders from Ascend national Ascend Fellowship, the more than 270 organizations in the Ascend Network, and the strength and expertise of parents. Ascend is energized and grateful for the partnership of Omidyar Network to target research and development to help build the field and a portfolio of solutions for students who are parents.

In partnership with Omidyar Network, Ascend is committed to:

- Promoting a deeper understanding across practice, policy, and research of the opportunities, barriers, and challenges for students who are parents;
- Creating a framework for parent-powered solutions and engagement; and
- Developing a model for philanthropy to authentically engage parent voice led by a group of Parent Advisors, who are current and former postsecondary students.

This brief, along with a complementary brief on policy, is the first in a series that highlights lessons and recommendations from leaders, including parents, in the field.

Recommendations for Colleges and Postsecondary Education Systems

Colleges and higher education systems can make institutional policy changes to bolster the success of students who are parents and their families through intentional use of a two-generation approach. This brief focuses on traditional two-year and four-year baccalaureate pathways for students who are parents. It also explores the partnerships that can provide the critical wrap-around services students who are parents need for postsecondary success and meaningful connections to career opportunities.

Identify Students Who Are Parents and Their Needs On Campus

Identify and engage students who are parents on campus and in the community to better understand family needs and improve educational and economic success for parents and their children. Approximately 4.8 million students, or 26 percent of the undergraduate student population, are parents of children under the age of 18; however, many institutions are not collecting data to identify and target support for this key population (Gault, Reichlin, Reynolds, & Froehner, 2014). To better serve parenting students, educational institutions must identify and listen to this segment of their constituents to understand their unique needs and strengths. Institutions should collect data on how student parent programs enhance the academic performance of students who are parents, thereby building support for such programs. Tracking outcomes and measuring the impact that additional support has on graduation and completion rates of students who are parents will help replicate and scale meaningful programs, while also improving the likelihood of workforce connections and other future success. Data collection systems should include traditional sources of information, such as registration forms and surveys, but also should tap into reporting and predictive analytics data already collected by colleges, universities, and community partnerships.

Measuring the impact parenting has on a student's academic life is not enough. We must also examine the effects on child outcomes. Partnering with local school systems, early childhood education providers, and human service agencies will provide the resources children need for success, offer greater support to students who are parents, and create the

Below are resources to help postsecondary institutions count, measure, and assess the needs of students and their families through gathering quantitative and qualitative data.

Tool: Beyond Financial Aid

(<https://www.luminafoundation.org/beyond-financial-aid>)

Beyond Financial Aid (BFA) is a framework to help two- and four-year institutions identify and better assist students who are low income and close attainment gaps. BFA expands the concept of “financial supports” for college beyond grants, scholarships, and loans and describes six college-tested strategies for helping students who are low income overcome the significant challenges created by limited resources. BFA features a self-assessment that college teams can use to analyze their service capacities and offers five strategies postsecondary institutions can use to increase student success.

Tool: The Family Friendly Campus Toolkit

(<http://familyfriendlycampustoolkit.endicott.edu/>)

The Family Friendly Campus Toolkit is a program evaluation and research tool that helps campus providers identify and serve students who are parents. The toolkit walks users through a self-assessment process that helps those working in higher education learn more about parenting students and their campus experiences; collect data on outcomes, conditions, services, and resources available for this group; gain awareness of recommended practices; and make evidence-based plans to improve the student parent environment and outcomes. The toolkit is designed for flexibility and use by two- and four-year institutions.

opportunity to augment data collection. To engage others in tracking outcomes, it is important to make the data available to inform and enhance the work of all partners involved in its collection. Postsecondary education institutions can tap already established collective impact efforts around data collection in their communities to move this work forward.

Practical Strategies:

- Conduct student surveys, listen to family voices, and foster parent leadership on campus through storytelling and advocacy. Offer mentoring and peer advising to build social capital. Listen to the goals parents are articulating for their families.
- Identify barriers to student achievement. Each college and campus operates in a different context, which means a different set of challenges and opportunities for the parenting students it serves. Through surveys and focus groups, administrators can better understand and address the most pertinent needs of their students and families.
- Use data tools already available to delve deeper into student demographics and track family outcomes. El Paso Community College in Texas, led by Ascend Fellow Dr. William Serrata, utilizes the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) data to better estimate the number of students who are parents it serves.

Central New Mexico Community College,* led by Ascend Fellow Dr. Kathie Winograd, established CNM Connect (<https://www.cnm.edu/student-resources/connect-services/about-us>), which is a student resource initiative that provides whole-family supports and benefits access alongside academic coaching and financial aid assistance. Based on the Center for Working Families model, Connect helps students navigate and accomplish their stated goals through in-person, online, and telephone support. A 2017 student survey revealed that 35 percent of enrolled students are parents. Connect works with students through its locations at CNM's six teaching campuses. A collaboration between the college's student services and academic affairs departments, Connect is integrated into the culture of the institution and partners with faculty, staff, students, and families to effectively engage student who are parents. Connect utilizes its student survey to understand student parents' experiences and provide the support these families need to be successful academically as well as outside the classroom.

* Ascend Network Partner

Build Campus Programs with a Two-Generation Approach

Build a family-friendly campus culture with processes, policies, and student support systems that take a whole-family approach. Strong narratives and proven programming are needed to build buy-in from senior leadership, faculty, and administrative leaders throughout institutions. With intentional engagement, campuses can become a locus of community, not just for students, but also for their families by focusing on collaborative partnerships, visibility of critical services, and strong relationship building.

Practical Strategies:

- Understand the federal funding landscape — e.g., Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG), etc. — in states for social innovation through braiding and blending of funding streams.
- Provide access to wraparound or bundled services, including but not limited to coaching, mental health services, benefits access, and affordable child care on campus through colocation and single-stop shops such as Family Resource Centers.
- Ensure that Title IX protections pertaining to pregnant and parenting students are enforced and upheld.
- Build staff and faculty capacity for strength-based approaches to ascertaining the needs of students who are parents and increase awareness of available family services to improve the accessibility of wraparound services and supports.
- Provide summer programming for students who are parents and their children to boost retention, accelerate completion, and reduce “summer slide” for school-age children. On average, school age children lose two to three months of reading over the summer due to lack of engagement (Summer Learning, 2015).
- Become a summer food sponsor or feeding site through the Summer Food Services Program (SFSP), which provides summer meals and reduces food insecurity for children of eligible students. According to the Urban Institute (2016), only about 11 percent of the 22 million children who participate in the National Free and Reduced Lunch Program receive summer meals through SFSP (Waxman, 2016). Food insecurity contributes to summer slide and is an additional barrier to families and postsecondary students who are parents.
- Identify where local or state policies are creating additional barriers for families and work with stakeholders to identify and implement solutions. For example, offering benefits access on campus with flexible hours or increasing self-service options through online access would help busy parenting students avoid missing class because they have to spend hours in line at government agency offices.
- Offer FASFA completion workshops to help students who are parents access financial aid, and offer financial literacy workshops to educate students about debt prevention and post-graduation financial success.

It's not that our families have changed too much. It's that our institutions have changed too little.

—Amber Angel, Parent Advisor

Georgia is one of only three states with a stand-alone agency, the Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL), dedicated to the early care and education needs of children. As a continuation of their Parents and Children Thriving Together (PACTT) efforts, Georgia DECAL and the Technical College Systems of Georgia recently announced a grant opportunity — the Two-Generation Innovation Grant (2018) — that will help institutions pilot or expand community initiatives that connect the early learning, postsecondary, and workforce systems at the local level to deliver benefits to both children and their parents (Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning, 2018). These strategies will help children access high-quality early learning and will help their parents obtain jobs that provide family-supporting wages and greater economic security. Ascend Fellow Kristin Bernhard helps lead DECAL's 2Gen work.

To increase student retention and degree acceleration, Hostos Community College* in Bronx, New York implemented a two-generation summer pilot program. The college found that 32 percent of its student body was supporting children, compared to 15 percent across the CUNY system. The program began in the summer of 2014 as a pilot and doubled student parent participation by the following year. The program offers accelerated programming, financial incentives and support, and coursework. Hostos also provides a high-quality education program for students' children through an all-day, campus-based College for Kids Summer Academy for seven weeks. Students who are parents in the program reported that their participation in a two-generation program not only increased their credit attainment but indirectly mitigated some of the stress around financial challenges and the lack of quality activities for their children, helping prevent the “summer slide” of lost information and learning. Dr. Felix Matos Rodriguez, now president of Queens College and an Ascend Fellow, helped launch the Hostos program and has brought awareness and leadership on the issues facing students who are parents to Queens College and the broader CUNY system.

Tennessee is leveraging CCDBG to increase access to quality child care for children of student parents through its Smart Steps program (Tennessee Department of Human Services, 2017). The Smart Steps Program is designed for parents who are employed no less than 30 hours per week or are enrolled and attending a postsecondary program full time, or a combination of both. The program has income thresholds and covers parents with children between six weeks and five years old. Since its inception, the Smart Steps program has provided thousands of children with access to quality early childhood education programs while reducing significant barriers to postsecondary achievement for student parents.

Build cross-sector collaborative support through strategic partnerships to increase college completion and workforce readiness by addressing whole-family needs and opportunities. Educational institutions will not be able to meet all the needs of students who are parents on their own. They must build strong collaborations to fill gaps in services by partnering with other organizations that specialize in strengthening families. Community and women's foundations, employers, workforce development agencies, public schools, child care providers, and faith-based

organizations all have resources to offer in partnerships that strive to help all families in their communities reach their goals, including financial stability and meaningful career pathways. Below are a few critical elements needed to build community support for students who are parents, with examples of impact and success from Ascend Network partners.

Practical Strategies:

- Build strong, visible connections to economic development efforts through employer relationships and by demonstrating strong returns on investment in the community.
- Leverage community resources to pilot programs through partnerships that provide coaching on reaching education goals, housing, and child care for students who are parents. For example, early childhood education providers should create intentional connections with and facilitated access to postsecondary institutions and vocational training for parents of enrolled children.

Educational Alliance* has partnered with the Borough of Manhattan Community College (CUNY) (<http://www.bmcc.cuny.edu/literacyzone/>) and local service agencies to provide the College Access and Success Program. The program engages parents with children who are enrolled in Early Head Start and Head Start in adult education that leads to higher education opportunities and enhanced financial opportunities.

The Women's Fund of Greater Birmingham* (<https://www.womensfundbirmingham.org>) identified that almost half of female-headed households with children in Birmingham, Alabama, live in poverty. Knowing that a single organization could not address this critical problem alone, The Women's Fund created the Collaboration Institute to bring agencies serving parents and children together to develop two-generation opportunity pathways. The Institute supports families in gaining education, resources, skills, and wraparound supports that lead to economic security. Organizations that participate in the Collaboration Institute receive targeted technical assistance in designing their collaborations, strengthening their own operations, and providing comprehensive services to families. Through the Institute, early education providers, community colleges, social service agencies, and the business community partner to provide tangible educational, economic, social capital, and health and well-being supports to empower families to navigate barriers, make successful transitions, and reach their goals.

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