The Effects of a Two-Generation Education Intervention on Low-Income Parents and Their Young Children in Head Start

Teresa Eckrich Sommer
Research Associate Professor
Institute for Policy Research, Northwestern University

Redesign for Whole Families Summit
Humphrey School of Public Affairs, Minneapolis, MN
May 14 & 15, 2018
RESEARCH PARTNERS

- Lindsay Chase-Lansdale, Terri Sabol  
  *Northwestern University*
- Jeanne Brooks-Gunn  
  *Columbia University*
- Hirokazu Yoshikawa  
  *New York University*
- Christopher King  
  *University of Texas Austin*
- Amanda Morris  
  *Oklahoma State University - Tulsa*
PROGRAM & POLICY PARTNERSHIPS
WHAT MOTIVATES TWO-GENERATION INVESTMENTS?

(WHAT’S THE PROBLEM?)
67% of low income children have parents with a high school degree or less.
DISPARITIES IN COLLEGE DEGREE ATTAINMENT BASED ON FAMILY INCOME

Percentage of Adults with College Degree

Family Income Quintile

- Bottom: 11%
- Second: 20%
- Middle: 25%
- Fourth: 38%
- Top: 53%
- All adults: 29%

Isaacs et al., 2008; PSID data from 2005
THEORY AND EVIDENCE BEHIND TWO-GENERATION PROGRAMS

(WHAT’S BEEN DONE ABOUT THIS PROBLEM?)
TWO-GENERATION HUMAN CAPITAL PROGRAMS

- Intentionally link child and parent programs in the same family
  - Education and job training for parents
  - Early childhood education (e.g. Head Start) for young children

- Quality and intensity for each generation
TWO-GENERATION EDUCATION PROGRAMS

1.0 Programs

Child
- Early childhood education centers
- Child care of variable quality

Parent
- GED, ESL
- Some AA degrees
- Job training

2.0 Programs

Child & Parent
- High quality early childhood education
- Pre-K to 3rd grade programs
- AA and BA degrees
- Career Pathway Certification
- Employers

Chase-Lansdale & Brooks-Gunn, 2014
TWO-GENERATION PROGRAMS

- Not a new idea (Head Start 1965) but renewed interest, especially in program quality and intensity

- Empirical evidence lags behind practice and policy

- The jury is still out; few 2.0 evaluations
MODEL TWO-GENERATION PROGRAM 2.0

CAREERADVANCE®
COMMUNITY ACTION PROJECT OF TULSA COUNTY, OKLAHOMA
CAREERADVANCE®
KEY INNOVATIVE ELEMENTS

Stackable training

Tuition-free courses at community colleges

Sector-based

Employment supports

Coaching and peer cohorts

Incentives and in-kind assistance
THEORY OF CHANGE AND EVALUATION

Two-Generation Program
Head Start
Child

Parent
Education/Workforce Development

Short-Term Outcomes
Attendance

Education and employment
Psychological well being
Career identity

Mid-Term Outcomes
School readiness
Elementary school performance

Short-term outcomes + Income + Parenting/Routines
THEORY OF CHANGE AND EVALUATION

Long-Term Outcomes

- High school graduation
- Postsecondary attainment
- High expectations and future orientation

Stable career
Family-supporting wage
Greater life stability
Better-functioning family system

Two-Generation Program
- Head Start
- Education/Workforce Development

Child
Parent
Our study of CareerAdvance®

- Child
  - Two-Generation Program
    - Head Start
  - Education/Workforce Development

- Parent

One year later
- Attendance
- Education and employment
- Psychological well being
- Career identity

2-3 years later
- School readiness
- Elementary school performance
- Short-term outcomes
  + Income
  + Parenting/Routines
CAREERADVANCE® PROMOTES EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

- Comparison Group
- CareerAdvance® Group

***

0.61

0.04
CAREERADVANCE® LEADS TO CAREER EMPLOYMENT

Employed full-time
- Comparison Group: 0.40
- CareerAdvance® Group: 0.35

Employed in healthcare
- Comparison Group: 0.27
- CareerAdvance® Group: 0.51

***
CAREERADVANCE® DOES NOT YET INCREASE OR DECREASE EARNINGS

- No increase or decrease in earnings
- Average incentives in first year ($1,811) may have offset reduced earnings
CAREERADVANCE® IMPROVES PARENT PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING

![Effect Size Bar Chart]

- Career Identity: 0.21
- Self-efficacy: 0.29
- Optimism: 0.30

* Significant at the 0.05 level
** Significant at the 0.01 level
CAREERADVANCE® PARTICIPANTS DO NOT HAVE HIGHER STRESS OR DISTRESS

- No increase or decrease in perceived stress or psychological distress
Program leads to a greater reduction® of chronic absenteeism in CareerAdvance® group versus matched comparison (25%)

Children have the most to gain when their parents have the most risk (i.e., high perceived stress and weak career identity)
STUDY RESULTS SUMMARY

- Increases in parent education, employment, and psychological well-being
- No increase or decrease in parent stress/psychological distress or income
- Reduced children’s chronic absenteeism in Head Start
WHY IS CAREERADVANCE® SUCCESSFUL?

(WHAT ARE IMPLICATIONS OF WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNED?)
I like how they’ve made the program fit around the youngest child’s schedule... how they’ve tailored it to fit around those hours, which really would tailor around all school-age children’s hours. So only during clinical times do you have to really worry about before and after care. But for the most part, all of us can still take the kids, kiss them goodbye, do our thing, and then be there to pick them up.
I know if I tried to leave this program, I would have some people on my phone. And that’s the good thing about us being, that’s the one good thing about us being a small group of people. If one of us tried to leave it, oh, we gonna be on that phone quick, ‘Wait a minute what are you doing?’
I took [the GED test] like twice and I could never pass it. And I just felt so dumb that I was like there is no need for me to take the GED test. How hard is it to take the GED test and I keep failing it so I must be dumb. And I just kept feeling that way. I will give up. But my Career Coach and GED instructor, ‘Don’t give up, never give up.’ And I’m not a give upper. I like to challenge myself. And you know they talked and talked to me and ‘just take your time.’ Because I like to rush also. And that was my problem. I want to get it, get it done. So I stayed there for a while and took it the third time and there I went. I passed it. I just had to do it, just take my time.
My son knows at 4 years old that he’s not stopping his education after high school, he’s gonna keep going. And he knows that now, and he’s, you know, I think he’s gonna be much more prepared than I was when I was in high school.
CAREERADVANCE® DRAWS ON PARENTS’ STRENGTHS

- Parents as an asset
  - Harness parents’ motivation on behalf of their children
  - Place the programs where the children are located, safe, and learning
  - Parents and program staff work together to solve problems
Holds great promise but jury is still out, especially for children

- Longitudinal follow-up needed and planned

- Model programs are expensive and need to be scaled-up

- Significant momentum in practice and policy