Paying It Forward: Student Parents and the Road to College Degrees

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Most Children Living in Poverty Have Parents with Low Levels of Education

Even full-time employment doesn't offset the ill impacts of a lack of education, and the impact of lack of education is getting worse.

![Graph showing the percentage of low-income children with parents employed full-time, by parents' education level, from 1986 to 2006.]

- Less than high school: 65% in 1986, 73% in 2006
- High school: 34% in 1986, 46% in 2006
- Some college or more: 15% in 1986, 17% in 2006

* Changes in the percent of low income are statistically significant at the 0.1 level for parental education level.
Education and Income are Related

Socioeconomic Disparities in U.S. Postsecondary Degree Completion

- Bottom: 11%
- Second: 20%
- Middle: 25%
- Fourth: 38%
- Top: 53%
- All Adults: 29%

Graph from Isaacs et al., 2008; Brookings tabulation of PSID data from 2005
Good news: College-going is up

- 2.2 million low-income student parents in the U.S.
- 13% of all undergraduates;
- 36% of all African-American female undergrads
Bad news: Many aren't finishing

Over 6 years, about 30% will obtain a certificate, 11% will obtain an associates degree, and 5% will obtain a BA
Student-Parents Face Multiple Challenges

Concentrated in under-resourced colleges and universities with few supports:

• Lack of child care
• Lack of counselors
• Lack of mental health services
• Basic needs: food, housing, transportation often not met
Campus-Based Coordination Is Essential but Lacking

Policies discourage schools from helping these students

- Many public benefits programs provide disincentives college success
- Case management/social work is often viewed as 'inappropriate'
Student Parents Are Put at Great Risk

- Access without support has consequences
- Half of these parents juggle 40-hour work weeks with school
- The compromises they are forced into affect their kids
There Are Viable Solutions

Coordinated case management that includes:

- Help with public benefits
- Free tax prep
- Free legal services
- Financial coaching
- Referrals, networking, advocacy

Examples on campuses now:

- Single Stop USA
- Working Families Success Network
- Benefits Access for College Completion
For More Information

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