

**Investing in Children *and* Parents:
Fostering Dual-Generation Strategies in the United States***

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Presented to the
*Annual Research Conference of the
Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management*
Washington, D.C.

November 5, 2011



* Work on this paper was supported by the Foundation for Child Development. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the Foundation or The University of Texas at Austin.

Overview

The Issue

Policymakers often become overly focused on finding the silver bullet, the one approach or component that will solve the pressing problem of the moment. In education, it has sometimes meant returning to teaching “the basics” or establishing school accountability. In welfare reform in the 1990s, it meant time-limiting benefits and requiring work. Workforce development has stressed ‘work-first’ strategies. Policymakers also tend to be reactive, responding to problems as they arise rather than seeking preventive measures. Rarely is sufficient thought given to devising and implementing more systematic, multipronged strategies for preventing problems. This is very much the case when it comes to policies for poor children and their parents.

On the one hand, Head Start, Early Head Start and pre-Kindergarten-to-3rd grade programs were established to provide quality early childhood education (e.g., Vinovskis, 2005). Typically these programs have not only provided quality early learning opportunities and social supports for the children but also have encouraged varying forms of engagement by their parents. Emphasis has changed over time, but these programs have generally been child- rather than family-focused. Parents’ needs have mainly been addressed as they related to contributing to better child development.

On the other hand, policies and programs have also been created to assist disadvantaged adults pursue postsecondary education and training opportunities in order to become more economically self-sufficient. These programs range from Pell Grants and educational access programs to workforce services and work programs under the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and related efforts, to name a few. Many of those served by these programs are also the parents of young children.¹ These programs have been almost exclusively adult-focused. To the extent that children are considered, it is in terms of securing childcare so that their parents may participate more effectively.

* The following individuals provided helpful comments on an earlier draft presented at a dual-generation strategy convening co-hosted by the Aspen Institute’s ASCEND Initiative, the Foundation for Child Development, and the Ray Marshall Center in Washington, D.C. on October 13-14, 2011: Lindsay Chase-Lansdale, Terese Sommer and Terri Sabol, Northwestern University; Ruby Takanishi and Don Hernandez, Foundation for Child Development; Ann Mosle and Nisha Patel, Aspen Institute; and numerous participants in the October convening.

¹ Interestingly, just how many are parents in postsecondary education and workforce programs, particularly how many are the parents of young children who might need quality early childhood education and/or childcare, is not readily known.

An Emerging Paradigm Shift?

Recently, a dual-generation paradigm seems to be emerging. Rather than focusing on children *or* parents, on this siloed program or that, or on immediate v. longer-term outcomes, it approaches service delivery from a dual-generation vantage point, one that is more systemic and comprehensive in scope. 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. Few examples of such strategies exist at present. In fact, two extensive environmental scans of dual-generation efforts were conducted in the past year using networks of policy, program and research experts and then exploring and even visiting dual-generation programs that were identified (see Sommer, Chase-Lansdale, Brooks-Gunn, Gardner, Rauner, & Freel, in press), and Waters Boots, 2010). For the most part, with very few exceptions, policies and programs remain focused on siloed approaches serving one generation or the other but not both together. As indicated below, the programs identified as dual-generation vary in their focus and are quite innovative.

The potential for dual-generation strategies is further highlighted by the fact that substantial numbers of students enrolled in 2- and 4-year postsecondary institutions, as well as participating in WIA, TANF and SNAP work programs are parents of young children, while many of the children served by Head Start, Early Head Start and Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) programs have parents who have not graduated high school, completed college or obtained a labor market credential.

Organization of the Paper

This paper is organized into seven (7) sections. The next section presents a conceptual framework for dual-generation investment strategies, contrasting it with the more traditional, single-generation view. The third section discusses some of the more important components of dual-generation policies and programs. The fourth section examines major barriers and challenges encountered by dual-generation strategies as well as major opportunities that may contribute to their adoption. The fifth section offers up an agenda for dual-generation strategies that addresses policies, programs and research. The final section suggests possible next steps for fostering dual-generation investment strategies. Following the references section, a case study of Tulsa's innovative CareerAdvance® Initiative is provided as an appendix.

Conceptual Framework

The Dual Generation Strategy Initiative being promoted by the Ray Marshall Center and the Foundation for Child Development builds from a relatively simple theory of change. Low-income families are often hampered by a lack of educational and occupational credentials, limited access to quality childcare, and fragmented,

inadequate support services. As noted above, programs and policies typically target parents and 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.

In the traditional, program-based approach to services for parents and children, needs and best practices related to either “participant” can be ignored. Workforce and education programs serving low-income adults identify childcare as a “barrier” to address in connecting a parent with employment and the services needed to prepare them for it. CCDF supports a range of childcare options, including with family members, at home-based centers and sometimes at early childhood programs (Davis and Jefferys, 2007). Key concerns with this approach are that the quality of the care received varies widely, and high-quality childcare programs report that CCDF payment rates are well below current tuition levels, which can be a disincentive to enrolling low-income children. While Head Start and Early Head Start programs are typically high quality and have established goals to support parent education and training, the focus of those efforts is primarily to increase parental involvement in their child’s education (Duch, 2005). The real challenge to working parents and those in education and training programs is the part-day, part-year structure of Head Start, which requires parents with limited resources to arrange for secondary, often fee-based, care, and Early Head Start, around half of which is provided through home visits. At the other end of the education spectrum, postsecondary education and workforce training programs experience significant student drop-out from those who are not prepared academically or who need additional support services, such as childcare or transportation, to succeed.

Theory of Change

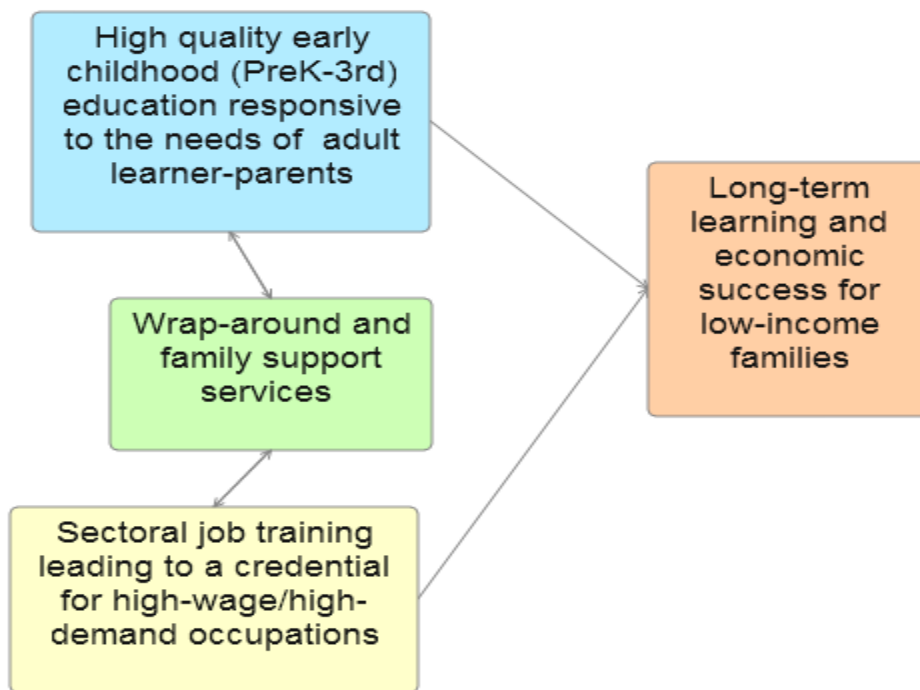
The Dual-Generation Strategy Theory of Change (Figure 1) posits that the combination of high-quality early childhood education (preschool through 3rd grade) with sectoral job training leading to high-skill/high-wage employment, supplemented by wrap-around family and peer support services, will lead to long-term academic and economic success for low-income families. As defined by Cauthen and Lu (2003), “true economic security includes: stable, predictable income; savings and assets that can help families survive crises and plan for the future, and human and social capital ... that helps families improve their financial status” (p. 1). The three core components in the Theory of Change are more intensive and focused than those found in traditional ‘siloes’ programs. Moreover, the components are coordinated to remove barriers and address program and service gaps.

Dual-generation strategies can be implemented from either direction, from systems serving children or those serving their parents:

- From the workforce development side, building in quality early learning programs for the children of parents who are pursuing or seeking to pursue higher-wage employment opportunities;

- From quality early childhood learning programs, building in sectoral workforce training and other needed services (e.g., Adult Basic Education, English as a Second Language programs, developmental education) for the parents of children enrolled or enrolling in them;
- From the postsecondary education side, building in quality early learning programs for students' children and connections to employment opportunities for adult-learner parents; and/or
- From the collaboration of existing, effective workforce, early childhood, and postsecondary education programs, building explicit connections between programs where few or none have existed before.

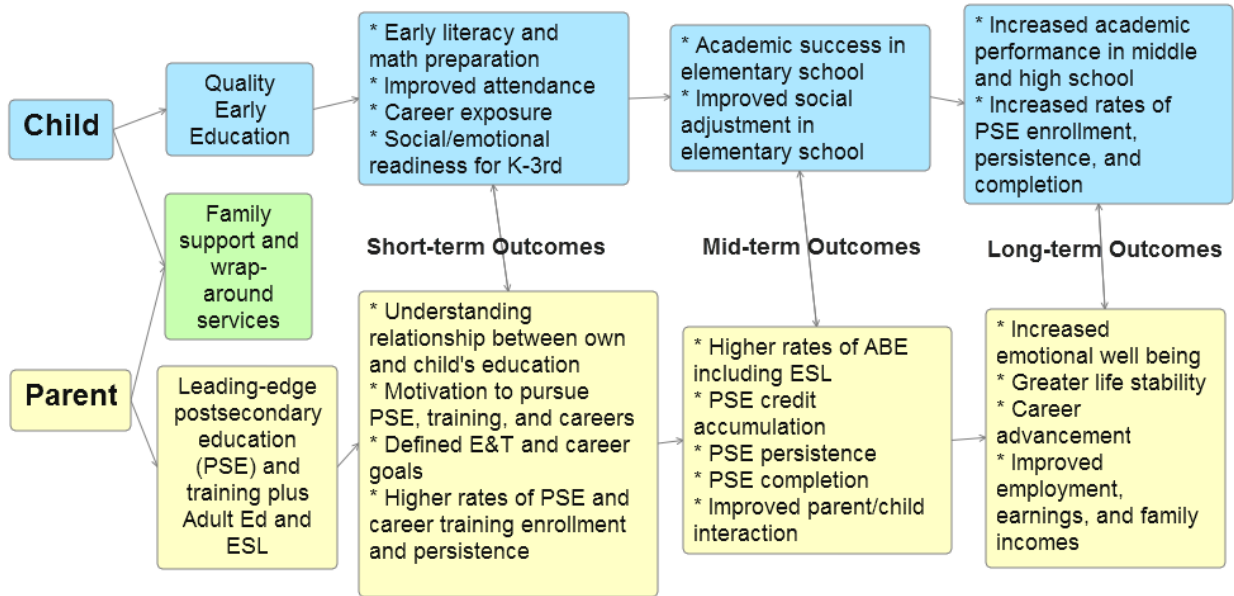
Figure 1. Dual-Generation Strategy Theory of Change



Ultimately, the purpose of the Dual-Generation Strategy initiative is to help low-income families achieve greater education and economic success over time. The combination of educational, occupational, and other services is expected to result in a range of outcomes that progressively move the family toward a more stable and secure future. Figure 2 presents a conceptual framework for the Dual-Generation Strategy Initiative that was developed by Chase-Lansdale and Brooks-Gunn, in collaboration with their colleagues, Sommer, Gardner, Rauner, and Freel as they launched a dual-generation action-research program in 2008 (see Chase-Lansdale, 2011; Sommer et al., in press; and Gardner et al., 2011). The theory of change defines short-, mid-, and long-term outcomes for parents and children. As parents achieve academic and economic success over time, they serve as role models for their children and increase their capacity to enrich their children's learning

environments and to advocate and push their children toward greater academic success from preschool through college.

Figure 2. Dual-Generation Strategy Conceptual Framework



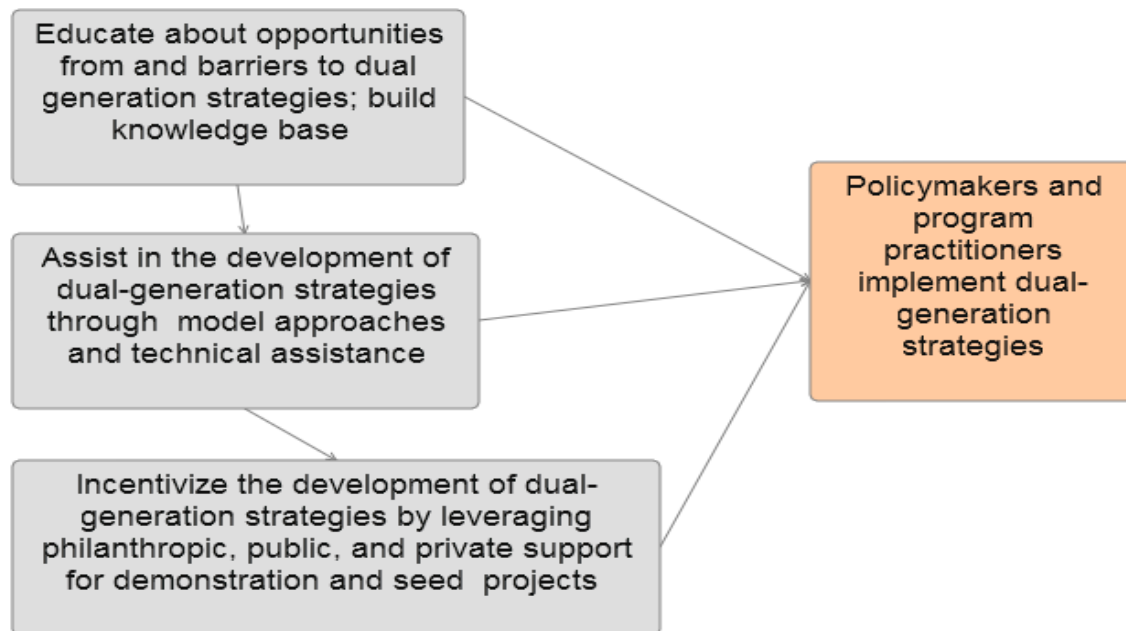
Theory of Action

In order to test the Theory of Change, the Dual-Generation Strategy Initiative is based on a Theory of Action as detailed in Figure 3 below. Three main lines of activity are intended to increase the implementation of dual-generation strategies by policy makers and program practitioners: education, technical assistance, and demonstration/evaluation. First, there is a need to educate policy and program developers, funders, and others about the potential benefits of shifting to a dual-generation approach rather than continuing to serve parents and children in isolation. Next, the initiative will work with model programs to identify technical assistance and other needs to aid in the development of dual-generation strategies. Finally, the initiative will work with private, public, and philanthropic organizations to fund demonstration and seed projects to further test the approach and demonstrate the viability of dual-generation strategies through evidence-based research.

The Theory of Action assumes that policymakers and program practitioners who are informed, actively assisted and appropriately incentivized to implement dual-generation strategies will substantially improve the long-term learning and economic success of low-skilled, low-income parents and their children. The Dual-Generation Strategy Initiative seeks to: deepen understanding of the elements, processes and results of dual-generation strategies; foster the field of dual-generation strategies through policy and program development; create a policy

framework and guide for diffusing and enhancing the use of dual-generation strategies; and identify and suggest legislative changes at the federal and state level that would facilitate the implementation of dual-generation strategies.

Figure 3. Dual-Generation Strategy Theory of Action



Dual-Generation Policies and Programs

Components of dual-generation programs may include: quality early childhood education; sectoral job training through postsecondary education coupled with a workforce intermediary approach to engaging employers; and critical support services such as contextualized adult education and developmental courses, career coaching, peer support, conditional cash transfers, reliable transportation, asset development, and financial education.² While these components already exist in many communities, what has been missing is the intentional and thoughtful linking of these funding streams and programs for low-income families. Moreover, research on two-generation programs by St. Pierre et al. (1996) concluded that “intensity of services matters for each component...two-generation programs are in danger of taking a broad-based approach that does not provide enough of any single type of service to be effective” (p. 15). This finding was echoed in MDRC’s Enhanced Services for the Hard-to-Employ Demonstration and Evaluation Project, which found that the modest intensity of education and employment services for parents,

² The Annie E. Casey Foundation (2011, pp. 17-25) offers its own description of two-generation programs in the *2011 Kids Count® Data Book*.

and low participation rates, resulted in little impact on parental employment or other outcomes of interest (Hsueh et al., 2011). Therefore, the combination and coordination of dual-generation program components (described in detail below), as well as the intensity of the family's engagement in these components, are critical to moving parents and their children ahead collectively.

Quality education for young children is essential to ensure that children are on track for academic success through high school and into college. The Foundation for Child Development is at the forefront of a movement that has redefined the first tier of public education, known as PK-3rd, so that early childhood education is intentionally linked to the elementary school system through 3rd grade (Shore, 2009). Other research has documented that the quality of early education period has lasting impacts on child outcomes and pointed to the important role of parental engagement (see Heckman, 2011; and Reynolds et al., 2010). In order to improve family outcomes, however, early childhood education and care must be provided on a schedule that meets the needs of working and adult-learner parents. Meyers (1993) noted that "care that is convenient, affordable, and high quality may help parents succeed in their transition from welfare to work, while deficits in any of these dimensions may interfere with parents' education and work activities, and may compromise child well-being" (p. 767).

An analysis of the literature on two-generation programs at Head Start centers by Duch (2005) identified several lessons learned, including the importance of the length of the childcare day; an assessment of family needs in order to target services; partnerships with elementary schools to continue programs; collaborations with well-established community-based organizations to provide a range of support services, including mental health services; and development of strong goals with clear expectations – attaining a GED is not sufficient for enhancing a family's economic trajectory.

Strong early childhood education programs have also been found to support community economic development by increasing the available supply of labor – parents with reliable, quality childcare options are more likely to be in the labor force (Warner, 2007). High-quality programs also may attract or retain high-skilled parents and their employers, as well as prepare participants for future academic success (Bartik, 2011).

Sectoral job training leading to industry-recognized credentials and connections to employers offering high wages and good benefits is essential to the Dual-Generation Strategy framework.³ Sector-based initiatives are targeted at a specific industry and designed to address local or regional workforce issues facing employers. Most workforce programs in the U.S. have adopted an anything goes, scatter-shot focus in recent few decades, opting to refer jobseekers to *any* job or to training in *any* field. Research, however, clearly shows that a much more effective strategy is a sectoral, employer-driven approach, focusing on selective occupations in high demand that

³ Some of these may well be short-term credentials. The key is that the credentials are clearly recognized by employers and employer groups as having value in the labor market.

pay family supporting wages and offer opportunities for advancement. Accumulating evaluation results indicate that skills development—rather than low-intensity, work-first services—yields sizeable long-lasting impacts on earnings for low-income adults (see Glover and King, 2010; Maguire et al., 2010; Prince and Jenkins, 2005; Smith et al., 2011; Conway et al., 2007; and Zeidenberg et al., 2010).

A sectoral job training strategy leverages two components: postsecondary education leading to a workforce credential or a 2- or 4-year degree; and reliance on a workforce intermediary to promote strong employer engagement and help bridge the gap between employers and service providers.

- **Postsecondary education** covers a range of programs from apprenticeship to occupational skills training to associate or bachelor's degree programs. Low-income parents, many of whom have not been in a classroom in years, often require additional support such as tutoring, study halls, and bridge programs to be successful.
- **Workforce intermediaries** connect employers and training providers to ensure that participants are trained in demand skills to meet hiring needs. Intermediaries may engage in participant screening and marketing, needs assessments with employers or industry groups, curriculum development, program coordination, or other activities necessary to forge connections and improve outcomes for employers and jobseekers.⁴

Wrap-around and family support services are critical to the success of any dual-generation initiative. These services, such as contextualized adult basic and developmental education, reliable transportation, peer community-building, career coaching, and conditional cash transfers—as well as an array of other traditionally provided to low-income families in early childhood programs (e.g., nutrition, food, health, housing and other assistance) enable low-income families to overcome barriers to success. As envisioned here, these services are accessed by families through the early childhood and workforce/postsecondary education systems, as well as through partner programs in the community, to meet immediate and longer-term challenges facing parents and children. Core services to the dual-generation framework are discussed in more detail below.

- **Adult basic and developmental education and ESL** programs are a likely precursor to occupational skills training or college enrollment for low-income parents. Most adult education/ESL programs tend to operate only a few hours per week and to deliver education services in a manner that is completely abstracted from the context in which they are needed and are most effective. Researchers have documented that contextualizing the curriculum along the lines of the I-BEST program in Washington State (Jenkins, Zeidenberg and Kienzl, 2009) leads to better skill attainment and alters the individual's long-term earnings trajectory.⁵ In a review of the literature, Coffey and Smith (2011) identified effective practices and model

⁴ For more on workforce intermediaries, see Giloth (2004) and Looney and King (2005).

⁵ The Open Society Institute is currently supporting scaling up the I-BEST model around the country.

programs to help adult learners develop stronger basic skills and make the transition to advanced occupational skills training and college-level coursework. These practices include increased program intensity, professional development for instructors, and curriculum alignment between adult education and college/workforce programs.

- **Career coaching** is intended to help low-income parents navigate the multiple education and training systems that are involved in a dual-generation approach, and to motivate and encourage participants through challenges. The career coach leads the weekly peer meetings, guiding participants through topics such as study skills, work-life balance, communication and “soft skills” for employment, and job search strategies.
- **Peer community-building** through cohort-based training, weekly meetings, and other activities allows for parents to form their own support groups to sustain their involvement in a dual-generation program over time. Peer supports have been found to contribute to persistence and completion rates among low-income populations attending community and technical colleges as well as universities (see Engstrom and Tinto, 2007; Karp, 2011; and Tinto, 1993, 2003). Cohort-based training allows parents to establish relationships through shared experiences and build a sense of belonging. These relationships are reinforced through weekly/periodic group meetings that allow participants to work through school, home, and parenting issues in a supportive environment. Over time, parents often report that they form small study groups, trade-off on childcare, and carpool with their peers in the program.
- **Conditional cash transfers** of approximately \$3,000-\$4,000 annually incentivize attendance and high-performance in training programs, help parents cover the expense of participation and foregone earnings, and have a demonstrated impact on immediate child outcomes (Yoshikawa et al., 2006). The amount of the cash transfer is based in part on research by Duncan and Magnuson (2011) indicating that “an annual income increase of \$3,000 sustained for several years appears to boost children’s achievement by roughly one-fifth of a standard deviation” or “about two months’ advantage in school” (p. 27).
- **Asset development and financial education** programs help families build savings for education or home expenses and establish a more financially secure foundation for their future⁶. In addition, asset development helps families manage financial stressors such as job loss or divorce more successfully (Lind and Friedman, 2006; Rothwell and Goren, 2011). Asset development is a key component of the Annie E. Casey Foundation’s two-generation initiative, the Center for Family Economic Success, which aims to help parents succeed in the workplace, increase their income, and grow their assets (“Center,” 2011).

⁶ A helpful diagram of the Asset Building Continuum is available from the Maryland Cash Campaign at: <http://www.mdcash.org/userfiles/file/Asset%20Building%20Continuum%20-%20Adults.pdf>.

- **Transportation assistance**, such as public transportation subsidies, car repairs, or gas cards, is often key to participation in a dual-generation program since programs, schools, and services are rarely co-located or geographically convenient to one another.

Public and philanthropic investments in children and low-income adults can be better coordinated to achieve more lasting results for families. The policy framework behind the Dual-Generation Strategy Initiative intentionally and thoughtfully links existing funding streams and programs to build-out dual-generation dimensions.

Initially, philanthropic and discretionary funds can be used to foster the development of dual-generation strategies and launch the demonstration research agenda. Programs that currently have a two-generation focus, such as Head Start and Early Head Start or the Casey Foundation's Center for Family Economic Success initiative, are natural starting points for building out a full dual-generation strategy model. Other opportunities exist with sectoral training programs that are already connecting participants with childcare or childcare subsidies, such as Capital IDEA in Austin, Texas or Milwaukee's Wisconsin Regional Training Partnership. Workforce training and institutions of higher education already serving adult-learner parents, including the Jeremiah Project in Minneapolis and other communities, present an opportunity to demonstrate the value of wrap-around and support services, including access to high-quality early childhood education, to improve program persistence and completion rates.

It is expected that some public policy changes will be necessary to support broader-scale implementation of a dual-generation initiative. For example, states that are responsible for the distribution of the CCDF block grant funds might establish quality standards for childcare or designate funding for parents in sectoral training programs. Federal policy and funding for Head Start programs could be amended to lengthen the school day, establish partnerships with high-quality, full-time child care centers (Lim et al., 2007), or clarify that parent education and training components should include sectoral job training strategies. Performance standards for the federal Workforce Investment Act, currently awaiting reauthorization, could be modified to support participants in longer-term sectoral training programs. Similarly, federal Pell Grant requirements could be amended to allow for students to attend college part-time and still receive aid. A recent policy brief by Women Employed (Graham and Bassett, 2011) noted that federal and state policy changes, such as "providing wrap-around supports, making financial aid a graduation strategy, reforming temporary income supports, improving access to childcare, meeting housing needs, and enriching data collection for better decision making" could improve college outcomes for single-parent students (p. 2). Such changes would likely improve college/workforce training outcomes for the broader group of low-income parents as well.

Major Challenges and Opportunities

While the case for dual-generation investment strategies is becoming clear, numerous challenges lie ahead. Fortunately, even in the difficult political and budgetary environment that exists in Washington and many states, there are noteworthy opportunities as well. This section examines both sides and assesses the prospects for addressing them. These challenges and opportunities have often been documented in the literature on policy and program implementation more broadly; they have also been experienced directly in the process of implementing dual-generation programs (see Glover et al., 2010).

Challenges

Challenges confronting the implementation of dual-generation strategies range from high-level policy conflicts and resource shortfalls to day-to-day scheduling problems. Some will be more difficult to address than others.

Policy and Program Inertia. First on the list of challenges is a problem that arises with the introduction of any new strategy or approach: inertia. Policymakers and program administrators in education, workforce development and child development have years of experience dealing with their issues in certain ways. The mindset in education and workforce development is that children are costly barriers to effective parental participation in their services and thus should be addressed in the least expensive way possible given limited funding. To the extent that parents can juggle their schedules so as to avoid needing child care or arrange for friends or family members to fill the need at zero cost, so much the better. Providing and paying for childcare is seen as a last-resort intervention. In fact, many local workforce programs choose not to pay for childcare and related support services and tend to target population groups who have fewer barriers to participation. The concept of children's simultaneous development as an option rarely if ever enters the equation.

Similarly, while early childhood educators give considerable thought to the parents of the children they are educating, it is mainly in the form of parental engagement, including parents-as-teachers, and other similar approaches. Head Start, Early Head Start and pre-K staff generally have their hands full serving the modest share of applicants they can afford to serve in traditional ways without adding to their burdens by trying to enroll parents in education or training interventions and dealing with the added family stresses that might result. While these programs also contract with other organizations to provide family and child support service workers in addition to direct early childhood education, these workers tend to focus on meeting their caseload's immediate needs that may interfere with a child's learning, not the long-term economic success of the family as a whole.

Addressing the challenge of inertia calls for federal, state and philanthropic efforts to educate and build capacity for understanding why and how dual-generation strategies can be implemented, and potential near- and long-term effects on children and their parents, as well as on taxpayers and society as a whole.

Differing Provider Cultures and 'Baggage'. The inertia described above may be explained in part by differences in provider cultures in the various systems as well as substantial 'baggage' left in the wake of federal and state welfare and workforce reforms since the mid-1990s.

On the one hand, early childhood providers might be characterized as nurturing and supportive organizations with staff reflecting those values. In addition to teachers, social workers and case managers tend to fill many of the staff positions in the system. Postsecondary education and training programs, on the other hand, deal mostly with adults and thus tend to be more concerned with pushing their students/participants to make good progress and succeed in the labor market. More and more, such programs are responding to increasingly difficult market conditions by stressing education and training for occupations with growth potential.

In the mid-1990s, federal and state policy for welfare and workforce development shifted sharply in favor of 'work-first' and against substantive investments in education and skills training. Welfare recipients and workforce participants were advised to "get a job, get a better job, get a career," and, despite claims to the contrary (e.g., Grubb et al., 1999; Barnow and King, 1999; Brown, 1997; and Smith et al., 2002), early evidence from welfare reform experiments seemed to lend support this approach (e.g., Hamilton, 2002). For welfare recipients, participation in such programs was mandatory. The early childhood community grew increasingly skeptical of efforts to engage parents in welfare and workforce services as a result, sensing that such efforts were not doing much to contribute to family economic success or to support services for their children. While more recent views on the value of education and training investments are far more sanguine (see Glover and King, 2010; King and Heinrich, 2011; and Ridley and Kenefick, 2011) and the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009 strongly encouraged WIA, Trade Adjustment Assistance and other programs to give greater emphasis to skills training and requisite support services (Hobbie et al., 2011), considerable 'baggage' remains.

Addressing cultural differences between these systems and the leftover 'baggage' will require efforts to educate and build capacity on both ends.

Absence of High-level Policy Coordination. A closely related challenge is that there is an almost complete lack of policy coordination across the systems serving adults and children. Postsecondary education and workforce programs explicitly focus on improving the lot of adults through improved educational achievement, employment, careers and earnings, while early childhood education programs focus on developmental outcomes for children. In Congress, different authorizing committees have purview over policies and programs dealing with adult and children, and executive responsibility for them spans the Departments of Agriculture, Education, Health and Human Services, and Labor. State policy structures typically mirror this lack of coordination. While a number of programs mandate state-level coordinating committees, they mainly focus on adult *or* children's programs separately.

Conflicting Goals and Performance Expectations. Early childhood programs are focused on improving child development outcomes, while human capital efforts on behalf of (parenting) adults seek to improve their education, skills and earnings outcomes with little regard for or mention of their children. Shared goals and performance expectations are simply not evident. Some illustrations are worth noting.

Congress in 2007 mandated a revision of Head Start Program Performance Standards. As documented in *Improving School Readiness & Promoting Long-Term Success: The Head Start Roadmap to Excellence* (US Department of Health and Human Services, 2010), the Office of Head Start's quality initiative seeks to "... improve the extent to which classroom activities ... promote increased vocabulary, early math skills, problem solving abilities, and social skills so that children start kindergarten ready, and continue to learn. And ... promote changes that integrate Head Start into a continuum of high-quality early care and education spanning from birth to age eight" (p. 1). Head Start and Early Head Start standards cover health, education, family involvement, and other Head Start services, as well as other areas. In terms of family involvement, Head Start standards "... will increase the emphasis on family literacy because research shows that having literate parents that sing, read aloud, and tell and retell stories to their children can have a large impact on the child's vocabulary and reading readiness" (p. 3). While local programs often go beyond what is required in terms of parental engagement, there appear to be no federal requirements for parents to develop their *own* education and skill levels as a means to reinforcing their child's developmental outcomes.

Moreover, the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF), which is authorized by the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) Act and the Social Security Act, assists low-income families in obtaining care for their children so they can either work or attend training/education (USHHS/ACF, CCDF Fact Sheet, 2011). Parents either make use of certificates (i.e., vouchers) or providers that have been contracted for services. The program also seeks to improve the quality of childcare and promotes coordination among early childhood development and afterschool programs. CCDF funding allows states to serve families through a single, integrated childcare subsidy program under CCDBG rules, coordinating their CCDF-funded efforts with Head Start, pre-K and other early childhood programs. States can also transfer a portion of their TANF dollars to CCDF or spend TANF funds directly for childcare.

Two CCDF Priority Goals adopted by USHHS address the importance of early investments in young children both to improve child outcomes and well-being and to provide support for families, as follows:

- Increase the number of low-income children receiving support for access to high quality early care and education settings through the CCDF.
- Expand the number of states with Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS) that meet high quality benchmarks for child care and other early childhood programs developed by HHS in coordination with the Department of Education.

In contrast, on the adult side,⁷ states are allowed to use their TANF block grant funds to: “(1) provide assistance to needy families so that children may be cared for in their own homes or in the homes of relatives; (2) end the dependence of needy parents on government benefits by promoting job preparation, work, and marriage; (3) prevent and reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies and establish annual numerical goals for preventing and reducing the incidence of these pregnancies; and (4) encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families” (Schott, 2011).

The Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998 is the primary federal workforce development program serving adults, dislocated workers and youth in the United States. As stated in Section 106, its purpose is “to provide workforce investment activities ... that increase the employment, retention, and earnings of participants, and increase occupational skill attainment by participants, and, as a result, improve the quality of the workforce, reduce welfare dependency, and enhance the productivity and competitiveness of the Nation.” Since 2000, four national performance standards have been established for adults served by WIA programs:

- Entered employment rate (1st quarter post-exit)
- Employment retention rate (2nd and 3rd quarters post-exit)
- Increased earnings (2nd and 3rd quarters prior to 2nd and 3rd quarters post)
- Credential attainment (employed 1st quarter post and credential attained by 3rd quarter post-exit)

Thus, there are few if any explicit connections between the goals and performance expectations of mainstream programs serving children and parents. Moreover, programs operate with limited and declining budgets in recent years—2009-2010 ARRA funding notwithstanding. Given differing performance expectations, program administrators could hardly be expected to devote scarce time and resources to creating developmental opportunities for the “other” participant – parent or child - without being encouraged or incentivized to do so. Addressing the disconnect between these program goals and expectations is more complicated than simply tweaking the goal statements and associated performance measures and standards. It would likely require revisiting the available budgets and incentive mechanisms as well.

Differing Structures and Loci of Decision-making. Another key line of demarcation between developmental programs serving children and those serving their parents is that the actors receiving the funding and actually making program and service delivery decisions are markedly different. Moreover, there is substantial variation among states and local areas in the nature of these operating structures. Such variation can create serious barriers to more collaborative action engaging both generations.

⁷ An excellent summary of many of the key adult programs (including WIA, TAA, Pell and TANF), their funding, structures and performance requirements can be found in National Skills Coalition (2011).

Head Start and Early Head Start program funding generally flows from the federal government (USHHS) directly to local program operators, in many instances, community action agencies, but also units of local government. In sharp contrast, funding for WIA, TANF and SNAP work programs flows to the states, which then allocate it with a variety of requirements to widely varying local structures. In some states (e.g., Florida, Michigan, Texas, Utah), many workforce and some education funding streams are consolidated into a single agency at the state level and then essentially “blocked” to local workforce investment boards, or WIBs (see Barnow and King, 2005). In a few states (i.e., Texas, Utah), CCDF program funds are also packaged with workforce funding streams and sent down to the local WIBs. Policy control over and the types of policies implemented with CCDBG funds vary widely by state and local area (see Cabrera et al., 2006; and Schexnayder and Lein, 2008).

This type of structural variation creates real challenges for implementing dual-generation strategies, but it can also create opportunities as is noted later. Addressing the structural challenges may require the creation of new mechanisms to encourage policy and program coordination, along the lines of the more comprehensive “human investment coordinating councils” that were created in the late 1980s and early 1990s.⁸ It could also include encouraging states to implement more integrated policy and program structures for investment in families via the use of model legislation from the National Commission on State Legislatures⁹ or well crafted case studies.

Varying Funding Mechanisms. A related challenge stems from the way federal and state funds for programs serving children and parents are allocated. Most, though certainly not all, education, workforce development and related funding flows by legislatively determined formulas to lower program levels for proscribed uses.¹⁰ WIA and SNAP E&T funds are formula-based and must be used for activities and services detailed in federal law. Governors have much more discretion over how TANF block grant funds may be used. Pell Grant funding is provided to individual grantees through processes administered by hundreds of institutions of higher education across the country.

Unlike adult education and workforce program funding, Head Start and Early Head Start funds tend to be awarded annually on a competitive basis and flow directly to providers around the country. Such funds come with a specific set of activities and services that must be provided to the children they serve under tightly specified conditions as alluded to under the discussion on performance expectations. In fact, the “competitive” aspect of the funding process for these funds has been questioned in recent years in that most organizations tend to receive their funding year after year with few new providers added to the mix.

⁸ A number of states created such councils during this period, leading the Congress to encourage their creation nationally under the 1992 Amendments to the Job Training Partnership Act, which was ultimately replaced by WIA in 1998.

⁹ See <http://www.ncsl.org/> for more information.

¹⁰ The National Skills Coalition (2011) succinctly summarizes these mechanisms and funding flows for the major adult programs.

The variation in funding mechanisms for the various adult and child programs would need to be addressed via legislative changes in all likelihood.

Resource Limitations. Clearly, one of the greatest challenges is that resources for both early education and job training/postsecondary education are likely to be severely strained for the foreseeable future at all levels. ARRA stimulus appropriations temporarily reversed some of the recent funding declines that programs for adults and children had been experiencing, but the effects were very short term in nature (Hobbie et al., 2011). It is widely expected that declining resources for most, if not all, of these programs will be the reality for the next several years at least (King and Heinrich, 2011). A recent Center for American Progress (CAP) report details Fiscal Year 2011 cuts in workforce program funding (Steigleder and Soares, 2011), including a 70% cut in WIA state discretionary funding. While the CAP report views the disproportionate cuts to WIA state discretionary funds as a positive in a generally dismal funding picture, states have often used such funding to support innovative training and related initiatives that were unlikely to be funded with regular WIA formula allocations. Moreover, programs are highly reluctant to focus their efforts on strategies serving the few as would be the case with a dual-generation initiative featuring high-quality child and parent services; they are much more likely to “spread the services” in lean times, regardless of the potential future benefits resulting from more intensive services.

How dual-generation strategies might be initiated and supported in an even more stringent fiscal environment down the road is an open question. Investing in two generations simultaneously still makes sense, even in a resource-poor environment, but it will take sustained efforts to do so.

Conflicting Schedules. As noted above, a serious challenge to implementing dual-generation strategies is that Head Start, Early Head Start and Pre-K programs tend to be part-year, part-day programs, while parents enrolling in investment opportunities such as adult education, job training and postsecondary education are often required to attend year-round and on a full-day (and sometimes night) schedule. Arranging for quality wrap-around childcare at convenient locations often becomes an issue. This problem surfaced early in the implementation of the CareerAdvance® program in Tulsa (see Glover et al., 2010). It is a particularly difficult challenge for single mothers without other family supports and for those being trained in healthcare occupations (e.g., nursing) that require practicums that may start quite early in the morning and finish early in the evening. There are a number of possible scheduling work-arounds, but they remain as challenges to dual-generation strategies.

Opportunities

The opportunities for pursuing dual-generation investment strategies also come in various sizes and shapes, ranging from a commitment to evidence-based policymaking to the availability of flexible sources of funding to support them.

Commitment to Evidence-based Policymaking and Program Design. The growing commitment to evidence-based policymaking and program design itself presents an opportunity for moving toward dual-generation investment strategies. Evaluation research clearly points to the critical role of family economic success and stability to outcomes for young children (e.g., Duncan and Magnuson, 2011; Yoshikawa et al., 2006; Sommer et al., in press). Moreover, rigorous evaluation studies now demonstrate substantial earnings impacts over time for participants in sectoral training programs (e.g., Maguire et al., 2010; Smith et al., 2011) as well as adult workforce programs more generally (see Heinrich et al., 2008; Hollenbeck et al., 2005; King and Heinrich, 2011; Magnuson, 2007; and Ridley and Kenefick, 2011).¹¹ Many of the participants in these adult workforce programs have been parents, although it is not clear to what extent their children were being served in quality early childhood education programs at the same time they were enrolled. Based on 2010-2011 national Head Start Program Information Report data, in more than 63,000 two-parent households served by the program, one or both parents were enrolled in school or training, while more than 89,000 single parents were enrolled in school or training (USHHS, 2011). The next step is translating those separate findings for children and their parents into policy and program initiatives like Tulsa's CareerAdvance® Project that serve both.

Federal Legislative Reauthorizations. Several key Federal programs for adults and children have not yet been reauthorized. These programs include: the Workforce Investment Act, which has been operating under a Continuing Resolution since 2003, and the Child Care and Development Fund, which has been extended since 2007. The Higher Education Act was eventually reauthorized in 2008 after a five-year delay. While Congressional action may remain elusive, the fact that reauthorization in final form has yet to occur suggests that it still may be possible to incorporate provisions that would incentivize and support dual-generation strategies either on a pilot or an ongoing basis. Such provisions should be attractive to both Democrats and Republicans if evidence suggests they have the potential to produce positive results that last for families.

Sources of Flexible Funding. While funding from traditional Federal sources is likely to be quite limited for the foreseeable future under most scenarios, other potential sources exist, some of which offer considerable flexibility. First, TANF funds for recipients and potential recipients of welfare can be deployed by states in ways that are far more flexible and expansive than most Federal funds. With guidance from USHHS and other groups, it may be that dual-generation strategies can be incorporated into state plans going forward.

Second, SNAP programs also can be used for an array of services for low-income adults. Moreover, there is an important but under used option for SNAP funds. As described in Jablow (2007), when state SNAP E&T plans include appropriate provisions explicitly alluding to accessing these 50/50 matching funds, they can receive millions in additional Federal funding on a cost-reimbursement basis for

¹¹ Earnings impacts for dislocated workers and youth served by these programs have not been as positive.

providing allowable services to eligible SNAP recipients. These funds are in addition to their regular Federal SNAP E&T allocations. States began taking advantage of this provision in the mid-2000s.

Third, in 2011, Congress established the Workforce Innovation Fund through cuts to regular WIA, Wagner-Peyser, Adult Education and other programs.¹² The WIF is funded at \$120 million in FY 2011 and the President's proposed budget for FY 2012 augments that funding through further cuts to these programs. Whether cuts to formula funds for workforce and education programs is the appropriate strategy given the current labor market environment or not, depending on how it's structured, WIF may allow states to pursue innovative approaches such as dual-generation strategies in the future.

Fourth, many states and some local areas also have their own funds dedicated to supporting education and workforce services for economically disadvantaged and other population groups. The most common of these forty or so state workforce development funds are supported either by reduced UI taxes—e.g., California's Employment and Training Panel, which was first established in 1983—or by state general revenues—e.g., Texas' Skills Development Fund, Enterprise Fund and Jobs and Education for Texans Fund. A far smaller set of local areas (e.g., Austin, Baltimore) have established their own local education and workforce funding streams, which are funded by local tax revenues. Rules for these state and local efforts not surprisingly vary widely, but in many cases they tend to operate without the sometimes cumbersome operating rules and performance standards that accompany mainline Federal programs like WIA.

Supportive State Policy Structures. A significant but under-appreciated opportunity lies in the fact that a growing number of states have policy structures—at the state and local level—that should be supportive of adopting more systemic approaches to serving parents and children through dual-generation strategies. Over the past two decades, states like Florida, Texas, Utah, Washington and others have moved toward more comprehensive policy frameworks encompassing major workforce development and child care programs, which create an opportunity for designing and implementing such approaches. Some examples are illustrative.

Utah has a distinctive history of more comprehensive policymaking in workforce and family policy that dates at least to the early 1970s when it opted to become one of a dozen or so states piloting comprehensive “manpower” policies. In Utah, people walking into one-stop centers are served by staff who can assist them with a full range of services ranging from accessing TANF and SNAP benefits to child care (e.g., CCDF), educational aid (e.g., Pell grants, FAFSA), workforce services under WIA, TANF and many other funding streams (see King and O'Shea, 2004). These state employees are not identified by the program paying for their salaries, but instead are functionally organized into Eligibility, Financial Assistance, and Workforce

¹² The idea for the Workforce Innovation Fund appears to have evolved from a proposal made by Georgetown University economics professor Harry Holzer (2007) as part of the Brookings Institution's Hamilton Project.

Services staff. Utah tends to rotate staff through the various functions, including time as Front Desk workers. Utah's system also features strong employer connections. Utah's policy framework would lend itself readily to adopting and implementing dual-generation strategies.

The Texas policy framework is not quite as far-reaching as Utah's, but it has many of the same features. Texas began moving toward a more systemic approach in 1993 with bipartisan support, ultimately passing legislation in June 1995 that placed most major workforce and related funding streams under a single agency, the Texas Workforce Commission, and over time devolved responsibility for these same programs to local workforce boards across the state (O'Shea and King, 2004). Programs included in this integrated system include WIA (Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth programs), Employment Services, Trade Adjustment Assistance, SNAP E&T, TANF work programs, child care (CCDF) and several other programs. Public education, postsecondary education and most adult education programs remain with the two state education agencies, the Texas Education Agency and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

The fact that these and other states—including Oregon, Washington, and Wisconsin, among others—operate within more comprehensive human investment frameworks does not indicate that they would be willing to implement dual-generation strategies. In fact, some of these states rank low on various measures for children and families. For example, the latest Kids Count® report ranks Florida and Texas 35th and 36th overall on their composite index of child well-being; Utah (7th), Wisconsin (12th) and Washington (13th) are ranked much higher (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2011, p. 41). Rather it suggests that these states have levers at their disposal that would make it easier to do so if there is concerted national or regional push in this direction.

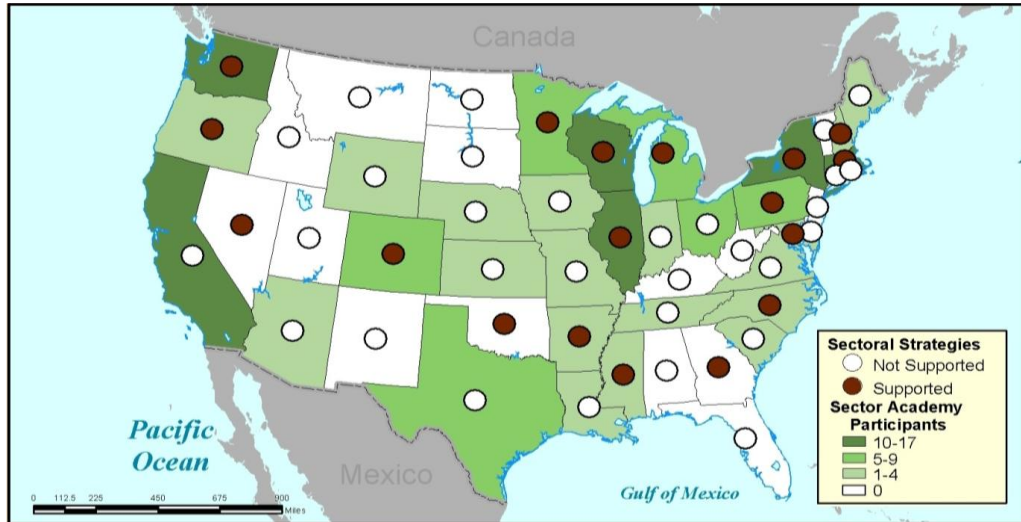
One push is a growing interest and emphasis on sector-based training. The map below illustrates opportunities for engaging workforce systems in a dual-generation strategy based on the presence of sectoral workforce initiatives (Figure 4). States that have participated in the State Sector Strategies¹³ initiative promoted by the National Governors' Association, the National Network of Sector Partners, and the Corporation for a Skilled Workforce are noted by a dot. The number of programs from each state that has participated in the Aspen Institute's Sector Skills Academy¹⁴ is highlighted by shading.¹⁵

¹³ More information on State Sector Strategies available at: <http://www.sectorstrategies.org/>

¹⁴ More information on the Sector Skills Academy available at: <http://www.sectorskillsacademy.org/>

¹⁵ Some of the states shown as not supporting sector strategies (e.g., Texas) have had their own version of sector or cluster strategies supported at the state level.

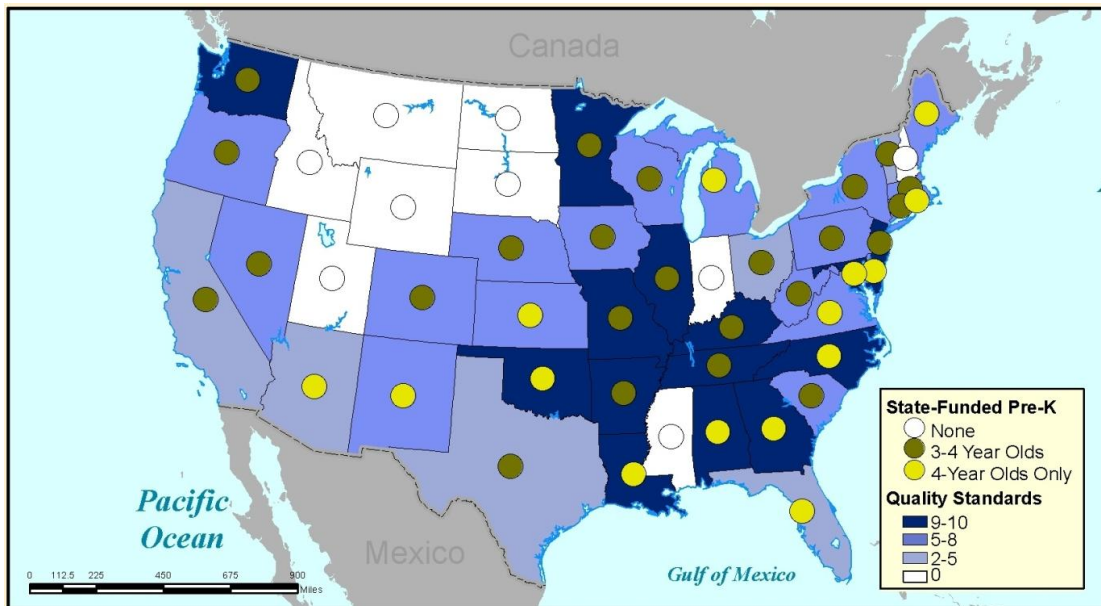
Figure 4. Sectoral Workforce Program Interest, by State



Sources: Sector Skills Academy Fellows <http://www.sectorskillsacademy.org/FellowsNEW.html>; Insight Center for Community Economic Development: <http://www.insightccd.org/programs/workforce/accelerating-state-adoption-of-sector-strategies.html>

Another push may come from the growth in state-supported Pre-Kindergarten programs and the number of states that are meeting quality standards. State programs vary widely, with some programs serving both 3- and 4-year olds, while others serve just 4-year olds. The National Institute for Early Education Research measures each state program against ten quality standards, which are considered the minimum criteria for ensuring quality preschool programs. These quality standards evaluate whether a state requires: established comprehensive early learning standards; the classroom teacher must have a bachelor's degree; the teacher must have a specialization in preschool education; assistant teachers must have a child development associate certificate or its equivalent; programs provide at least fifteen hours of inservice training per year; a class size of twenty or fewer students; staff-child ratio of 1:10 or better; vision, hearing, and health screenings along with at least one other support service; programs provide at least one meal per day; and site visits to ensure compliance (Barnett et al., 2010). The map below (Figure 5) identifies which states offer state-funded Pre-K and the number of quality standards each state meets.

Figure 5. State-Funded Pre-Kindergarten Availability and Quality, by State



Source: Barnett et al., (2010). *The State of Preschool 2010*.

Note: For states with multiple state-funded Pre-K programs, only the program meeting the highest number of quality standards is shown.

Innovative Local Dual-Generation Initiatives. As several recent survey reports have demonstrated, there are growing numbers of innovative initiatives, which are either dual-generation or hold promise as dual-generation programs. Existing dual-generation initiatives range from postsecondary education/early childhood to family engagement/ early childhood to sectoral training/early childhood. Among these are the following:

- *The Annie E. Casey Foundation’s Civic Sites* in Atlanta, Baltimore and New Haven exhibit dual-generation strategies to varying degrees and enjoy the broader support of the foundation’s long-standing family economic success initiative. For more information, visit www.aecf.org/MajorInitiatives/CivicSites.
- *The Jeremiah Project* is relatively new on the national scene but began operating in Minneapolis in 1998 and St. Paul in 2007 as a place-based strategy helping single mothers living in housing units pursue postsecondary education while their children receive high-quality care. Jeremiah, which is now also in Austin, TX and Fargo, ND, plans to expand to twelve cities by 2020. More information is available at: www.jeremiahprogram.org.
- *Tulsa’s CareerAdvance® Initiative* began as a pilot project featuring sectoral job training in healthcare for the parents of Head Start and Early Head Start children in 2009-2010 with funding from the George Kaiser Family Foundation and is now expanding to scale with support from a 5-year Health Professions Opportunities Grant (HPOG) from USHHS/ACF. Appendix A provides additional detail on this initiative, which appears to be the only

program focusing on sectoral skills training plus early childhood education in the nation. For more information, visit:
www.captc.org/financialServices/CareerAdvance.php.

The above are a few of the existing dual-generation strategy initiatives. However, there are also high-quality early childhood education and postsecondary education or workforce training projects around the country that have the interest and potential to become dual-generation efforts. In some communities, very high-quality early childhood education *and* postsecondary education/workforce programs already exist, but the direct connections between the two have not yet been made. For example, Austin has a number of quality early education providers (e.g., AVANCE, Open Door Preschool), innovative K-3rd initiatives in the Austin school district, and a leading edge sectoral training program (Capital IDEA with Austin Community College). San Antonio is similarly situated with AVANCE, Project QUEST and others.

In other communities, it would be possible to build out from an innovative early childhood program working with a local community college, workforce board or community based organization to design and launch a related education or training initiative for the parents of the children being served. This describes the origins of Tulsa's CareerAdvance® Initiative (see Glover et al. 2010). Alternatively, it would be possible to approach the creation of dual-generation strategies from the other direction, engaging high-quality early childhood education providers to serve the children of parents enrolling in quality postsecondary education and/or training.

Federal and Philanthropic Interest. The interest in dual-generation strategies from Federal agencies—especially HHS and Education—and an array of philanthropic institutions appears to be strong and growing. In part this interest may stem from experience with and rigorous evidence emerging from earlier initiatives focusing on comprehensive services for families and family economic success, including the Family Assets for Independence in Minnesota (Sawyer, 2009), Project New Hope in Milwaukee (Yoshikawa et al. 2006, Duncan et al., 2007), and the Earnings Supplement Projects in the U.S. and Canada (MDRC, 2011). Research using new longitudinal data sets to examine influences on children's development (e.g., Kalil and Crosnoe, 2010) may also be important in explaining this interest. Translating interest into an ongoing commitment through supportive policies and programs and additional funding will be important.

While the challenges to implementing dual-generation strategies are substantial, on balance, the opportunities may outweigh them. Even in a resource-challenged environment with programs overly fragmented, it should be possible to move forward with a more systemic approach to making human capital investments simultaneously in children and their parents in ways that reinforce near- and longer-term learning and earning impacts. The next section suggests the outlines of a dual-generation strategy agenda, focusing on policies, programs and research.

Outlining a Dual-Generation Strategy Agenda

A dual-generation investment strategy agenda needs to encompass at least three major elements: policy, program and research. What follow are the outlines of such an agenda. Fleshing out a full agenda for each of these will require additional work.

Policy Elements

Key policy elements for a dual-generation investment agenda include a mix of Federal and State action at the very least.

Supportive Federal Policy & Leadership. Among Federal policy actions needed to foster dual-generation investment strategies are:

- More closely aligning performance goals and expectations between postsecondary and workforce programs on the one hand and early childhood/Pre-K efforts on the other;
- Bolstering Federal support for a skills agenda and deemphasizing ‘work-first’ as an approach;
- Crafting policy approaches such as amendments to Pell Grant and family loan provisions that encourage parents of young children to attend postsecondary education;
- Instituting performance incentives to reward states and local program operators for adopting policies and implementing programs that have significant dual-generation features;
- Increasing funding, in particular funding that is more flexible, that is both adequate to support new dual-generation investment strategies;
- Developing and providing technical assistance/education materials for states and local program operators describing key elements of dual-generation investment strategies, specific models that can be emulated, the benefits and costs associated with such strategies and other pertinent information; and
- Designing and launching a capacity-building initiative for dual-generation investment strategies, possibly in tandem with states and leading foundations to foster the spread of such strategies.

Supportive State Policy & Leadership. A similar list of actions applies at the state level, but is likely to be relevant for the handful of states who may be expected to play a leadership role in pressing for dual-generation investment strategies.

Program Elements

Key program elements in a dual-generation strategy include the following:

- Coordinated, quality early childhood development, ranging from Early Head Start, Head Start and Pre-K up through 3rd grade;
- Accessible, affordable postsecondary education, most likely through community and technical colleges;
- Sectoral skills training;
- Workforce intermediaries;
- Essential support services, including career coaches, peer supports, coordinated/quality childcare;

- Conditional cash (or relevant in-kind) support, both to address earnings foregone while enrolled in education or skills training as well as to provide the resources that have been shown to make a significant difference to the outcomes for young children (see Duncan and Magnuson, 2011);
- Asset development; and
- Other support services, especially including career coaching, peer supports and coordinated quality childcare services before and after hours to support effective parental participation in education and/or training.

Research Elements

Possible elements for a dual-generation research agenda include the following among others:

- Ongoing implementation studies in varying contexts to identify added challenges and necessary and sufficient conditions for operating dual-generation program strategies;
- Longitudinal qualitative and quantitative studies to better understand the mechanisms supporting dual-generation strategies and to document their joint outcomes and impacts; and
- Long-term analysis of the benefits and costs of dual-generation v. single-generation strategies in varying operating environments.

Next Steps

In addition to holding additional “conversations” with Federal and state policymakers and practitioners to flesh out understanding of and commitment to dual-generation strategies, possible approaches include:

- NGA State Academy process with states and local areas recruited for team participation supported by “faculty”, followed by expanded policy and program implementation with funding from Federal agencies and foundations; or
- Direct program demonstrations on the ground with an overall project manager, an evaluator and funding from Federal and State agencies and foundations.

Either approach should be coupled with investment in an expanded network of dual-generation researchers.

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Appendix A. CareerAdvance® in Tulsa:

Linking High-Quality Early Childhood Education with High-Quality Parent Training in a Dual-Generation Approach

CareerAdvance® was begun in Tulsa in 2009 as the parent training portion of a dual-generation strategy to end the cycle of poverty in families. The driving theory of change behind CareerAdvance® is that family economic success will protect and enhance gains made through high quality early childhood programs even after children transition into the public school system. The program is operated by the Community Action Project of Tulsa County (CAP), an antipoverty agency with a successful record in growing pilot programs into effective large-scale initiatives. CAP offers a variety of financial services, including a large program of tax preparation assistance serving more than 17,000 households, screening for public benefits and scholarships, asset development initiatives, money-management and protection from predatory lenders, and a first-time homebuyers program.

CAP -- the largest provider of Head Start/Early Head Start in Tulsa -- already operated a high quality child development program for nearly 2,000 children up to age 5, with family support and training in parenting provided by Child and Family Services. CareerAdvance® added a sectoral workforce development program targeting jobs in healthcare -- a growing industry sector in Tulsa-- with a ladder of education, training, and certifications in selected occupations offering opportunities for advancement and family-supporting income with fringe benefits.

The program design features a stackable series of training in nursing from Certified Registered Nurse Aide (CNA) through Registered Nurse (RN). The ladder allows individuals to stop-out (either temporarily or permanently) at multiple points along the pathway with an industry-recognized credential. The program design includes working closely with employers in the healthcare industry sector to fill their needs; starting the training in cohorts; fostering peer mentoring and support through facilitated weekly peer meetings of participants; incentives for good performance; payment of tuition, books, testing fees, vaccinations, and other school-related expenses; and supportive services including selective tutoring as needed, assistance with transportation, and school-related childcare to overcome barriers and obstacles to success.

CareerAdvance® works with an expert on Tulsa Healthcare, who regularly interacts with industry officials, closely monitors labor market developments in Tulsa, guides participants to the better employers, and arranges partnerships between CareerAdvance® and individual healthcare employers.

CareerAdvance® begins with training for a Certified Nurses Aide (CNA) at Tulsa Community College. This offers the advantage of making participants eligible to take the Oklahoma CNA assessment and receive a certification after the first five weeks of training. It also leads into a continuing path of training in CNA Levels II and III that provides certification by Tulsa Community College as a Geriatric

Technician, which also entitles recipients to participate in graduation ceremonies at the college. The CNA sequence of courses provides a meaningful start with a high rate of success, thereby building skills along with a sense of achievement and confidence among participants, who may have entered training with doubts about their abilities to succeed. Weekly peer support meetings facilitated by a Career Coach foster a positive team environment, in which participants help and encourage one another.

CareerAdvance® was started with funding from the George Kaiser Family Foundation and is now being supported through the Health Professional Opportunities Grant program at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.¹⁶ From its beginning as a small demonstration program at two Head Start learning centers, the program has expanded eligibility to low-income parents across a citywide network of early childhood learning centers within two years, now enrolling applicants at a rate of 60 per year split between nursing and Health Information Technology. Nearly all are low-income mothers, most of whom are single parents with limited educational and workforce experience in families living in poverty.

At this point, nearly every participant has earned a CNA certification from the state of Oklahoma. The most advanced student has achieved certification as a Licensed Practical Nurse and is currently taking general college-level courses to fulfill requirements for admission to the Associate Degree Registered Nursing Program (RN) at Tulsa Community College. Six others are close behind her. In addition, six participants passed the all GED tests and received GED certification while concurrently studying for CNA certification.

CareerAdvance® participants and a matched comparison group of CAP parents are currently being interviewed for a multi-year evaluation undertaken by the Institute for Policy Research at Northwestern University and the Ray Marshall Center at the University of Texas at Austin. Initial and follow-up interviews are investigating how participation in the program impacts family life. The evaluation covers both implementation and outcomes of CareerAdvance®. Program records track participant progress in education and training. Analysis of state agency administrative records will document impacts on earnings and use of public assistance programs. In addition, the performance of CareerAdvance® children enrolled in the early childhood program are also being measured on the Bracken test as part of the evaluation.

¹⁶ This initiative is supported the George Kaiser Family Foundation and by Grant # 90FX00100 from the Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health & Human Services (HHS).