

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



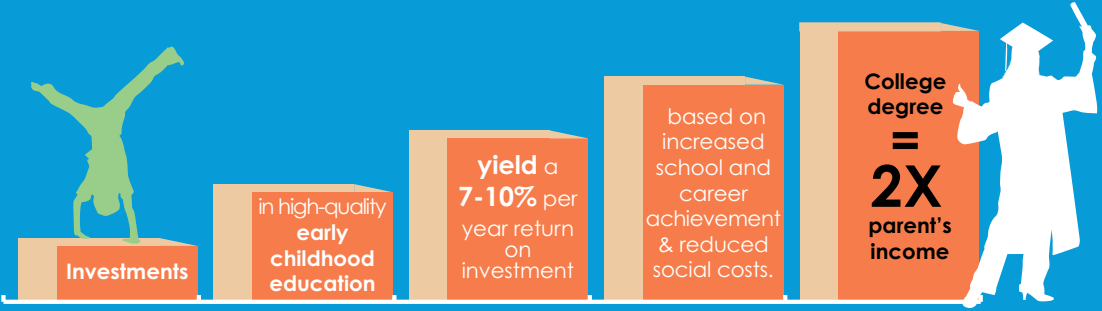
## TWO-GENERATION PLAYBOOK

# WHY A TWO-GENERATION APPROACH?

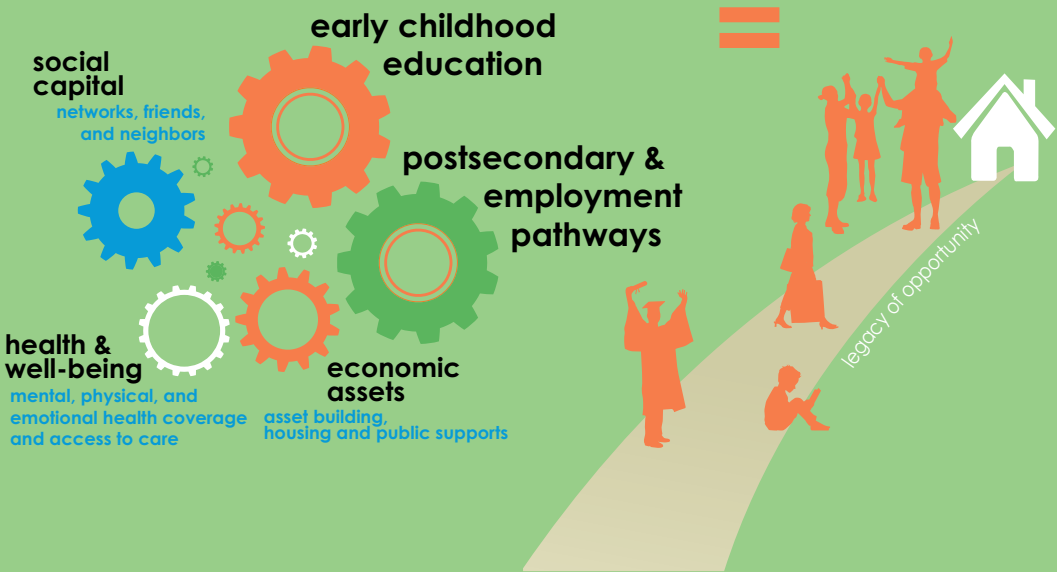
Almost **HALF** of all children in the United States live in low-income families.



**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.



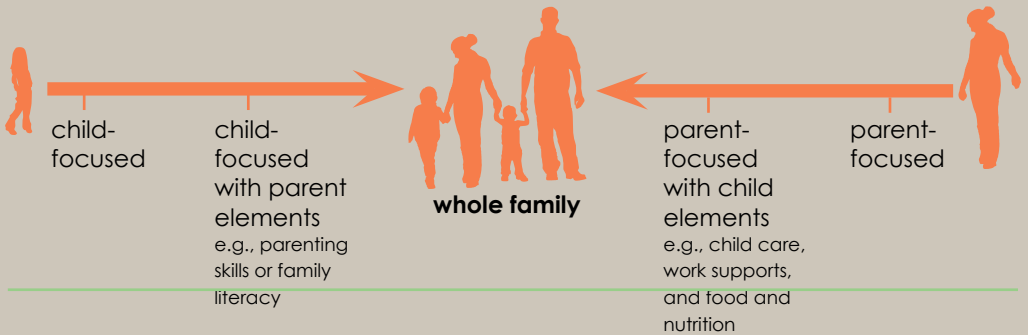
# WHAT IS A TWO-GENERATION APPROACH?

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

We all want to see families thrive, but fragmented approaches that address the needs of children and their parents separately often leave either the child or parent behind and dim the family's chance at success. Placing parents and children in silos ignores the daily challenges faced by parents who are working or studying while raising a child, a challenge even more pronounced for those with low wages.

Research has documented the impact of a parent's education, economic stability, and overall health on a child's trajectory. Similarly, children's education and healthy development are powerful catalysts for parents. Two-generation approaches help both generations make progress together.

## 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

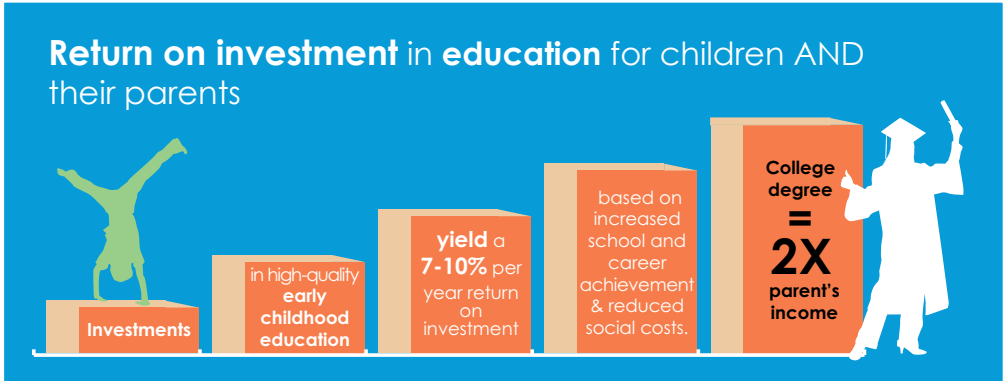




# EDUCATION

**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.



## 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 United Way of Greater Cincinnati built a pilot program for low-income mothers to help them enter the field of advanced manufacturing, which is a growing employment sector in the region. They used a design-thinking approach to develop the career training program at Gateways Community College and involve their children in STEM learning. The program targets low-income mothers with at least one child age 12 or younger. Families set short- and long-term goals for their career, finances, education, and family. In addition to a peer support group and a STEM-focused family camp, families have access to an emergency assistance fund as they build their savings and support systems. The partnership has expanded to include other community organizations.

# 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>



## 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:** Jefferson County Human Services is connecting education, health, mental health, job training, and other supports for Head Start children and their parents through 3rd grade. Critical to the model is the integration of a family-centered coaching approach, with a coach assigned to working with parents through monthly dinners and one-on-one goal-setting discussions to support parents in their pursuit of GEDs and postsecondary education and asset-building, among other areas, and to connect them to other community services. The program has successfully built social capital among the parents for peer support in achieving their goals.

# ECONOMIC ASSETS

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 assets

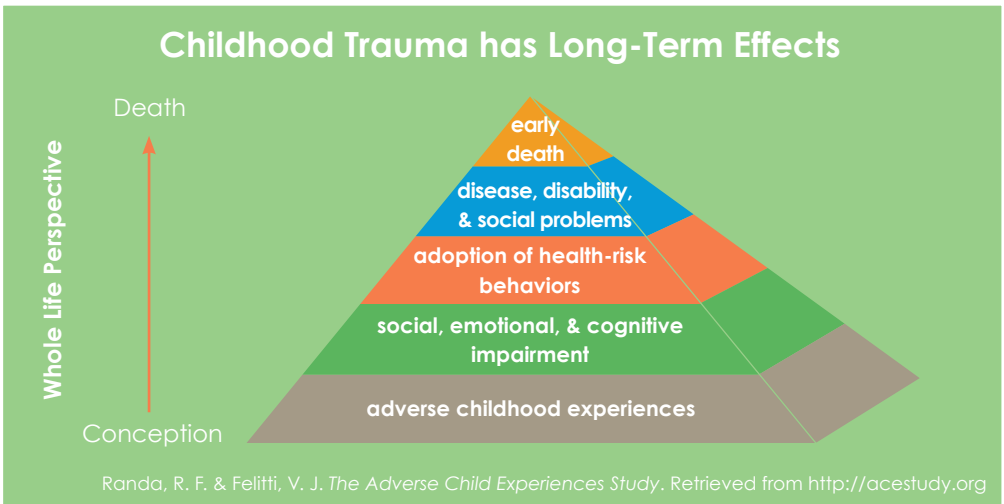
- Housing
- Transportation
- Financial education and asset building
- Tax credits
- Student financial aid
- Food assistance

**In the spotlight:** Led by Ascend Fellow Andrea Levere, the Corporation for Enterprise Development (CFED) 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

**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>

Recent brain research shows that the brains of new parents undergo major structural changes just as babies' brains do. Understanding how parents are biologically prepared for their new roles is important to ensuring young families get off to a good start.<sup>8</sup> Studies also show that parents with health insurance are more likely to seek regular care for themselves and their children.<sup>9</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:** Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP), led by Ascend Fellow Roxane White, is a maternal and early childhood program that fosters long-term success for first-time moms, their babies, and society through the support of caring maternal and child health nurses. In Indiana, the Nurse-Family Partnership program is carried out by Goodwill of Central Indiana. Under the leadership of Ascend Fellow Betsy Delgado, the program offers families employment, education, and wrap-around economic services that complement the health-focused expertise of the NFP nurses.



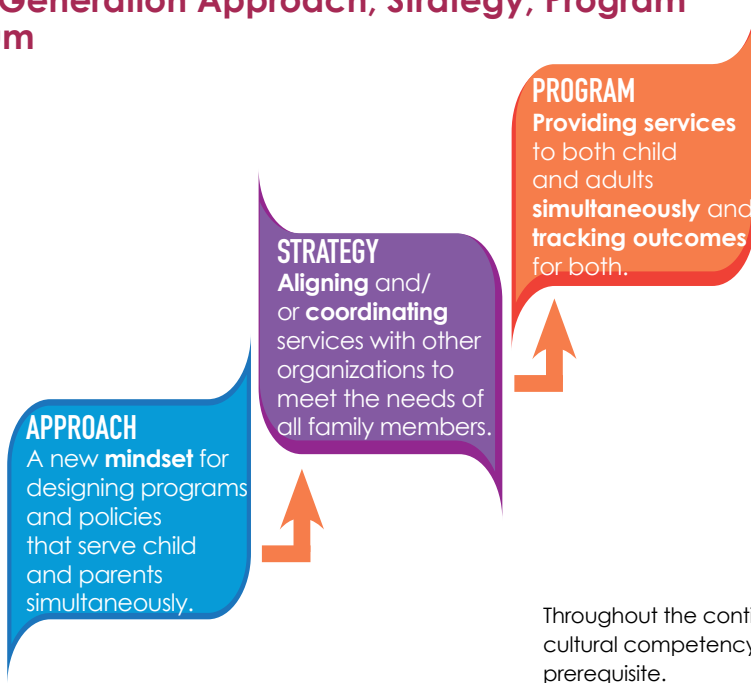
# MEASURING IMPACT

As two-generation approaches have gained national traction over the last several years, “What are the intended outcomes of two-generation programs?” and “What are the pathways to these outcomes for two-generation programs?” have become gnawing questions for the field.

To help answer these questions, Ascend and the Annie E. Casey Foundation and a working group of field experts developed a report, *Making Tomorrow Better Together*, and an online 2Gen Outcomes Bank. Both are available on Ascend’s website.

Two-generation programs articulate and account for the outcomes of children and the adults in their lives. The graphic below outlines the continuum from a two-generation approach to a strategy and program.

## The Two-Generation Approach, Strategy, Program Continuum



**In the spotlight:** The Colorado, Tennessee, and Utah Departments of Human Services, led by Ascend Fellows Reggie Bicha, Raquel Hatter, and Ann Silverberg Williamson respectively, have embraced two-generation strategies, enabling billions of dollars in public services and thousands of employees to serve families more holistically. They are bringing offices and data systems that serve families together and strengthening a culture of service and an appetite for change within their teams. Similar shifts are developing in Connecticut and Hawaii, with almost half of all states exploring two-generation approaches. Public will for efforts that address the needs of children and their parents together is also strong, with 89 percent of the American public across all demographics in favor of a two-generation approach.

# HOW DO WE BUILD A LEGACY OF OPPORTUNITY?

Ascend at the Aspen Institute is the national hub for breakthrough ideas and collaborations that move children and the adults in their lives toward educational success and economic security. We embrace a commitment to racial equity and a gender lens.

## How we make a difference:



### We elevate and invest in solutions.

- Two-generation policy and practice agenda
- Innovations from Aspen Institute Ascend Network
- Practice and policy roundtables and forums
- Products and tools to support adoption and adaptation of two-generation approaches



### We build leaders and a national network.

- Aspen Institute Ascend Fellowship
- Networked way of working to increase connectivity, alignment, and production across strategies



### We leverage resources.

- Expansion and leveraging of funding and support for two-generation efforts as well as flexible resources



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*“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

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## 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)
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- <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> Watamura, S. & Kim, P. *Two Open Windows: Infant and Parent Neurobiologic Change*. (2015). Washington, DC: The Aspen Institute. Retrieved from <http://ascend.aspeninstitute.org/pages/two-open-windows-infant-and-parent-neurobiologic-change>
- <sup>9</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)

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*“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

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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.

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