The Leading Edge of Early Childhood Education

Linking Science to Policy for a New Generation

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use of screening and assessment tools helps ensure that all children, particularly those with disabilities or at risk for developmental delays, are diagnosed accurately to support their individual educational needs. No longer can we afford to miss this opportunity by having inadequately prepared, and inadequate numbers of, early childhood teachers. The recommendations we have presented throughout this chapter suggest classroom-, program-, and system-level ways to implement these early identification practices.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Two-Generation Education Programs for Parents and Their Young Children

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The United States has a long history of developing and expanding early childhood education as a key policy for improving education and economic outcomes for children. Indeed, the focus of this entire volume is to draw on this extensive knowledge to examine and document what is needed to bring high-quality early childhood education to scale in the twenty-first century. Deborah Phillips (chapter 1) and Amy Pace, Kathy Hirsh-Pasek, and Roberta Michnick Golinkoff (chapter 3) synthesize over forty years of evidence regarding the benefits of high-quality early education, especially model programs from the 1960s and 1970s, on outcomes later in life.

The observation that high-quality early childhood education programs can make lasting change for young children is encouraging.[1] However, as model programs have been scaled up, the strength of impacts has varied by program type, implementation, and quality.[2] Some

Figure 7.1
CHAPTER PREVIEW
Challenges to two-generation education efforts for young children and families

1. Despite parents' critical roles in young children's lives, early childhood education initiatives rarely include program elements that foster parents' own education and degree advancement, a key to supporting child well-being.
2. Parents with limited education are less likely to provide stimulating learning environments at home than are parents with higher levels of education.
3. Parents with low levels of education often experience daily adverse experiences (e.g., financial stress, housing instability, nonstandard work hours) that undermine their capacities to support their children's learning and growth and that diminish the effects of early childhood education on their children's development.
4. Low-quality or limited childcare options are cited as a primary barrier to full participation in traditional postsecondary education and training programs, significantly limiting the programs' success in helping parents advance their own education.
5. Early childhood education programs are staffed by experts in child development. Two-generation education programs require additional staff who are specialists in adult education and workforce training.

recent state pre-K programs demonstrate impressive effects on children's academic outcomes in the short term.[3] Yet, evaluations of other programs, including Head Start, suggest more modest short-term impacts on child development.[4] In addition, numerous recent evaluations have found that the positive effects of Head Start diminish over time and, for some evaluations, disappear.[5]

In the face of this evidence, we propose an alternative possibility to maintain the benefits of early childhood education by targeting parents' and children's education together through two-generation programs. The idea is to use early childhood education as a platform to support parents' own educational advancement, specifically linking children's programs with postsecondary education and workforce training for parents. Parents facing economic hardship tend to have low levels of education, with 50 percent having no more than a high school degree.[6] Children whose parents have low educational levels and the often-corresponding low income are less likely to be prepared for elementary school, to graduate from high school, or to complete postsecondary education.[7] This educational disadvantage sets both parents and children up for increased disadvantage and limited life opportunities over time.

In this chapter, we address two-generation education programs that are designed to promote educational advances for parents and their young children. Some researchers posit that two-generation education programs will be more beneficial for children than early childhood education programs alone.[8] For example, increased education might help parents raise their income, invest in their children's learning, reduce their own stress, or become better role models. Because few researchers have yet examined these ideas, there remains a tantalizing question: Does improving parents' education and career skills provide a significant additional benefit to children's early education?

Early education for four-year-old children (and perhaps for three-year-olds as well)—whether through pre-K, Head Start, or community-based programs—is likely to become universal in the twenty-first century. For this reason, educational leaders and policymakers need to examine the feasibility of integrating education and career training for parents within the early childhood landscape. The recent innovations in adult workforce training and education make this an opportune time

to consider two-generation programming.[9] Figure 7.1 summarizes the major challenges confronting the implementation of two-generation programming.

In this chapter, we explore the possibilities of using two-generation programs to promote deeper and longer-lasting benefits of early child education. We examine the frameworks and empirical evidence underlying education programs for both children and parents. We review the advantages and disadvantages of adding programs for parents to different types of early childhood education settings, including state-funded pre-K programs, Head Start, and community-based programs. We also examine the literature on education and workforce development for parents and other adults and highlight key innovative elements that could be integrated into two-generation programming. We draw lessons from the ongoing evaluation of one of the most advanced two-generation programs, CareerAdvance. Finally, we offer suggestions on how to make two-generation programs a reality, including cross-agency partnerships, potential funding mechanisms, and pilot programming that could help advance the science behind two-generation education programs.

FRAMEWORKS AND EVIDENCE UNDERLYING TWO-GENERATION EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Historically, several early childhood education programs, particularly those funded through Head Start, have provided direct services for parents. Most often, these programs focus on improving parenting skills and knowledge (e.g., classes on home literacy or positive discipline practices) as a way to foster children's development. While promoting effective parenting practices is critically important, our emphasis is on programming that directly targets parents' education and subsequent employment and income, also known as human capital. These two-

generation programs are distinct in that they strengthen parents' human capital as a way to influence parenting and child outcomes over time.

Parents' education is consistently related to children's development.[10] Even a one-year increase in a low-income mother's education is related to better academic achievement among children.[11] We hypothesize that improving parents' education may be particularly beneficial for children who are already experiencing the positive effects of early childhood education, although this premise warrants more study than it has yet received.

Increased education helps parents secure more-stable jobs and reduce nonstandard work hours, which would give them a better work-family balance and more time to spend with their children. These benefits could in turn reduce unpredictability or instability in the home. The increased family income often resulting from additional education could decrease stress as well and promote well-being for both parents and children. Parents with higher levels of education are also likely to provide home environments that are more cognitively stimulating, and they are able to tailor their interactions to better suit the developmental needs of their children than parents with lower levels of education.[12]

Although parents' education plays a key role in fostering social and cognitive development among young children, past education interventions for parents have had limited success.[13] In the 1980s and 1990s, several programs were created in response to concerns that too many teenagers were becoming parents without completing high school (e.g., the New Chance Demonstration, the Learning Earning and Parenting Program, and Teenage Parent Demonstration). These programs, designed to help parents complete their General Educational Development (GED) test, provided a range of services, including basic academic skills instruction and occupational skills training. Experimental studies, however, suggest that these programs had limited success in helping parents advance their education or employment.[14] Importantly, many

mothers in these interventions and in more recent studies of programs that provided scholarships to young low-income parents in community colleges cited childcare as a barrier to education activities.[15]

Early childhood education addresses the biggest impediment to career advancement for parents—the safe and trusted care of their children—and thus is a key lever to promote parents' educational success. Yet, these learning environments for children are much more than childcare. Early childhood education programs foster trusted, connected communities for parents as allies in the shared goal of enriching children's development and fostering future school success.[16] On the day-to-day level, as parents watch their young children thrive and learn in early education programs, they may be more motivated to improve their own education and career opportunities, especially because two-generation programs help them see the vital connection between their own educational attainment and their children's learning.[17] The two-generation approach capitalizes on early childhood education to attract parents into education and training and has the untapped potential to promote parents' educational success.

While early childhood education may be an effective platform for offering training and education for parents, few such models exist. Whether two-generation programs are warranted within the current early childhood education landscape is currently being debated. On one hand, early childhood education should focus on improving classroom and teacher quality, not advancing the education and skills of parents. This position is aligned with the primary aim of early childhood education programs, which is to offer effective educational services to promote children's readiness for school. On the other hand, because parents play a critical role in the lives of their young children, any program element that fosters parent outcomes could be considered an essential way to support child well-being.

To examine this debate in detail, we reflect on four central questions. First, what types of early childhood education programs are well

positioned to support parent-centered education and career training programs? Second, which features of parent-centered services would best suit the needs of parents, especially low-income parents? Third, what would a combination of early childhood education with training and education for parents look like? (We answer this question with a case study of an innovative two-generation model being conducted in Tulsa, Oklahoma.) Finally, what are the key implementation issues that early childhood education providers should consider when adding parent-centered programming?

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION PROGRAMS WITH POTENTIAL AS A TWO-GENERATION PLATFORM

Early childhood education and care comprise a diverse range of program types, arrangements, providers, and funders. For children with low socioeconomic status, the three main types of early childhood education programs are pre-K, Head Start, and community-based organizations, and each varies in its scope, mission, and capacity to support two-generation programming.

Pre-K

Pre-K programs provide early childhood education to three- and four-year-olds for no charge to families and are controlled and funded by local and states monies. Because of their design, these programs may not be the most feasible environment from which to launch a two-generation intervention. The mission of pre-K programs is to prepare children for entrance into elementary education. To date, parents have not been central to the aims of pre-K. In fact, the National Institute for Early Education Research definition of pre-K programs includes state-funded early childhood education programs that offer parenting classes, but excludes programs that mainly address parent education or work

status or that tie child eligibility to either. Education and training for parents would be a large departure from the traditional focus of pre-K.

Although some pre-K programs are located with Head Start or placed in community-based or faith-based organizations, the majority are embedded in the K–12 system, which may provide various barriers for two-generation programing. Typical K–12 barriers include reduced flexibility in staffing roles and limited funds to support parent outcomes. Yet co-location with elementary education may benefit two-generation programs by providing continuous services from pre-K through elementary school and engaging parents and children across the elementary school years. Many other types of early education programs serve children for only one or two years, potentially limiting the amount of time to help parents make educational gains.

Pre-K programs can also serve a wide range of children. Programs targeted for low-income and at-risk children would be an effective platform for two-generation services. On the other hand, universal programs, which serve children across a range of income levels, may not be as appropriate for two-generation education programming, particularly if parents already have higher levels of education than parents in targeted pre-K.

Head Start

Head Start, the nation's largest federally funded preschool program, may be more amenable to two-generation education programming than pre-K because, from its inception in the 1960s through former President Lyndon B. Johnson's War on Poverty, it has had a whole-family, anti-poverty approach. Indeed, many advocates and leaders consider Head Start the original two-generation program. In particular, every family in Head Start is assigned a family support advocate to provide case management and emergency services support. In addition, Head Start already provides various parent-oriented services, such as parenting classes, mental health support, financial coaching, and GED services.[18]

New findings from the Head Start Impact Study reveal that parents whose children were randomly assigned to Head Start were more likely to increase their *own* educational attainment over time than were parents of control group children, particularly among those who had some college experience at baseline.[19] Formalizing a more explicit education program for parents could add to this promising base.[20]

Indeed, on-the-ground momentum is growing within Head Start to provide more intensive two-generation education programing. In 2011, the federal Office of Head Start established the National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement, which provides technical assistance to Head Start centers throughout the country to support parents. More recently, the National Head Start Association and Ascend at the Aspen Institute held a conference in February 2015 to discuss two-generation innovation in Head Start and to highlight models with promise.[21] The Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation in the Administration for Children and Families is currently supporting Head Start University Partnership Grants for dual-generation programs.

Community-Based Centers

Community-based organizations or private centers that serve children whose tuition is subsidized through state-administered federal monies from the Child Care and Development Block Grant have mixed potential for offering two-generation education services. One of the most important design elements of these subsidies is parental choice. Parents may select any legally operating childcare provider that meets state health and safety requirements; offerings include center-based care, licensed family childcare homes, and more informal settings (although for purposes of two-generation programs, we focus on center-based programs only). Community-based centers could provide the opportunity to integrate parent education and career-related training by providing a safe and trusting environment that parents selected themselves, assuming the program's mission is sufficiently parent-oriented. These providers

may also be especially supportive of working parents as subsidies require labor market participation, and higher income eligibility thresholds permit parents to earn higher wages than parents with children enrolled in Head Start, in which income requirements are stricter.

One challenge of working with community-based programs is that the quality varies widely across center-based programs that serve children who receive subsidies, with recent evidence suggesting that these children may often attend low-quality care that is associated with poorer outcomes at kindergarten entry.[22] Although the quality of pre-K and Head Start programs varies as well, community-based programs often do not have to adhere to the same quality benchmarks (depending on their funding source) as do pre-K and Head Start. Thus, there is a greater concern that community-based programs may not meet minimum levels of quality. To ensure positive benefits for both parents and children, two-generation programs seek providers that use high-quality early childhood education programs as a platform.

PARENT-CENTERED SERVICES BEST SUITED TO TWO-GENERATION PROGRAMS

One compelling reason for the idea of two-generation education programming in the twenty-first century is the progress made in the 2000s in identifying better strategies for implementing adult-oriented education and training. Past attempts to improve the education and employment of low-income adults have had modest impacts, and interventions and research on these programs for low-income parents specifically (with the exception of teenage parents) have been limited.[23]

Community colleges—the most common point of postsecondary entry for low-income students—typically provide a wide range of disparate and sometimes confusing educational and training options. Adults receive limited guidance on how to select and complete required coursework, and they get an incomplete picture of how their coursework relates to future education and employment. (As community college expert Davis Jenkins points out, however, there are notable exceptions to this unfocused approach at community colleges.[24]) These issues are especially concerning for low-income students who typically have inadequate knowledge and skills to navigate the system and are less likely to take advantage of scarce career services.[25]

Lessons from behavioral and cognitive science suggest the need for a different approach. Students are most likely to succeed when their choices are carefully delineated and divided into manageable, sequential steps; when feedback and support are offered regularly; and when the pathways to completion are well defined and monitored.[26] New developments in adult workforce training and education align with these principles and include these six approaches, which we describe in the following sections: sector-based training, stackable career credentials, contextualized curricula, connections to employment, coaching and peer support, and compensation for performance and other financial support.

Sector-Based Training

Sector-based training programs improve a prospective worker's chances for securing stable employment and higher wages by identifying and targeting growth areas of the local economy.[27] For example, market analyses of Tulsa, Oklahoma, revealed that jobs were expanding in the health-care sector so the two-generation program focused on health-care careers.[28] This strategy may be especially beneficial to low-income students who are likely to have inaccurate and incomplete information about career training options and the consequences for employment and earnings, and who may need guidance in narrowing their career choices.[29]

Stackable Credentials

Students earn stackable credentials through step-by-step career training that leads to increasing levels of employment and commensurate wages.[30] For example, students in a nursing pathway can progressively

receive certification as a nursing assistant (e.g., $9 to $12 per hour), licensed nurse practitioner (e.g., $16 to $20 per hour), and registered nurse (e.g., $20 to $30 per hour), entering and leaving employment and school as needed to achieve certification, to practice skills, or to improve income.[31] Stackable credentials offer parents of young children a well-defined path and the flexibility that is likely to improve work, family, and school balance, especially given the shifting developmental and care needs of young children. A parent might decide to pursue short-term certification when a child is in early childhood education, minimizing the time demands on the family when a child is very young, and then progress to more challenging and time-intensive college-level career training when a child enters elementary school.

Contextualized Curricula

Adult students are more likely to be engaged in learning and motivated to persist educationally when their coursework is connected to their career goals.[32] Two-generation programs have a distinct advantage in that they can design coursework relevant to both the parent's career and experiences of parenting. New two-generation models are exploring ways to align curricula of parents and children. For example, English language learner classes for parents of young children can be based on developmental objectives used by teachers in their children's classrooms (e.g., math, "My daughter can name shapes," or socio-emotional learning, "My son can make friends") while also advancing English language skills.[33]

Employment Support

Workforce intermediaries serve as matchmakers between the broader needs of the local labor market and the skills of the workforce.[34] Examples include workforce development organizations and community college bridge programs that bring together employers and workers, private and public funding streams, and students and educational institutions. Early childhood education centers have been underutilized in this role to date but can help identify skilled and educated workers for existing workforce intermediaries. And in so doing, early learning organizations would be helping parents find employment that offers security, family-friendly hours and conditions, and family-supporting wages.[35]

Coaching and Peer Support

Peer support, mentors, coaches, and counselors have been shown to be effective for low-income students in general, although there have been fewer studies of these services for low-income parents specifically.[36] Career coaches with specialized knowledge of the local training and education market may be especially effective in helping student parents prepare for and succeed in an education system that typically offers limited academic support. The coaches can work with small groups of parents and offer regular opportunities to reflect and assess progress.[37] Low-income parents facing educational barriers may be more likely to overcome them when working in tandem with other parents who share similar life experiences and career goals. For example, parents could share childcare, transportation, problem-solving approaches, and encouragement.[38]

Incentives and Other Financial Support

Incentives can promote persistence in college; likewise, extra support (e.g., before and after childcare) can help parents balance the competing demands on their resources.[39] Incentives may include cash payments for regular monthly class attendance or for the completion of educational milestones such as career certification or degree completion. Past studies suggest that even modest financial support to low-income parents and their families can promote child well-being. Parents returning to school may also require additional care for their children beyond pre-K or other early learning programs. Two-generation programs may choose to cover the cost of wraparound childcare while parents attend classes or participate in on-the-job training.

In sum, programs that incorporate these innovative parent-centered elements in an early learning platform may be more effective for low-income parents of young children than programs lacking them, although experimental studies are needed. The advantages for parents (and, by extension, their children) could be substantial, given a postsecondary education system that is poorly designed to meet parents' particular strengths and challenges. While the number of parents pursuing college has grown over the past several decades, rising from 20 to 27 percent among students who are enrolled in undergraduate institutions, most parents cannot attain an advanced certificate or degree through traditional two- or four-year institutions.[40] Within six years of starting, only 33 percent of parents who enroll in higher education institutions attain a credential or degree, compared with 53 percent of nonparent students.[41]

PULLING IT ALL TOGETHER: A CASE STUDY OF A TWO-GENERATION PROGRAM

An Oklahoma antipoverty organization called the Community Action Project of Tulsa County (CAP Tulsa) is testing the feasibility of adding these six innovations (sector-based training, stackable career credentials, contextualized curricula, connections to employment, coaching and peer support, and financial support) through its CareerAdvance program. The program is showing initial signs of promise.[42] We, the authors of this chapter, are leading three ongoing federal evaluations of the CareerAdvance program, examining how a blended pre-K and Head Start early childhood education program can serve as an effective platform for advancing the future education and employment opportunities of parents and children alike. CAP Tulsa's model is an example of original simultaneous programming for parents and children that is possible within an early childhood education context. Although experimental results are not yet available, research on program implementation, including focus groups with parents and staff, highlights the experiences

and perspectives of providers and participants in the program. On the following pages, we present some of these findings.

Key Elements of CareerAdvance

The CareerAdvance program prepares parents of children enrolled in CAP Tulsa's Early Head Start and Head Start programs (which also receive pre-K funding) for careers in the health-care field (e.g., nursing, health information technologies, medical and dental assisting), a growing sector of the local economy. Through cross-agency partnerships with Tulsa Community College and Tulsa Technology Center, CAP Tulsa purchases entry-level classes and pays tuition for college-level career training for parents accepted into the CareerAdvance program. The agency also offers GED and college preparatory classes geared to the health-care field for parents not yet ready for college. To support employment, CAP Tulsa connects students at each level of certification with local health-care providers in search of job candidates with similar skills and training.

CareerAdvance participants engage in group (weekly) and individual (monthly) meetings with career coaches. The groups consist of fifteen parents, all of whom have at least one child (six months to five years) enrolled in CAP Tulsa's early childhood education programs. Topics at peer partner meetings range from soft skills (e.g., time management and job interview skills) to course selection and employment opportunities.

The CareerAdvance program covers student tuition and all school-related expenses. Program participants are eligible to receive up to $3,000 annually in cash transfers for attendance or performance-based incentives for achieving certification and employment. Parents also receive tutoring assistance and additional childcare coverage as needed to fulfill educational requirements.

Early Childhood Education as a Platform

CAP Tulsa's CareerAdvance program serves as a model two-generation program and uses pioneering service strategies to connect parent and

child programming. First, the program has expanded the Head Start's family support team to include career coaches with expertise in education and careers. Second, it delivers parent education and training programs while children attend school. Last, it intentionally and intensively promotes the skills of parents and children at the same time, which may lead to synergies in learning across generations.

CareerAdvance coaches serve as an extension of the Head Start family support team. Each family advocate is assigned to work with a career coach and a small group of parents enrolled in a career training track. Family support staff members help parents cope with the day-to-day challenges of raising children with limited resources, and career coaches build on this foundation to promote economic self-sufficiency over the longer term. The perspective of one parent exemplifies the experience of many:

> My favorite part is so much support we're getting. We can pretty much call her [the coach] anytime . . . We constantly have the support not only from our classmates but also from our teachers and our coach . . . And when I was in college before, it was just me against the world, basically . . . So if I dropped out, nobody cared . . . I was only just disappointing myself. Now if anybody is missing too much class, we'd call them and are, like, you know, "Where are you at? Come to class."

CareerAdvance coaches provide information, support, guidance, and direct accountability to parents according to principles of effective practice for adult students.[43] Working with parents in small groups to foster peer relationships, the career coaches also often succeed in creating community, as suggested by this parent participant: "I know if I tried to leave this program, I would have some people on my phone. And that's the good thing about us being . . . a small group of people. If one of us tried to leave it, oh, we gonna be on that phone quick: 'Wait a minute what are you doing?'" Parents, coaches, and family advocates expand the trust that has been built from a foundation of early childhood education.

The CareerAdvance program offers training and education services for parents during early childhood education center hours of operation, a critical support to parents that allows them to take advantage of other key features of the program. The synchronization of schedules helps parents in that they have time available while their children are safe and in care to pursue their own goals: "I like how they've made the program fit around the youngest child's schedule," said one parent. "How they've tailored it to fit around those hours, which really would tailor around all school-age children's hours. So only during clinical times do you have to really worry about before- and after-care. But for the most part, all of us can still take the kids, kiss them good-bye, do our thing, and then be there to pick them up." Parents may be more motivated to engage in education and career training knowing that their children are learning and thriving in early education, although this idea has not been tested empirically.[44]

CAP Tulsa has invested heavily both in children's development and in parents' education and skill building. Program participants are beginning to identify connections between the two, especially for their older children, who benefit immediately from parents' improved skills to support their school work:

> I have found, on a positive note, what school has done in our house. Like, my nine-year-old has always struggled in math. And I have always struggled in math. It's never been a strong suit. I've always told her that, you know, "Sorry, I can't really help you." And she's relied on that. "Well, mommy can't help me. She doesn't get numbers." Well, when I got put in this math tutoring class, I felt like I could then relate to her more, and I felt like it was empowering me because it was giving me those skills that I left behind somewhere in high school and junior high. And so when I would get home, for the first couple of weeks, I'd be like, "I can help you." She's like, "No you can't, you don't know how to do this." And I was like, "No, really, I know how to do it now." So I feel like I wasn't getting so upset with her, because now I know the material and understand it and I'm getting it. So it's helping her

> to feel better about herself, and I feel better about myself because for all those years, it was embarrassing to tell your nine-year-old, "Sorry, I can't help you with this because I don't know it myself." So I feel like that's been a positive—is that I can guide them better. Now that I have the information, I can help them better.

This parent links her new skills with improved family life, including her increased confidence, reduced stress at home, and a healthier relationship with her older daughter, which in turn benefits her preschool-aged daughter. We are testing these associations by studying the CareerAdvance program's effectiveness and whether the program promotes children's well-being above and beyond what early childhood education provides on its own. We have also found that CAP Tulsa's early childhood education teachers and staff support parents' education and training advancement. They engage with the objectives of CareerAdvance (e.g., through in-service training sessions), and they play an important role in celebrating and supporting parents' day-to-day school success.

Preliminary Evaluation Results

As of this writing, the main evaluation of CareerAdvance is still ongoing, but preliminary results are promising, as parents in the program have attained relatively high levels of education. After sixteen months in the program, 76 percent of parents achieved at least one workforce-applicable certificate.[45] This progress is remarkable, considering the rates of average community college degree completion across the country. Only 27 percent of full-time students and 15 percent of part-time students complete a degree after six years in community college.[46] These findings suggest that—in addition to preparing children for school—early childhood education programs could provide parents the tools for increasing their education and eventually reducing economic hardship over time. A CareerAdvance participant explains this viewpoint: "This program has changed my life; it's changed my future, my family's future definitely. I mean, this has opened up so many opportunities for me and my family."

KEY IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES

As previously discussed, early childhood education programs vary in their scope, mission, and capacity to support two-generation programming. Those that embrace an antipoverty mission (e.g., Head Start) may be especially well suited for adding parent-centered education services. Other important considerations for two-generation programs from an early learning platform include the types of parents to serve, the kinds of cross-agency partnerships needed to support them, potential funding opportunities for these efforts, and pilot programs to help gather evidence on the effectiveness of two-generation programs.

Types of Parents to Serve

The education, skill level, and career goals of parents as well as the financial circumstances and characteristics of the household (e.g., single parenthood) may vary widely among parent populations served by various types of early childhood programs.[47] Two-generation education programs may choose to target specific parent subpopulations and should tailor their services accordingly. Programs interested in serving fathers, for example, may develop career training services in more traditionally male career fields (e.g., manufacturing or transportation logistics).[48]

Cross-Agency Partnerships

Most early childhood education programs do not have the organizational capacity and expertise to deliver parent-centered education services themselves; typically, cross-agency partnerships with local educational providers (e.g., community college and technical schools) and employers are needed. These partnerships are most successful when they are mutually beneficial to both organizations.[49] For example, when employment

opportunities that suit the needs and interests of parents of young children (e.g., career field, wages, hours, benefits) match the job openings of local employers, the likely result is sustainable partnerships between early childhood education centers and businesses in the same community.[50] When partnering with adult education providers, early childhood education centers may choose to purchase separate classes for parents. In doing so, the centers increase the opportunities for tailored instruction and social networking among parents while also securing a funding source for the educational service provider.

Funding Strategies

Inventive funding strategies for two-generation programs hold promise for advancing the field. These strategies include blending child funding streams, combining adult and child funding sources, reallocating public dollars within a single funding stream, and testing low-cost two-generation pilots.

Child-centered funding sources

Candidate programs that receive federal and state funding sources for children include pre-K, Head Start, and home visiting, all programs with a solid evidence base (although the strength of the impact varies) and relatively broad political support.[51] Other federal sources for children include the Child Care and Development Fund, Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grants, and Preschool Development Grants.[52]

Adult-centered funding sources

Federal funding source options within the adult sphere include the Workforce Innovations Opportunity Act (WIOA), which took effect July 1, 2014; Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), the federal welfare program passed in 1998 to replace Aid to Families with Dependent Children; and Pell Grants and the Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (FSEOG) program.[53] WIOA, the first reauthorization of the federal workforce training system since 2000, seeks to support job seekers through education, training, and employment. The legislation fits well with the purposes of two-generation strategies and, as a new mandate, may be more likely to support innovation. TANF, part of President Clinton's Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act, emphasized work over education and training. This act may be reauthorized and may offer new opportunities to expand allowable educational activities. And because FSEOG focuses on students with the highest level of financial need, these grants could be especially beneficial to early childhood education programs serving the most vulnerable families with young children.

Braided funding

The strategy of combining funding may have a particular advantage over single funding sources for two-generation education programs. For example, braided Head Start and pre-K models build from the strengths and opportunities provided by both services. Improved labor market outcomes such as family-supporting wages may take many years and thus require a longer-term investment than an investment for pre-K programs alone, which typically fund children for a single year. Braiding funding sources also can help overcome the tendency to serve parents and children in separate programmatic silos despite the deep connection between the well-being of parents and that of the children in the same family.[54]

Funding reallocation

Within a single funding source like Head Start, existing dollars may be reallocated to support two-generation programming while not detracting from child services. For example, Head Start centers could apply for waivers to expand or reallocate family support services dollars, of which $1 billion are spent each year, such that the centers offer tiers of services for different subgroups. One type of family support staff could focus

on existing family support functions such as emergency assistance, crisis counseling, and case management services for families experiencing high levels of emotional and financial distress. Another type of staff, with a different set of skills and content expertise, could serve as career coaches for parents who have educational and career goals and who are ready to enter programs in developmental education, career certification, or degree attainment. Staff at the Administration of Children and Families within the US Department of Health and Human Services have shown some interest in such staffing diversification models in Head Start.[55]

Pilot Programming

Another way to gather research on the effectiveness of two-generation programs is to test low-cost models that do not require the braiding or reallocation of federal funding but use existing public dollars, which may be augmented by private and other community resources. One such model offers classes in career exploration and soft-skill development to parents within a network of local employers and community providers with expertise in serving parents, children, or both. Ascend at the Aspen Institute has funded such a pilot program in Evanston, Illinois—the Evanston Two-Generation Initiative—through a partnership with the Evanston Community Foundation and Northwestern University.[56]

At this juncture, we know little empirically about the impact of adult training and career services offered from a base of early learning on child, parent, and family well-being. Yet pilot models in early childhood education centers are currently under way.[57] Several inexpensive and low-intensity two-generation approaches are available to help parents and children. For example, services for first-generation immigrants include the translation of postsecondary transcripts to assess the value of educational credits attained outside the United States.[58] Other programs provide short-term transportation to parents' places of employment

while helping parents build savings to purchase a car of their own (e.g., Friends of Children of Mississippi's TANF to Work and Ownership Project).[59] Family members can take technical training and community college classes at an early childhood education center or elementary school (e.g., the College Access and Success Program of Educational Alliance).[60] Finally, there is a wide range of financial support offerings to encourage economic self-sufficiency and asset building. Efforts include helping families with credit repair, budgeting, completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (e.g., Evanston Two-Generation Initiative), and the establishment of individual and child savings accounts, especially for college (e.g., Corporation for Enterprise Development, or CFED).[61] While these approaches do not have an evidence base yet, they hold promise for improving the labor market success of low-income parents and their children.

CONCLUSION

Empirical evidence shows strong associations between parents' education and income, on the one hand, and children's development and academic success, on the other. In this chapter, we have considered the value of adding education, workforce training, and career services for parents to early learning settings, and whether this is achievable. Two-generation programs may be a viable and reasonable approach to protect and sustain investments in early learning by advancing the education and labor market outcomes of low-income parents, thus improving the likelihood of school success for their children. We hypothesize that supporting the education of parents and children together may strengthen the benefits of early childhood education programs to children over time. This chapter does not prescribe a definitive direction for pre-K or other types of early learning programs as to whether they should add a focus on parents' human capital. We do, however, suggest approaches

worthy of additional consideration. Combined pre-K and Head Start programs and agencies willing to extend beyond a business-as-usual approach to add education, employment, and career services for parents are especially well suited to model ways to support parents and children together so that families might escape poverty when their children are still young.

Conclusion

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This book highlights the array of diverse and pressing issues facing us at this pivotal moment in the early education sector—a moment that demands that we engage in the hard work of substantial quality improvement within the system with an eye toward scaling. Building on the rich and exciting work featured in the previous chapters, we now present some implications for the system and key recommendations for advancement and improvement. The following sections are organized around five high-impact leverage points to consider in the design, implementation, and eventual scaling of the next generation of early learning practices and policies. In each section, we summarize the central scientific insights that inform these leverage points; some common pitfalls that impede advancement in these areas; and actionable suggestions for bringing relevant strategies to bear on today's settings that serve and support young children and their families.

FIVE HIGH-IMPACT RECOMMENDATIONS

Identify and support children facing adverse life circumstances and experiences that impede learning.

Decades of research have illuminated the impact of adverse childhood experiences on development and learning. Experiences of adversity "get