



**May 2014:
Two-Generation Efforts**

Background

Since its beginning Head Start has been a program invested not only in children but in nurturing their entire families. Two weeks ago, NHSA was excited to launch our [Two Generations Together](#) project, in partnership with Ascend at the Aspen Institute. This project will highlight the work that Head Start programs across the country are doing, work that goes beyond preschool to a whole family approach, integrating support for children with support for parents as they get their education and develop the skills they need for success.

As the Washington Post wrote last week in an article titled "[the New War on Poverty: Tackling Two Generations at Once](#)," two-generation efforts are not new, but they are getting new attention and new focus. For just one example, NPR recently profiled the two-generation work of the Community Action Project of Tulsa County in the article "[One Approach To Head Start: To Help Kids, Help Their Parents](#)," and last year the [Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation](#) funded a handful of research projects aimed at two-generation work in Head Start. Ascend and numerous other research, philanthropic, and advocacy groups have reinvigorated the discussion of how to support both generations of a family at once in order to have the greatest impact. The resources and research below lay out the frameworks for two-generation models, the history of these efforts, and the undeniable research about how parents' education affects their children's outcomes and lives.

What have you developed to best meet the needs of Head Start parents in your community as they develop and grow alongside their children? **We invite you to learn more about [Two Generations Together](#) and watch our [recent webinar](#) - then apply by July 1, 2014 to be featured nationally for your work!**

Learn about recent research on two-generation programs and much more. [Register](#) now for Head Start's free National Research Conference on Early Childhood, sponsored by OPRE and OHS this July 7th-9th in Washington, DC.

Resources

[Two \(or More\) Generation Frameworks: A Look Across and Within](#)

by Janice Gruendel

This article lays out the frameworks developed by Ascend at the Aspen Institute, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Foundation for Child Development, and several other groups working to encourage two-generation efforts. If you're interested in understanding what different groups mean by "two-generation," this is a tool for comparing and contrasting their visions.

Ascend at the Aspen Institute

[Gateways to Two Generations: the Potential for Early Childhood Programs and Partnerships to Support Children and Parents Together](#)

Ascend at the Aspen Institute recently launched the [Ascend Network](#), a group of associations, universities, non-profits and more, who are working on two-generation efforts - including NHSA and several Head Start programs! This brief lays out the case for developing two-generation models to raise families out of poverty rather than focus on children and parents as separate entities, and grounds that case in both research and examples from two-generation models.

Foundation for Child Development

[Dual-Generation Strategy Initiative](#)

In partnership with the Foundation for Child Development, the Ray Marshall Center for the Study of Human Resources in the LBJ School of Public Affairs at the University of Texas at Austin, leads a Dual-Generation Strategy Initiative to improve the understanding of dual-generation strategies among policymakers, researchers, and funders, as well as to foster the implementation of dual-generation strategies at the federal and state levels, and to evaluate their outcomes on both children and their families. Click through above to access their research briefs and reports for varied audiences including "[Promoting Two-Generation Strategies: A Getting-Started Guide for State and Local Policy Makers.](#)"

Research

[Two-Generation Programs in the Twenty-First Century](#)

*by P. Lindsay Chase-Lansdale and Jeanne Brooks-Gunn for *The Future of Children**

In this article, part of a special issue of *The Future of Children* on "Helping Parents, Helping Children: Two-Generation Mechanisms," the authors lay out the history of two-generation programs, beginning with what they term "Two-Generation 1.0" efforts from the early 1990s and contrasting the more recent "2.0" efforts. The 1.0 era projects mainly focused on either mothers *or* children, with limited efforts made to address the needs of the other group and only the most basic educational goals for mothers in the programs. As a result of welfare reform and a shift from job training to "work first," these two-generation models lost steam.

Over the past several years, however, new two-generation efforts have emerged, and the authors explore several theories for how addressing early experiences, home and school environment, and development of resilience suggest promising outcomes for new models. Head Start and other high-quality early learning settings are recognized as fertile ground for developing programs for parent education and sectoral training to help families access jobs in local communities that pay a living wage and move families out of poverty. While research and evaluation studies will inform us about the success of current and future efforts, Chase-Lansdale and Brooks-Gunn suggest there's reason to be hopeful that two-generation programs will change outcomes for both children and their parents.

Maternal education and children's academic achievement during middle childhood

by Katherine Magnuson for the American Psychological Association

Much of the energy around two-generation work is grounded in the idea of "linked lives" and evidence that children's outcomes are related to the education and income levels of their parents. Based on past findings that mothers' levels of education are related to children's cognitive and academic outcomes, in this study Magnuson set out to examine whether changes in mothers' education while their children were six to twelve years old would change children's trajectories. She hypothesized that the effects would be greater for children of mothers who were younger and had less education at the outset compared to older, more educated mothers. She also theorized that increases in a mother's education would affect the quality of the environment in the home.

Using data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth on over 1,700 children born to mothers under 26, Magnuson found that children born to younger mothers (20 or younger when the children were born) who were less educated (had a high school degree or less) showed a similar pattern of academic growth to older and more educated mothers, and that overall mothers who completed additional schooling were those who had higher aptitude, greater self-esteem, and higher aspirations and expectations. For the younger mothers in particular, there were associations between increased maternal education and their children's reading skills in elementary school and math skills in the early elementary years. Young mothers who furthered their education also had higher quality home settings than those who did not get additional education; this may have been a mechanism supporting their children's stronger outcomes. While Magnuson points to the need for additional research, these findings strengthen the idea that supporting young mothers with young children as they further their education is an important opportunity to influence outcomes for both generations.

[Early Childhood Education Centers and Mothers' Postsecondary Attainment: A New Conceptual Framework for a Dual-Generation Education Intervention](#)

by Teresa Eckrich Sommer, P. Lindsay Chase-Lansdale, Jeanne Brooks-Gunn, Margo Gardner, Diana Mendley Rauner & Karen Freel for the *Teachers College Record*

Given the potential of early childhood education centers to support mothers' education, this study conducted interviews with mothers to better understand how perception of their children's development, support within the center, and access to resources encourages their growth and achievement. Interviews were conducted with mothers individually as well as with focus groups of staff in the programs; the results were then analyzed to find different categories of mothers' attitudes and readiness for college education. Interventions are suggested to support different groups. For example, parents at a high level of readiness might benefit from individualized career coaching and support, whereas those who are moving toward readiness could benefit more from life-skills training and personalized support from family services staff. These types of services might help mothers develop the aspirations and expectations shown in the previous article to be related to academic achievement over time.

Analysis of themes within the interviews with mothers emphasizes the support roles early learning programs can play in mothers' motivation to get further education. Mothers' comments suggested that having a quality setting for their children relieved stress, created relationships, provided information, and inspired them as role models for their children. Programs in the process of developing two-generation efforts may want to consider the details of this study both for creating appropriate supports for different cohorts of parents and for explaining the potential benefits to parents interested in enrolling.

Discussion Questions

1. What programs do you offer to help parents take college classes or gain other skills? Start planning now to apply for Two Generations Together!
2. P. Lindsay Chase-Lansdale and Jeanne Brooks-Gunn write, "*Early childhood education centers promote social capital as parents and children participate regularly and get to know one another, program leaders, family support staff, and children's teachers. These programs are likely to foster trusted, connected communities for parents and to be strong allies that share the hopes, expectations, and efforts to promote children's healthy development.*" How do you deliberately create that type of community in your program? How can you build on that to more deeply support parents as they get education and job training?
3. Katherine Magnuson writes, "*Mothers who continues in their schooling after the birth of their*

children are more likely to have higher levels of academic achievement and aspiration, fewer stressful life events, better mental health, and more social support than mother who do not obtain additional education. These characteristics, rather than the mothers' schooling, may explain why children whose mothers return to school may fare better than other children." Do you agree with this hypothesis? What outcomes have you seen in your program for children whose parents pursued additional education?

Do you know of other recent research that may be of interest to the Head Start field? Do you have other questions, comments or concerns? E-mail Emmalie Dropkin (edropkin@nhsa.org).