

WE ENVISION **AN AMERICA**  
IN WHICH A LEGACY OF **ECONOMIC**  
**SECURITY** AND **EDUCATIONAL**  
**SUCCESS** PASSES  
FROM  
ONE GENERATION TO THE NEXT.

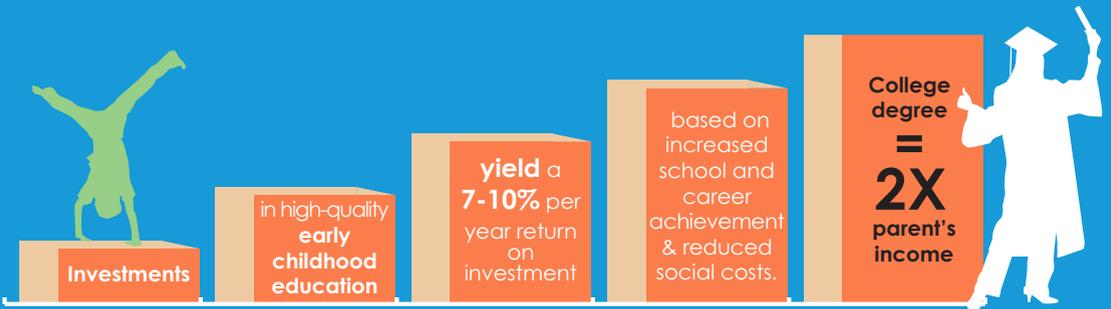
## TWO-GENERATION PLAYBOOK

# WHY A TWO-GENERATION APPROACH?

Almost **HALF** of all children in the United States live in low-income families.



**Return on investment** in **education** for children AND their parents is high.



**Two-generation approaches** put the **WHOLE FAMILY** on a path to economic security.

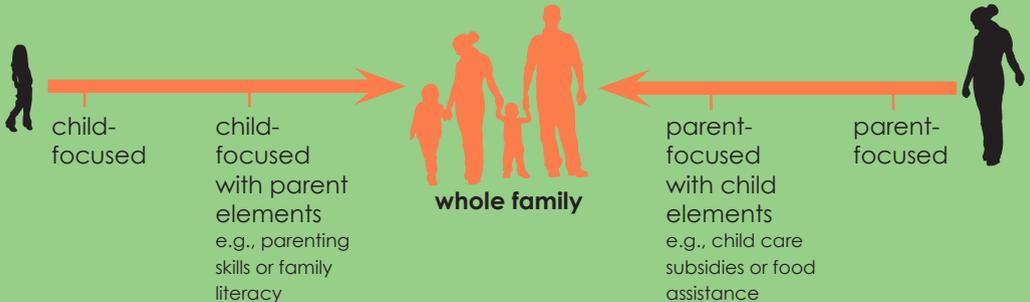


# WHAT IS A TWO-GENERATION APPROACH?

Two-generation approaches provide opportunities for and meet the needs of vulnerable **children and their parents together**. They build education, economic supports, social capital, and health and well-being to create a legacy of economic security that passes from one generation to the next.

Fragmented approaches that address the needs of children and their parents separately leave either the child or parent behind. Two-generation approaches – in programs, policy, and research – put the entire family on a path to permanent economic security.

## Where is your work on the two-generation continuum?

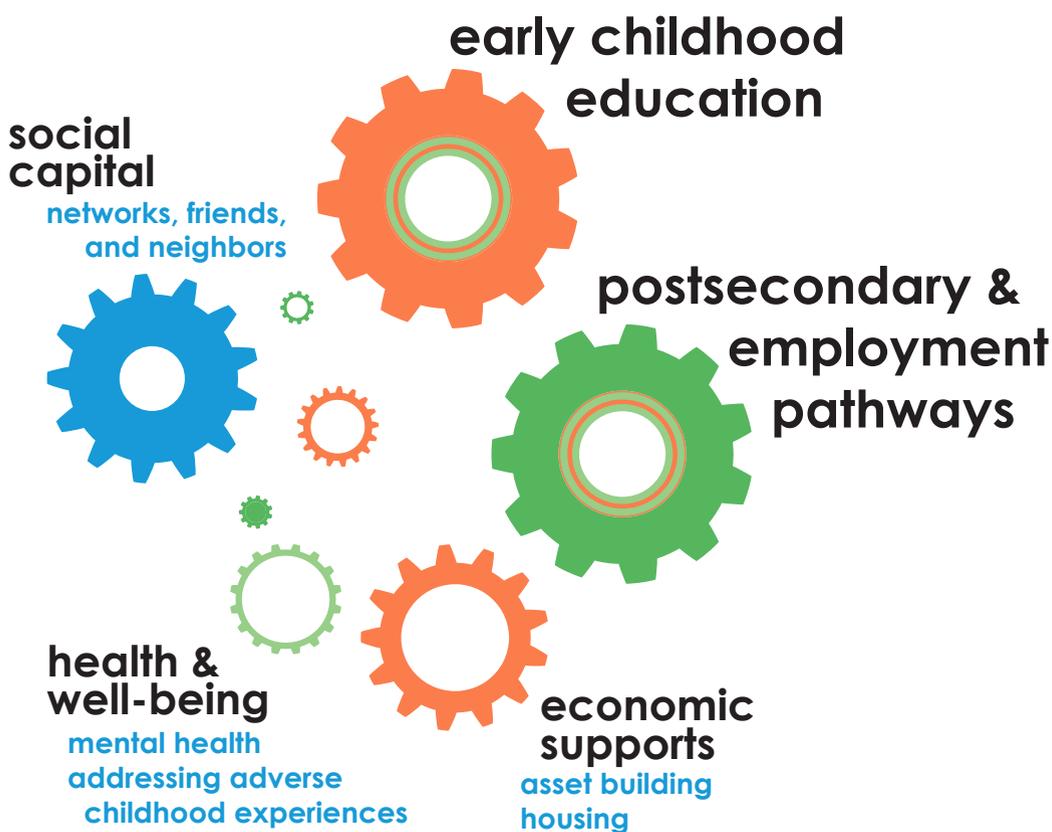


*“My children have learned to focus on school because I am doing the same. They motivate me to create a better life for our family, and I want to show them what is possible when you work hard.”*

- Tameka Henry, mother; former Policy Committee chairperson, Acelero Learning Clark County; Board Member, National Head Start Association

# CORE COMPONENTS

We believe that **education**, **economic supports**, **social capital**, and **health and well-being** are the core components that create an intergenerational cycle of opportunity. Quality early education for children and postsecondary education for parents are central to approaches that move the whole family toward economic security.



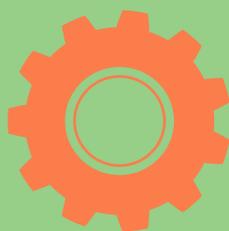
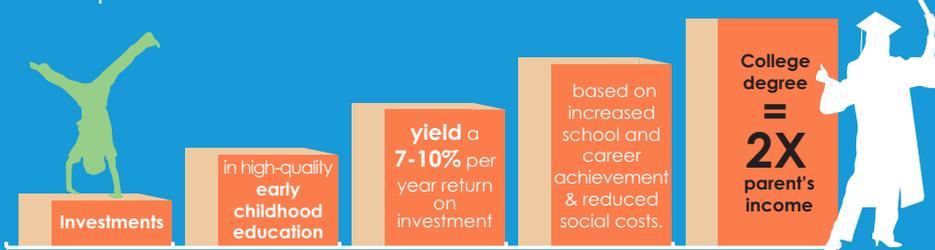
**In the spotlight:** The Jeremiah Program provides housing, early childhood education, and life skills, and partners with local community colleges for postsecondary education. It began in 1998, in the Twin Cities in Minnesota, and is designed to help single mothers complete postsecondary education while their children are successfully prepared for kindergarten. Under the dynamic leadership of Ascend Fellow Gloria Perez, Jeremiah is expanding to North Dakota and Texas.

# EDUCATION

**Investments** in high-quality early childhood education **yield a 7-10 percent** per year return on investment based on increased school and career achievement as well as reduced social costs.<sup>1</sup>

At the same time, **parents who complete a college degree double their incomes.**<sup>2</sup> A parent's level of educational attainment is also a strong predictor of a child's success.

## Return on investment in education for children AND their parents



## education

- Postsecondary education and workforce development
- Early childhood development programs e.g. child care; Head Start; prekindergarten; home visiting; hubs of support for family, friend, and neighbor caregivers
- Family literacy
- K-12 education

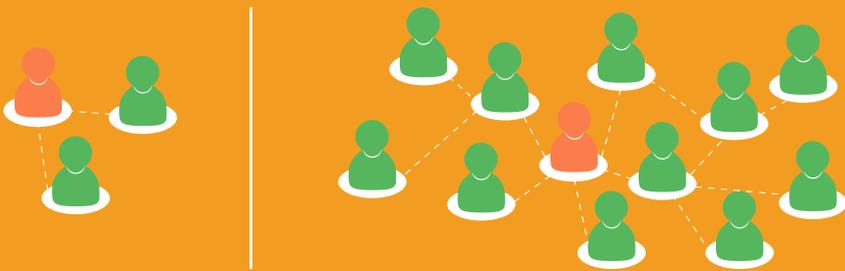
**In the spotlight:** The Community Action Project of Tulsa (CAP Tulsa), led by Ascend Fellow Steven Dow, is piloting a pathway for the parents of Head Start children to earn credentials or degrees in the healthcare field. The program, CareerAdvance®, partners with local technology and community colleges, where parents attend classes as a group with guidance from career coaches. They also receive other support, including funding for transportation and uniforms, setting them up for living-wage jobs in Tulsa's growing health sector.

# SOCIAL CAPITAL

Social capital is the **formal and informal networks** - of family, friends, neighbors, and institutions - through which people develop meaningful connections to build economic security.

These networks and the skills to build them are important contributors to families' well-being. According to a recent survey, low-income mothers with children enrolled in child care centers were 40 percent less likely to be depressed than those whose children were not enrolled. The friendships mothers developed through the centers were also important sources of information and support.<sup>3</sup>

## As Networks Expand, So Do Resources and Support



## social capital

- Career coaches, cohort models, and case managers
- Family, friends, and neighbors
- Community and faith-based organizations
- School and workplace contacts
- Leadership and empowerment programs
- Family engagement

**In the spotlight:** Ascend Fellows Dr. Mario Small, Dr. P. Lindsay Chase Lansdale, and Henry Wilde have designed a pilot program to promote social capital among parents in three centers at an Acelero Learning Head Start site. In addition to parenting resources from a family advocate, the program facilitates parent partnerships based on geography, encouraging parents to share information and support each other, such as through walking pools and shared drop-offs. These partnerships supplement the family advocate and intentionally build parent networks. Each center's approach is structured differently to assess which is most effective. Results will be released in 2014-2015.



# ECONOMIC SUPPORTS

Increased family income during early childhood can have a profound and lasting impact on children's lives. A **\$3,000 difference in parents' income** when their child is young is associated with a **17 percent increase in the child's future earnings**.<sup>4</sup>

Yet nearly 45 percent of all children in the United States live in low-income families.<sup>5</sup> Almost three-fourths of single-mother families with children are low-income. Beyond monthly incomes, savings and other financial assets are critical to help manage unexpected setbacks and build economic security. Children with as little as \$1 to \$499 in an account designated for college are more likely to enroll and graduate. Even small dollar amounts help children see themselves as college bound.<sup>6</sup>

## Children with Savings Accounts More Likely to Attend College



CFED. (2013). *Investing in Hope: A two-generation approach to asset building*. Washington, DC.



## economic supports

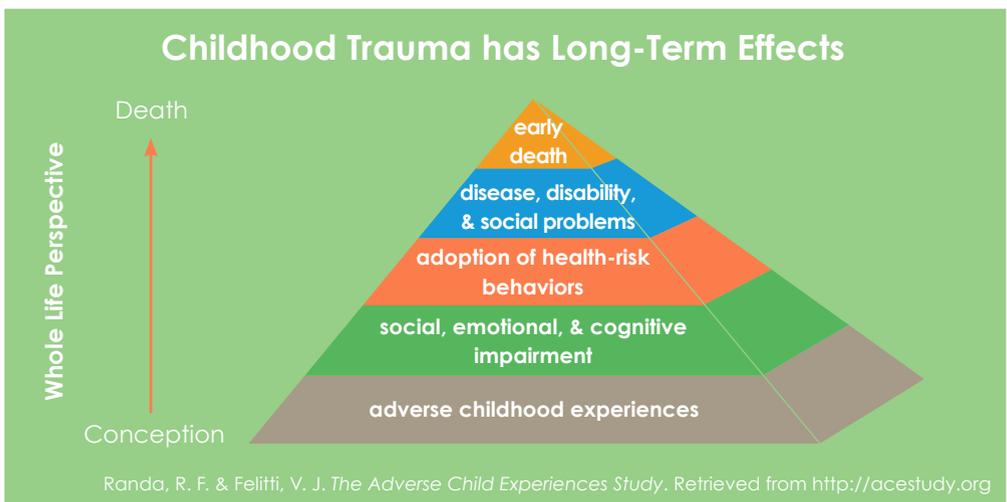
- Housing
- Transportation
- Financial education and asset building
- Tax credits
- Student financial aid
- Food assistance

**In the spotlight:** Led by Ascend Fellow Andrea Levere, CFED (Corporation for Enterprise Development) works nationally and internationally on asset-building strategies for low-income families. CFED has been at the forefront of developing children's savings accounts, financial tools that provide children and youth with savings to help them get ahead economically, and transform their aspirations for the future. The impact does not stop with children, however. The accounts are also a means to get low-income parents banked, increase their financial capability, and build their own long-term goals.

# HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Health and well-being is an emerging component of two-generation approaches because **physical and mental health** have a **major impact on a family's ability to thrive**. Childhood trauma, for instance, has lasting health and social consequences.<sup>7</sup>

Research also shows that parents with health insurance are more likely to seek regular care for themselves and their children.<sup>8</sup>



## health and well-being

- Mental health supports
- Preventing toxic stress
- Access to health insurance
- Support to build strong parent-child relationships
- Family planning

**In the spotlight:** Ascend Fellow Katie Albright at the San Francisco Child Abuse Prevention Center has introduced a pilot program to assess the mental health needs of children and their parents. The program connects families to support networks and other services, including partner organizations such as the Children's Advocacy Center. The Prevention Center is also developing tools to measure two-generation risk factors.

# DEVELOPING OPPORTUNITIES

Two-generation opportunities can be identified and developed through **programs, policies, and research** at all levels – local, state, and federal. When we serve children and their parents together, we see results far greater than the sum of their parts.



## Build, Buy, and Broker

Solid infrastructure and cohesive systems that draw together resources may be two of the most important factors in ensuring families succeed. It is not necessary that only one organization delivers all of the components of a two-generation approach. For example, parents' education needs might be filled by top-performing local community colleges while their children are served by high-quality Head Start centers.



Some leaders may “build” specific programs or services themselves – by hiring experienced case managers or providing extensive staff training. But it may be just as effective to:

- “buy” or contract out services from a partner;
- “broker” or partner to provide services with no financial transactions.

The common interest of helping families succeed is a powerful driver for partners to innovate and link services for parents and children together.

**In the spotlight:** The Colorado Department of Human Services is integrating the two-generation approach across their \$2 billion statewide system. Under the leadership of Ascend Fellow Reggie Bicha, the state is developing an approach to employment for both custodial and non-custodial parents, increasing college savings options for low-income children, and expanding the percentage of low-income children in high-quality early education.

# HOW DO WE BUILD A LEGACY OF OPPORTUNITY?

Ascend at the Aspen Institute is the national hub for breakthrough ideas and collaborations that move vulnerable children and their parents toward educational success and economic security.

## How we make a difference:

### We elevate and invest in solutions.

- \$1.5 million Aspen Institute Ascend Fund
- Convenings, tools, and models

### We build leaders and networks.

- National Ascend Fellowship program
- New two-generation learning network

### We deepen the conversation.

- Engage the voices of families to inform policies and programs
- Bring leaders together to put good ideas into action



---

*“I think the biggest thing for me is trying to figure out how I am going to take care of myself and how am I going to set my children up for success.”*

- Low-income, white mother, Richmond, Virginia  
Focus Group

---

## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Heckman, J. *Presenting the Heckman Equation: Schools, skills, and synapses* [Powerpoint slides]. Retrieved from the Heckman Equation website: <http://www.heckmanequation.org./content/resource/presenting-heckman-equation>
- <sup>2</sup> Julian, T. & Kominski, R. (September 2011). *Education and Synthetic Work-Life Earnings Estimates: American community survey reports*. Retrieved from the U.S. Census Bureau website: <http://www.census.gov/prod/2011pubs/acs-14.pdf>
- <sup>3</sup> Small, M. L. (November 7, 2013). *The Ties That Bind: How childcare centers build social capital*. *Huffington Post*. Retrieved from [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/dr-mario-luis-small/the-ties-that-bind-how-ch\\_b\\_4228843.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/dr-mario-luis-small/the-ties-that-bind-how-ch_b_4228843.html)
- <sup>4</sup> Duncan, G. & Magnuson, K. (2011). *The Long Reach of Early Childhood Poverty*. Stanford University. *Pathways Journal*.
- <sup>5</sup> Addy, S., Engelhardt, W., Skinner, C. (January 2013). *Basic Facts About Low-Income Children: Children under 18 years, 2011*. New York, NY: National Center for Children in Poverty.
- <sup>6</sup> Elliott, W., Song, H., Nam, I. (March 2013). *Research Brief: Relationships between college savings, enrollment, graduation, and student loan debt*. Center for Social Development, Washington University in St. Louis. Retrieved from <http://csd.wustl.edu/Publications/Documents/RB13-09.pdf>
- <sup>7</sup> Randa, R. F. & Felitti, V. J. *The Adverse Childhood Experiences Study*. Retrieved from <http://www.acestudy.org>
- <sup>8</sup> Rosenbaum, S. & Whittington, R. P. T. (June 2007). *Parental Health Insurance Coverage as Child Health Policy: Evidence from the literature*. Retrieved from [http://sphhs.gwu.edu/departments/healthpolicy/CHPR/downloads/Parental\\_Health\\_Insurance\\_Report.pdf](http://sphhs.gwu.edu/departments/healthpolicy/CHPR/downloads/Parental_Health_Insurance_Report.pdf)

---

*“When I look at my son, he’s eight now, I see my mom, and I think of what she said: America is a place where a nobody can be a somebody. I just want to show my son, don’t give up on your dreams.”*

- Lubens St. Fleur, father, student at Miami Dade College

---



## THE ASPEN INSTITUTE

The Aspen Institute is an educational and policy studies organization based in Washington, DC. Its mission is to foster leadership based on enduring values and to provide a nonpartisan venue for dealing with critical issues.

The Institute has campuses in Aspen, Colorado, and on the Wye River on Maryland's Eastern Shore. It also maintains offices in New York City and has an international network of partners.

**One Dupont Circle, NW, Suite 700  
Washington, DC 20036**

**[ascend.aspeninstitute.org](https://ascend.aspeninstitute.org)**

** [@aspenascend](https://twitter.com/aspenascend)**