Exploring On-Campus Childcare Solutions: Head Start and Community College Partnerships
Educational Investments in Student Parents & Their Children: More than Doubling Returns

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Benefits of Higher Education

Returns to Education Compared to Other Investments
The average returns to earning a degree are high, and even the returns to starting college and not finishing are still higher than the returns to any other traditional investment.

Greenstone et al., 2013
Education and Family Systems: Empirical Evidence

Education is one of the strongest predictors of income.

Parents’ education and income are significantly linked to children’s education and achievement.

Educational investments in children have greater returns when children are younger.

Parent education + child education leads to social mobility.

Bradbury et al., 2015; Garcia et al., 2016; Reardon, 2011
Potential Benefits of Coordinated Education for Families

Educational programs for parents and children are traditionally siloed by funding and service delivery. Investments are likely to yield greater returns when educational programming is coordinated and funding is braided for parents and children.

Linked lives: Changes in one generation are likely to lead to changes in the other generation, with mutual reinforcement over time.

Chase-Lansdale & Brooks-Gunn, 2014; Sabol et al., 2021; Sommer et al., 2018; nu2gen.org
Example of Linked Lives: Head Start Impact on Parents’ Education

Head Start Impact Study (2002-2006), randomized control trial

Parents whose children were randomly assigned to Head Start were more likely to increase their education than parents whose children were not randomly assigned

This is especially true for parents with some college education

Sabol & Chase-Lansdale, 2015
Families in College: ~4 Million Students Parents Today (22%) 

- 42% Enrolled at community colleges
- 53% Have preschool-aged children
- 70% Are mothers

1.6 times more likely to be single than student fathers

Reichlin Cruse et al., 2019
Single Mothers: Least Likely Women to Attain a Degree/Certificate

Figure 3. Share of Female Undergraduate Students Who Attained a Degree or Certificate within Six Years of Enrollment, by Parent and Marital Status, 2003-09

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Women Students</th>
<th>Student Mother Subgroups</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All women</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women nonparents</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All mothers</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single mothers</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married mothers</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

New Approach: Children as a Motivator, not a Barrier

Student Parents: Motivated to improve their education on behalf of their children’s educational futures and families’ economic stability and mobility

Sommer et al., 2018, 2019; nu2gen.org
New Approach: Children as a Motivator, not a Barrier

Student Parents: Motivated to improve their education on behalf of their children’s educational futures and families’ economic stability and mobility

“Looking at my kids each and every day, that’s what keeps me going... I look at them, and I see me when I was a kid, and I don’t want them to ever, ever, ever go through what I went through... We’re going to own our own house. My kids are going to be able to have friends over, sleepovers without having us worried about getting robbed or anything like that... That’s why I keep doing these [educational] programs.” -Student Parent

Sommer et al., 2018, 2019; nu2gen.org
Yet, **Childcare** is a Major Barrier for Student Parents

- Tuition
- Housing
- Childcare
- Mental Health
- Food/Basic Needs

Goldrick-Rab et al., 2019
Head Start as Logical Platform for Childcare at Community Colleges

Original two-gen model:
Supports parents and children

Eases logistical burdens

Offers safe, trusting environment

Improves social capital by merging two communities of support

Chase-Lansdale & Brooks-Gunn, 2014; Sommer et al., 2018; Tighe et al., 2023; nu2gen.org
Head Start as Logical Platform for Childcare at Community Colleges

Original two-gen model:
Supports parents and children

Offers safe, trusting environment

“It is a great opportunity and peace of mind that we have the children here at Head Start.”
-Student Parent

Eases logistical burdens

Improves social capital by merging two communities of support

Chase-Lansdale & Brooks-Gunn, 2014; Sommer et al., 2018; Tighe et al., 2023; nu2gen.org
Community College (CC) + Head Start (HS) Makes Sense

Community college student demographics are increasingly similar to Head Start parents. Nearly half of college students with children under 6 meet Head Start income eligibility requirements. Three-quarters of a million parents in Head Start need higher education. Community college + Head Start = promising policy model.
High Educational Needs of Head Start Parents

Figure 1. Educational Attainment of Head Start Children’s Parents/Guardians, 2017-18

- Less than high school graduate: 23%
- High school graduate or GED: 45%
- Associate degree, vocational school, or some college: 22%
- Bachelor’s or advanced degree: 7%


Carnevale et al., 2013; Gault et al., 2019
Community College + Head Start Theory of Change

Parent
- Higher education; career training
- Short-term
  - Education and employment
  - Economic wellbeing
  - Psychological wellbeing
- Longer-term
  - Stable career
  - Higher income
  - Less stress
  - Improved family systems

Child
- Early education
- School attendance
- School readiness
- Elementary school achievement

Sommer et al., 2019; nu2gen.org
Benefits of CC + HS Model to Families? Research Evidence

Study of CareerAdvance (Tulsa, OK): Education and career training in healthcare for parents + Head Start for children and families

Additional comprehensive family-based supports, including free tuition, coaching combined with Head Start

Quasi-experimental research design, 300 families

Parent and child outcomes under study: Education, economic wellbeing, and psychological wellbeing
CareerAdvance Results: Parents’ Education and Economic Wellbeing

- Higher levels of education
- Greater employment in the healthcare sector
- Stronger career identity (i.e., importance of work and career)
- Less material hardship and financial worry

Chase-Lansdale et al., 2019; nu2gen.org
Example:
Higher Rates of Certification

Chase-Lansdale et al., 2019; nu2gen.org
CareerAdvance Results: Parents’ Psychological Wellbeing

Higher optimism (i.e., hopefulness)

More self-efficacy (i.e., belief in ability to achieve goals)

No increases or decreases in perceived stress or psychological distress

Chase-Lansdale et al., 2019; nu2gen.org
CareerAdvance Results: Children’s School Attendance

Higher rates of Head Start attendance

Lower rates of chronic absence in Head Start

Sommer et al., 2020; nu2gen.org
Benefits of CC + HS Model to Society? Cost-Benefit Analysis

Research benefits and costs of new model: Career Pathway Training + Head Start
  o Benefits based on improved parent earnings over time

~8 Times Return

Break Even

Parent Credentialed

Sommer et al., 2018; nu2gen.org
Research Evidence for Promising Program and Policy Approaches

- Streamline **dual eligibility** (e.g., FAFSA and Head Start)
- Promote **intersecting identities** (e.g., community college student, first gen, students of color, mothers/fathers)
- Add **coaching** to manage **complexities**
- Address the **mental health crisis** of parents and children with a **family-centered approach**
- Expand **financial supports** (e.g., student debt relief and financial aid)
Next Frontier: 2Gen College Promise Scholarship Programs

- Parents and youth receive scholarships at the same time
- Studied the first 2Gen college promise model in nation, HOPE Toledo Promise
  - Many positive dynamics taking place across generations
    - Mutual motivation
    - Intergenerational decision-making
    - Academic competition
  - Simultaneous skill development
  - Bidirectional support
- Untapped opportunity for scholarships + coaching + additional benefits/services for two generations

Sommer et al., 2021, 2022; nu2gen.org
Project Overview

List of NHSA + ACCT members seeking matching + TA

Co-develop materials and processes for identifying, vetting, and matching interested members (focus groups and surveys, questionnaires to identify available spaces, requirements for relocation, etc.)

Draft MOUs, sample contracts, guides for estimating retrofit costs, and other background materials
Learn more about the Kids on Campus Initiative
https://www.acct.org/page/kids-on-campus

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