

Dual-Generation Strategy Initiative

RESEARCH BRIEF

FEBRUARY 2012

Dual-Generation Strategy Overview

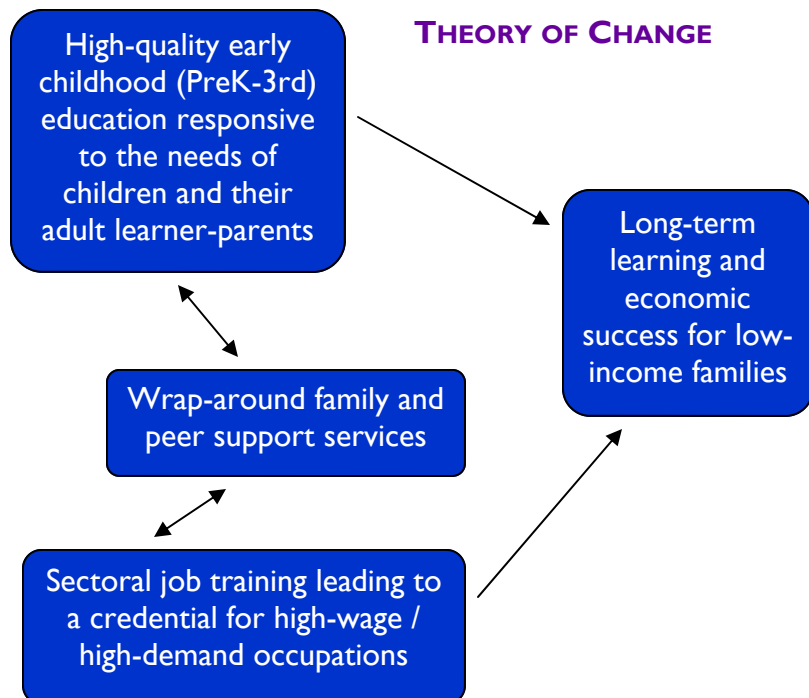
Low-income families are often hampered by a lack of educational and occupational credentials, limited access to quality childcare, and fragmented, inadequate support services. Programs and policies typically target parents or children separately, limiting their impact on the family as a whole. The result is that low-income families are left on a path with limited opportunities to improve their academic achievement and financial security.

The Dual-Generation Strategy Theory of Change posits that the combination of high-quality early childhood education (PreK-3rd) with sectoral, cohort-based job training leading to high-skill / high-

wage employment, supplemented by wrap-around family and peer support services, will lead to long-term academic and economic success for low-income families.

The three core components—high quality early-childhood education; cohort-based sectoral job training; and wrap-around family and peer support services—are more intensive and focused than those found in traditional 'siloed' programs. Moreover, the components are coordinated to remove barriers and address program and service gaps. Wrap-around services, including adult basic and developmental education, career coaching, earnings supplements, transportation assistance, extended child care, and peer community building are critical to success.

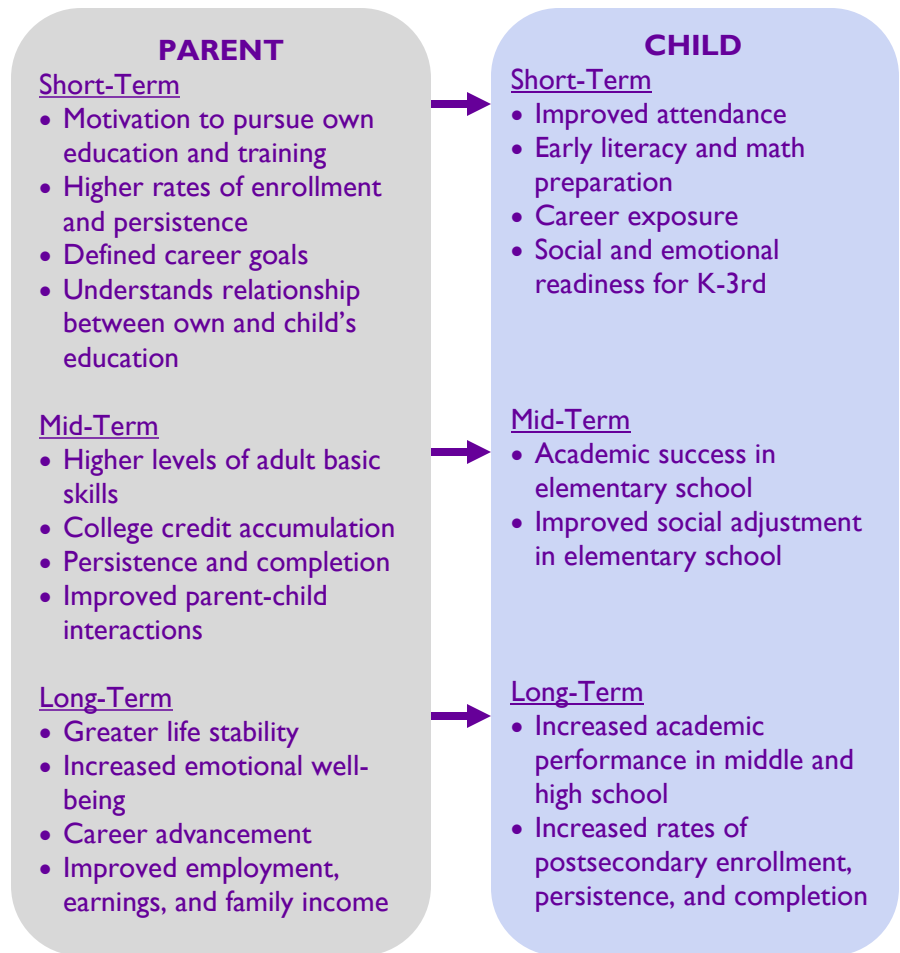
Dual-generation strategy implementation can originate from multiple directions: workforce development to early learning programs; early learning to sectoral training programs; postsecondary education to early learning programs; or collaboration among effective programs across these arenas.



Conceptual Framework

The Dual-Generation Strategy Initiative aims to help low-income families achieve greater academic and economic success over time.

The conceptual framework builds from the Theory of Change and further defines a range of short-, mid-, and long-term outcomes for both parents and children targeted by the initiative. It is expected that these outcomes will reinforce each other at every stage in the process, strengthening the gains made by families.



The conceptual framework builds on models presented in Chase-Landsdale, 2011, as well as Sommer et al., in press, and Gardner et al., 2011.

CareerAdvance®



CareerAdvance® participants.

Launched in 2009 by the Community Action Project (CAP) of Tulsa County, CareerAdvance® offers cohort-based workforce development targeting jobs in healthcare to parents of Head Start and Early Head Start children. The career ladder includes education, training, and certifications in healthcare occupations offering opportunities for advancement and family-supporting income with fringe benefits. The ladder allows individuals to stop-out at multiple points along the pathway with an industry-recognized credential. The program design includes a workforce intermediary to connect with employers; weekly peer support meetings for participants; a career coach, incentives for good performance, and other support services to overcome barriers to success. CareerAdvance® participants and a carefully matched comparison group are currently being followed in a multi-year evaluation. More information is available on the CAP website: www.captc.org/financialServices/CareerAdvance.php

Opportunities for Growing Dual-Generation Strategies

A number of opportunities exist to support the growth of the Dual-Generation Strategy Initiative:

- Commitment to evidence-based policymaking and program design. Research clearly points to the critical role of family economic success and stability to outcomes for young children and substantiates earnings impacts over time for participants in sectoral training programs.
- Upcoming federal legislative reauthorizations of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) and the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF)
- Sources of flexible funding, particularly Temporary Assistance For Needy Families (TANF) and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) employment and training funds at the federal level, as well as state and local funding
- Supportive state policy structures in states with comprehensive policy frameworks encompassing major workforce and child development programs
- Innovative local dual-generation pilot programs to study, expand, and replicate promising programs, such as: Atlanta Civic Site, The Jeremiah Project, and Tulsa's CareerAdvance®
- Strong and growing federal and philanthropic interest in dual-generation strategies

Dual-generation strategies stress simultaneous services to children and their parents, providing them with quality developmental opportunities of demonstrated effectiveness and the supports needed for them to take full advantage of those opportunities.

Challenges to Implementation

There are a range of challenges to the implementation of dual-generation strategies:

- Policy and program inertia in education, workforce development, and child development
- Differing provider cultures stemming from welfare and workforce reforms since the mid-1990s
- Absence of high-level policy coordination at the federal, state, or local level
- Conflicting goals and performance expectations among mainstream programs serving children and parents
- Differing structures and levels of decision-making, with federal funding for Head Start/Early Head Start going directly to local programs while workforce development funds flow from the federal government to the states, then on to a range of local structures
- Varying funding mechanisms, from annual formula funds to competitive grant funds
- Resource limitations due to declining federal support for education, workforce development, and early learning
- Conflicting schedules for early childhood programs, postsecondary education and workforce training programs, and employment opportunities resulting in additional childcare demands

POLICY ELEMENTS

Supportive Federal, State, and Local Policy and Leadership

- Align performance goals between postsecondary education/workforce programs and early childhood programs
- Bolster federal and state support for a skills agenda
- Encourage parents of young children to attend college with changes to the Pell Grant and family loan programs
- Reward state and local programs for adopting dual-generation programs
- Increase flexible funding to support dual-generation investments
- Provide technical assistance to state and local programs to develop and launch dual-generation strategies
- Build the capacity for dual-generation investment strategies in partnership with states and leading foundations

PROGRAM ELEMENTS

- High quality early childhood development, spanning Early Head Start, Head Start, PreK, and K-3rd
- Accessible, affordable postsecondary education
- Sectoral skills training targeted at high-paying occupations
- Workforce intermediaries bringing together employers and education/training providers
- Essential support services including career coaches and peer supports
- Conditional cash and in-kind support, transportation assistance, and gap employment
- Asset development and financial education

RESEARCH ELEMENTS

- Ongoing implementation studies to identify challenges and conditions for operating dual-generation programs
- Longitudinal studies to understand mechanisms supporting dual-generation initiatives, and to document outcomes and impacts
- Long-term analysis comparing the benefits and costs of dual-generation versus single-generation strategies in similar operating environments

Next Steps

Building on a series of meetings and conferences across the nation that have focused on framing the dual-generation strategy, researchers at the Ray Marshall Center and the Foundation for Child Development will host a meeting of leaders from state/local workforce and early childhood development programs. This meeting will seek input on the Dual-Generation Strategy Agenda and identify specific opportunities for piloting dual-generation initiatives. These efforts will be coordinated with the growing network of policymakers, practitioners, and researchers who are fostering dual-generation investment strategies.

Pilot demonstration projects will be developed to further test different implementation models, with an emphasis on leveraging existing, high-quality programs in workforce development, postsecondary education, and early childhood education.

SELECTED REFERENCES

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