Growing Together: Family-Centered Two Generation Approaches in New York State

February 2021

NYIC

Executive Summary

As the COVID-19 crisis has made startlingly clear, the success of immigrant parents and their children are inseparably linked. Parents who lack English language literacy and/or digital literacy have been unable to help their children to connect to their classrooms remotely during this crisis, and have struggled to access food, health services, and other necessary support systems. The two generation approach to both education and service delivery focuses on serving families in ways that recognize how parents and their children affect each other. They are uniquely situated to address the need for multilingual educators trained to impart information to non-English speakers, trauma-informed care, and digital literacy support that have become so crucial to addressing the continuing effects of the COVID-19 crisis as well as the preexisting factors that so disadvantaged our immigrant families.

In Spring and Summer of 2019, the NYIC held a series of convenings across New York State to assess the strengths and barriers to a two generation approach to education. These convenings, along with a series of one-on-one interviews with community based providers, yielded an analysis of how the two generation approach is currently being used statewide, what barriers exist around the creation and implementation of two generation programs, and a series of recommendations to support building out these programs in the future.

Through these convenings and interviews, we found six general approaches to two generation work that have proven to be most effective: employing formal and informal feedback measures to plan curriculum, schedules, and address the concerns of program participants; accurately identifying the barriers that keep participants from regular attendance; taking steps to understand the community members they serve, including cultural and religious influences; successfully blending and braiding public and private funding sources to integrate otherwise unrelated programming; internalizing the two generation approach even in programs that serve only one generation at a time; and building a sense of community and investment both within their organization and in the geographical area in which they are located. Programs that utilize these six approaches are most successful at supporting their communities and running successful programs, and have better outcomes for their parents and children.

Organizations also shared the greatest challenges they faced in running programs with a fully two generational approach. In addition to insufficient or restrictive funding issues, of which there are many, programs also struggle with restrictive early childhood and early care requirements, changing populations, a lack of trained or bilingual staff, external pressures like food and housing insecurity that keep students out of classes, issues with data sharing and tracking, and difficulty collaborating with other organizations.

Based on this information, we have come up with three policy recommendations to support immigrant families in a holistic way, while best utilizing the preexisting structures our community based organizations already have:

I. Fund Collaborative Work Among Organizations
- Funding for collaboration allows organizations to share the benefits of a fully two generational model without having to seek significant independent funding to create entirely new programs interorganizationally or renovate physical spaces.

II. Fund the LIFT Model: An Integration Workshop Series
- The LIFT Model is a new, research-driven, locally-based integration workshop series that covers eleven basic topics geared towards supporting parents who are new to New York systems and provides a less time-consuming option for those who cannot currently access a seat in an adult literacy program.

III. Fully Fund the Adult Education and Early Childhood Education and Care Systems
- Bolstering and expanding funding for New York's adult education and early childhood education and care systems would provide the backbone for a truly accessible two generation system for all immigrant families who wish to access it.

The two generation approach is needed now more than ever, as younger students are already being left behind with the move to remote learning and parents are struggling to maintain a safe and stable environment. Community based organizations have the relevant expertise and are primed to create a better, more supportive two generation system for our immigrant families.

Introduction

New York State is home to a vibrant, superdiverse community of immigrant families who seek to thrive in a state known for its opportunities. *Nearly half* of New York State's young children are from immigrant families; 43% of New York's children age 0-8 have at least one parent in the home who speaks a language other than English.[1] There are currently more than 400,000 limited English proficient parents of young children across the state, with a further 21% lacking a high school diploma.[2] These parents strive to integrate into their communities, provide for their families, and support their children as they learn and grow.

In addition to their substantial numbers — immigrants make up around 23% of New York State's population — immigrant families make vital contributions to New York. 33% of the essential workers who continued to support New York State through the worst of the pandemic are immigrants, with immigrants making up a staggering 53% of essential workers in New York City.[3] Not surprisingly given these statistics, immigrant families have been hit especially hard by the ongoing COVID-19 crisis and the economic hardship that has followed it. Their work has been integral to keeping New York afloat, and yet immigrant families have been largely left out of federal financial support, have suffered higher rates of the virus, and have frequently been the last to be informed about changes to the healthcare and school systems due to a lack of in-language communication and an overreliance on digital communications.

> **Nearly half of New York State's young children are from immigrant families**

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1   43% and Growing: Young Children from Immigrant Families in New York and How to Support their Success
2   Dual Language Learners: A Demographic and Policy Profile for New York State
3   New York's Essential Workers: Overlooked, Underpaid, and Indispensable

The two generation approach is a powerful strategy to address these and other challenges. This approach to parent and child education is a proven one that empowers immigrant families to learn together and access key systems like healthcare, while supporting healthy cross-generational interaction and building the tools to allow parents to create better futures for themselves and their children. It is a system that is primed to support our immigrant families as they work to recover from the detrimental effects of the COVID-19 crisis and the anti-immigrant policies that have been instituted over the last four years. Trauma-informed care, digital literacy support, and multilingual educators trained to impart information to non-English speakers are just a few of the valuable services that two generation programs are well-positioned to provide to their immigrant communities to support parents while ensuring that young children receive the education in their earliest years that has been proven to lead to higher financial, health, and education outcomes later in life.

The two generation approach to education and services is not new, though it has been largely underfunded in recent years. It is a particularly promising approach for immigrant families whose unique challenges nearly always implicate multiple generational levels of opportunity. The two generation approach has been proven to help families and children thrive nationally, as it more extensively considers program outcomes for both children and parents and the ways multiple generations within a family interact with and influence each other. It recognizes the basic principle that members of families influence each other, and improvements for one generation will lead to improvements for all generations. A two generation approach can be applied to programs, policies, systems,

and research, and creates a framework for understanding individuals through their interactions with their families and support systems. It is an ideal system to address the unique challenges of this moment.

For the purposes of this report, "two generation" work will include all programs that intentionally address multiple generations within a family. For some organizations, this means a full family literacy program.[4] For many others, it means a one generation program with two generation elements. Examples of these elements may include a referral program to legal, health or other services helping families integrate into their communities, parent engagement in a child care program, or an internal curriculum that includes parent-relevant content. In sum, a two generation approach to programming affirmatively includes some level of support for multiple generations of a family.

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Programs throughout New York are already utilizing this approach to various extents, from those organizations whose programs are explicitly two generational to those who have integrated pieces of this framework without necessarily using the language of two generation work. The NYIC convened over 70 professionals at immigrant-serving organizations in Buffalo, Syracuse, Long Island, and New York City to explore how two

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4   Family Literacy: A Plan for Whole-Family Success in New York

generation approaches are currently being used to serve immigrant families throughout New York State, which practices are most effective for these families, and what challenges and barriers are currently impeding organizational efforts to incorporate a two generation approach.

By analysing these elements of two generation work, we have been able to create an approach-based, rather than purely programmatic, analysis of what makes a successful two generation program for immigrant families. Ultimately, programs that displayed the following six evidence-based approaches were the most successful at supporting two generation programs. Successful programs:

1. Employ formal and informal feedback measures that are used to plan curriculum, schedules, and address the concerns of program participants;

2. Accurately identify the barriers that keep participants from regular attendance;

3. Take steps to understand the community members they serve, including cultural and religious influences;

4. Successfully blend and braid public and private funding sources to integrate otherwise unrelated programming;

5. Internalize the two generation approach even in programs that serve only one generation at a time; and

6. Build a sense of community and investment both within their organization and in the geographical area in which they are located.

This brief consists of three sections. Using the above six approaches as a guide, Part I of this brief will survey the current scope of two generation work being done by immigrant-serving organizations across Buffalo, Syracuse, Long Island, and New York City. This section will include examples to illustrate some of the ways that organizations use innovative solutions to serve their immigrant communities. These examples are merely a few of the many ways that organizations use these approaches to create supportive, effective programs. Part II of this brief will describe the main barriers organizations face as they work to incorporate a two generation approach into their programs. Part III of this brief will include recommendations for how New York State can better support the creation and growth of two generation programs to create a space of true opportunity for its immigrant families.

I. The Current Scope of Two Generation Work in New York State

Organizations across New York State actively work to incorporate a two generation approach into their programs. This approach is especially effective for immigrant families, who often experience additional burdens as parents work to support their children financially, learn a new language, adjust to the cultural shifts that living in a new country requires, and deal with a complicated immigration system. We have identified six approaches to two generation work that have proven effective for organizations that primarily serve these communities. Although these approaches may look different based

on the organization and the particular needs of the population they serve, all ultimately work to achieve the same goals. While every program here illustrates a two generation approach, not every best practice will itself be explicitly two generation. Some of the practices mentioned are components that are necessary to form a successful two generation program but are not themselves explicitly two generation — they are necessary elements of one component of a two generation approach. In this section, we will break down each of the approaches to two generation work programs are using and provide several examples of what each approach may look like in practice. These examples are meant to be illustrative, and are in no way an exhaustive list of the many innovative ways that community based organizations serve their communities.

1. Responsive to Feedback from Students

Programs that create feedback mechanisms for students to gauge their opinions, needs, and requests and then use this feedback to organize their programs, develop curriculum, and address issues students are facing create positive environments that lead to more productive and long term relationships between organizations and their students. Feedback mechanisms, whether formal or informal, help programs to meet their participants where they are, providing services that the participants themselves actually request. Further, programs that request and respond to feedback develop a sense of agency in their participants. This allows for a sense of investment in the organizations and builds confidence in students who may otherwise struggle to have their voices heard.

Most programs use either formal or informal feedback, though most commonly include some element of both. This feedback may be written, in the form of surveys or feedback forms, or spoken, by interview, focus group, or informal conversation.

- One organization that serves immigrant families in Astoria uses an intake form for each adult that joins an adult literacy class. This form asks about students' preferred style for learning and practicing English. Teachers then use this information to format their classes to best effect.[5]

- One organization held focus groups where their students shared that they felt intimidated by a traditional classroom setting. The organization was then able to redesign the perceived formality and structure of the class to create a more comfortable learning environment for their students.[6]

- Several organizations have utilized the work of nearby university and doctoral students to assist them in developing a set of feedback mechanisms, like surveys, focus groups, and one-on-one interviews, to better capture the thoughts and needs of their communities in a cost-effective, mutually beneficial way. This has both allowed them to shape their programs to better reflect the needs of the community as well as to collect and record data they can use to determine the effectiveness of their programs for internal and external purposes.

Feedback can be particularly useful even where organizations may not have foreseen the need for it.

- One organization held in-depth focus groups with parents who were interested or already attending classes at the organization. Although they were initially

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5   Center for the Integration and Advancement of New Americans (CIANA)
6   Educational Alliance

trying to gauge what classes parents were interested in, they were surprised to find that, contrary to the general belief that more class options were better than fewer, parents stated they felt overwhelmed by the amount of options they were being offered. Offering too many choices led to parents feeling unable to choose out of the available options and guilty they could not do more of them. This then led to choice paralysis, where some parents, even with assistance, ultimately did not choose any classes at all. The organization, responding to this feedback, was able to restructure their system to offer fewer classes at a time of shorter duration, broken up into a trimester-like system.[7] Multiple additional organizations found similar situations in their own program models, where it became clear that simplicity of process and choice are crucial, particularly during the intake and enrollment periods.

2. Successful Barrier Identification

Students often face significant barriers to enrolling in and attending classes. Immigrant families, in particular those from refugee populations, may have additional burdens that keep them from attendance. Programs that take steps to accurately assess the populations they work with can more creatively and effectively address these barriers.

- One organization identified a lack of childcare support, in addition to ingrained gender roles, as a major cause of women staying home from classes or not enrolling in their programs. They created an innovative solution by pursuing a micro-entrepreneurship grant that supports women in setting up in-home daycare businesses by directing them through the credentialing process. This helped the women to supplement their income, created a sense of agency, and provided a child care support network for women who wanted to take their classes.[8]

- Another program held a free book club, where staff and volunteers read with parents and then gave them the books to take home with them. While some of these families took the books, quite a few did not, leading the organization to consider whether homelessness was an issue where these families might need additional support or direction.[9]

> **Multiple organizations who provide adult literacy services found that offering childcare was integral to parents attending their programs.**

- Multiple organizations who provide adult literacy services found that offering childcare was integral to parents attending their programs. Low- and no-cost care is difficult for immigrant families to access when they are eligible at all, and a lack of child care creates a significant barrier to parents', and particularly mothers' attendance.

- Timing was cited by multiple organizations as a major element of identifying barriers.

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7   Educational Alliance
8   Journey's End Refugee Services
9   Borough of Manhattan Community College (BMCC)

Where potential participants in programs were primarily either parents with young children or full-time workers, flexibility in scheduling made a significant difference in rates of attendance at both regularly scheduled and one-time events.

3. Understanding the Community

Programs succeed best where they have a strong understanding of the families and community members they are working with, and the external challenges that arise that make learning and participation more difficult. Immigrant families do not leave their beliefs and cultures at the border, but rather bring with them a set of cultural, social, and religious values that influence their experiences as they move forward in the United States. This can be especially so for those with refugee status, who did not leave their countries by choice and often feel especially strongly about the preservation of their religious and cultural practices in their new lives.

- One organization deals with traumatized populations frequently, and must therefore prioritize mental health support and the particular challenges that come with reunification of families, especially those who have been long separated. By recognizing this need and working to meet it, they are able to create a supportive environment that allows clients to better adjust themselves and their families to a new country.[10]

- Several organizations have noted that the communities they serve are frequently pre-literate in their native languages. While these languages may sometimes be more commonly spoken ones like Spanish, they may also be indigenous or rare

languages for which there is not a sizable population. This creates an additional barrier to learning, in large part because adult literacy funding does not adequately include literacy in languages other than English despite literacy in one's native language being a considerable support in learning a new language. Students value their native languages and wish to retain and expand their abilities in those languages in addition to learning English. One approach organizations have taken to this issue has been to elevate clients who speak these languages to teachers within the organizations, which serves the dual purpose of both keeping them within the organization at the same time as it allows for opportunities for professional growth and respect for their native cultures, including the value of speaking their home language with their children.

- Organizations succeed where they have incorporated and celebrated elements of their immigrant communities' cultures into their programs and included elements outside of education, such as traditional dance classes or, where appropriate, celebrations of religious or cultural holidays. This practice builds a culture of respect and joy in addition to creating longer-lasting relationships within communities and with the organizations.

- Organizations that provide classes and extracurricular activities for children that are not traditional academic subjects have found that they sometimes need to provide additional support and explanation to parents, who may not be familiar with the purpose or benefits of these activities. One organization, for example, provides robotics classes and found that parents

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10 Catholic Charities of New York's Refugee Resettlement Program

were uncertain as to the value of the classes. Once the organization was able to adequately convey the purpose of the subject and why it might be beneficial to their children both as an extracurricular as well as academically, they were able to retain more students for these classes.[11]

4. Blending and Braiding Funding Sources

As there is currently no adequate dedicated source of public funding for two generation programs, successful programs find innovative ways to blend multiple grants to cover two generation work. This most frequently occurs by combining public and private sources of funding. Public funding sources frequently cover only one particular kind of programming. In the two generation field, this is often adult literacy education funding or early childhood education funding. Though funding sources may include some family literacy component as an allowable deliverable, in practice these funds do not adequately cover family literacy and other two generation programs without being substantially compounded by additional funding sources. Programs must therefore be creative in applying for and blending funding sources to create their own two generation programs.

- One program, for example, schedules separately funded adult literacy and early childhood programs at the same time, and adds in parent-child together time (PACT) with private funding to create a three-pronged literacy program.[12]

- Organizations report one of the most common uses of blended and braided funding is to keep up with their staffing costs. Bilingual and multilingual staff are

more difficult to find and keep; blending funding sources to support fair salaries allows organizations to keep their staff consistent over the course of multiple years even where funding may change by hiring the same staff to work on multiple projects to build up to a full-time salary even where one individual funding source could not cover it.

5. Internalizing the Two Generation Approach

Often programs only have the capacity to run one component (for example, an adult literacy class) of two generational programming, either due to a lack of funding or for other reasons such as capacity. Programs that only get funding for one kind of program may still be successfully utilizing a two generation approach by integrating aspects of the family into the education component of a class or program. By using the two generation framework as a basis for a one generation program, organizations can create curriculums that are true to the funding requirements of the one generation program but also integrate the two generation approach.

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11   Masa
12   Educational Alliance

- At one organization, in adult literacy classes where parents make up a large portion of the class, teachers will spend a class teaching vocabulary specific to parent-teacher conferences and include a parent-teacher role-play to give parents the opportunity to practice. This allows for parents in an adult literacy program to contextualize their learning to relevant and valued life experiences, which both improves their ability to learn English and helps to build their confidence as parents with agency in their child's education.[13]

- Many organizations who cannot afford to run full family literacy programs or provide early childhood education provide parenting classes for the adults in their communities. One organization spends each week teaching parents different methods to direct play for their children, answering questions, and providing parenting guidance, and then has the parents report back the next week on how that week's lessons went with their children.[14]

6. Building Community and Investment

Community based organizations have deep roots in their geographical communities and create long-standing relationships with those they serve. They also provide an invaluable first contact for immigrant families who have not yet developed deep connections of their own to their new homes. Organizations that excel at creating a sense of investment and community through respect, agency-building, and cultural exchange are able to keep families involved over multiple generations, providing parents with trusted partners and children with safe, stable, and supportive communities to thrive and grow.

- One organization internalizes an approach that regards teacher and student interactions as cultural exchanges rather than as a unilateral passing of information, and all staff are trained to understand their relationship with their community as one of equals. As a result, parents feel heard, continue to be involved, and feel respected by teachers and

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volunteers. This both builds the capacity of the organization and develops a relationship of trust that brings parents back and provides a space for children to experience respect for their culture during their crucial growth years.[15]

- Organizations found that supporting relationships between students made a noticeable difference in engagement and attendance of adult literacy classes. One way this was done was through the creation of study groups of three students

13 Central American Refugee Center (CARECEN)
14 Jewish Family Service of Buffalo & Erie County
15 North Side Learning Center

in each class. These groups of students support each other during their studying, providing accountability for themselves, and help each other to catch up if they miss a class. This organization chose three students as the preferred number to create a fallback in the event that a student had to leave the class due to external circumstances, and to prevent any one student from feeling the pressure as another student's singular source of peer support. These students also formed friendships that provided them with emotional support and encouragement outside of the classroom.[16]

- One organization was able to create a summer program for their students and bring in their families by providing childcare and holding summer events like raffles and picnics. These families built up relationships with each other and began to take on additional responsibilities within their group, creating intentional safe spaces for their community, developing additional classes, and becoming involved in civic engagement activities. Many of these families have remained with the organization and are active members of the community.[17]

- Another organization trains interested parents to be classroom volunteers, with an emphasis on preparing parents to become more involved leaders. Parents participate in an 8-week training session and are responsible for organizing three read-aloud events. Many go on to be active in their Parent-Teacher Association, and those who excel may go on to train as part-time early childhood associates with the potential to become full-time workers.[18]

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16 Queens Public Library
17 Catholic Charities of New York
18 LiteracyINC

II. Barriers and Challenges

While organizations in different geographical areas struggle with varying challenges depending on the particular needs within their communities and the infrastructure and supports present, there are multiple challenges and barriers commonly confronted by groups across the state. Programs cited the following as the main challenges keeping them from being able to fully invest in a two generation model.

Insufficient or Restrictive Funding

Organizations struggle to meet the financial burdens of running two generation programs. Funding issues fall into five general categories. First, outcomes required by funding sources are too restrictive to allow for flexible programs. While private funding is generally more flexible, both public and private funding sources often have strict requirements that compel organizations to build their programs around test results or a narrow set of deliverables. For example, funding may require an organization to only serve particular types of clients or collect data such as social security numbers that excludes particular clients such as undocumented individuals. Organizations have been forced to change curriculum or accept burdensome additional deliverables

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to acquire additional funding, which makes it more difficult to blend or braid existing funding sources to create two generation programs.

Second, adequate funding does not currently exist to cover the needs of their communities. While this is broadly true across all programs, the additional requirements for serving multiple generations in an integrated way makes it difficult or impossible for organizations to serve more than a very small percentage of the needs in their communities. This dearth of funding also creates competition between organizations that are otherwise working towards the same ends, complicating their relationships with each other and making working partnerships more difficult to negotiate even where they could benefit both parties. Another difficulty is the short terms of many grant periods, which create the need to advocate for funding year-over-year with no guarantee of continued support and limit organizational ability to plan for the upcoming year's programming.

Third, those organizations providing English language education face a lack of funds specifically for lower level and beginner English classes. There is significantly more funding available for higher level English classes focused on workforce development and high school equivalency attainment than on lower level English classes with a focus on English attainment for integration-based reasons. While funding geared towards workforce development is necessary, not all parents' primary motivation for learning English is workforce-related. Immigrants may come from cultures where one parent traditionally stays home to raise the children or may simply lack access to quality, affordable child care. Their goal may not be to seek employment, but rather to learn English to navigate their new home, support their children, and access necessary financial and healthcare services for their families. Funding that does not take this into account, or requires that students

show workforce-related outcomes, cuts off this resource for these families. Additionally, many immigrants have come without any English skills due to a lack of opportunity or through adverse circumstances, as is the case for many refugee communities.

Fourth, funders, both private and public, can be disconnected from the needs of a particular community, and thus require deliverables or data that organizations and their clients do not feel comfortable sharing. For example, funders may ask for demographic information that clients do not wish to share or which may put them at risk, such as race, national origin, immigration status, or social security numbers. Organizations are then left with the choice to not pursue or renew funding sources, or to potentially alienate their clients and community. Further, funders may not understand the particular needs of a community or believe that those needs are different than what the community has asked for, leading to a mismatch between programs for which funding is available but not desired and programs that lack the funding to run but which are requested by the community.

Fifth, restricted or inconsistent funding year-to-year makes it difficult for organizations to find and retain quality full-time staff. As a result of this, organizations depend more than they prefer on either unpaid volunteers or part-time staff. Turnover is even higher for these positions, which does the dual disservice of stymieing the growth of relationships between staff and their community and leaving staff without the job security or benefits they would be eligible for as full-time workers.

Early Childhood and Early Care Requirements

Early Childhood and Early Care programs have very high safety and credentialing

requirements for teachers, staff, and physical program spaces. Organizations that already offer adult literacy and would be interested in expanding into two generation work are often unable to meet these requirements and are not eligible for other funding to develop these programs. Appropriate physical spaces were cited as the most frequent issue, with most programs not having the funding to move or renovate their spaces to, for example, create bathrooms designed for small children. Programs also cited the low pay for preschool and 3-K teachers as a barrier, with finding and keeping bilingual staff being a particular challenge.

Dynamic Nature of Refugee Communities

Many of the organizations who participated in this project serve refugees. For these organizations, language and support needs can change year-to-year based on federal determinations of who qualifies for refugee status. This creates challenges designing programs that are responsive to feedback and meet required deliverables while accurately addressing the different needs that the refugee community may have and which may vary based on their country of origin. Programs may apply for funding for a particular need the current refugee community has, but by the time they receive that funding, they have been sent a different population with different needs. Programs also struggle to hire staff based on language ability, in part because the language needs change rapidly and the languages spoken may be rare in the geographic area involved.

Lack of Trained or Bilingual Staff

Organizations frequently struggle to find adequately trained staff who also speak the necessary languages. It can be difficult or impossible to find staff who speak needed languages, or who have relevant qualifications. This problem is particularly apparent when serving young children. This issue is compounded by an inability to pay teachers higher rates. Programs that serve transient or refugee communities have the additional burden of not knowing which languages will be needed year-to-year. These programs, as with many others, require trauma-informed teachers and staff, as well as social workers and mental health professionals. As salaries are frequently on the lower end within the nonprofit field, finding staff who have the requisite language skills, professional

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certifications, and trauma-informed training is rarely possible.

Long Island programs, in particular, struggle to find and keep bilingual staff, many of whom commute and are unable to stay for later meetings or events. Organizations generally do not have the funding to pay salaries that cover the cost of commuting even when the additional time commitments are not an issue. This concern was reflected across nearly all Long Island organizations. Even those who have sufficient funding struggle to fill positions with staff who are qualified and culturally and linguistically competent. When they are able to find staff,

they invest in training them only to lose them to higher paying jobs in other areas.

External Life Pressures

Even where organizations are well-funded and able to run classes, clients often face urgent external pressures that make regular attendance difficult. As many sources of funding require regular deliverables throughout the time of the program to prove its effectiveness, clients who may be identified as high risk can be left out of programs because they put the funding source at risk. The following were shared as interfering with or preventing students from attending or continuing to attend classes:

- Food insecurity

- Abusive working conditions were brought up frequently as a significant issue keeping students from classes. Immigrants, regardless of immigration status, are particularly at risk for demands for unfair or last-minute working hours that conflict with their class time. As many programs are required to have attendance requirements built into deliverables, students may be dropped from courses and programs can fail to meet their required deliverables due to this practice.

- Housing instability and impending or current homelessness can, in addition to being a significant psychological weight, prevent students from attending classes due to distance or frequent changes of residence that make attendance impossible.

Data Sharing and Tracking

Internal data tracking can be a significant burden on organizations. It is time-consuming for staff and students, and long-term outcome tracking is extremely difficult with individuals who experience instability in other areas of their lives and may not maintain consistent modes of communication or places of residence. It is also difficult to determine causality and effectiveness of programs long-term when external life situations

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change rapidly and influence results. This is particularly true of organizations who serve high-risk populations.

Multiple organizations have difficulty tracking long-term outcomes for their clients. Many families may not stay in the same neighborhood over the course of several years. Some clients have immigration status issues that make them understandably uncomfortable with sharing personal information on their home and work life. Even where clients have had positive experiences within an organization, housing concerns or other issues may necessitate a break in the relationship. This is compounded by the difficulty of tracking children's progress within the school system due to education privacy rules. Outcome tracking may be left primarily to families who self-report their progress.

Difficulties with Collaboration

Organizations struggle to collaborate with other organizations, especially where funding is particularly tight and breeds competition. Collaborating with school districts and state agencies was also cited as a challenge where funding does not require collaboration and power differentials exist between community based organizations and state systems. Long Island, in particular, struggles to collaborate with a deeply fragmented school system, given its 125 school districts with localized control.

Organizations are interested in collaborating with each other, however this is difficult under the current circumstances due to both funding and scheduling issues. Current funding does not incentivize or otherwise promote collaboration, which for many organizations is the best option for running two generation programs. Programs emphasized the need to choose their partners, noting that collaborations sometimes fail where they were forced. They also stated the need for partners in a collaboration to be fully aligned in their missions.

III. Moving Forward

All across New York State, the two generation approach is a promising model for immigrant families, and organizations are already utilizing this approach across multiple types of immigrant-serving programs from adult education to refugee resettlement.

During the course of this project, the NYIC has identified three major opportunities to leverage existing capabilities and programs to expand and deepen the work organizations are currently doing in the two generation field. Successful programs already exist throughout New York that have the building blocks of a true two generation model. By supplementing and connecting these programs, New York State can create fully functioning two generation models that support and raise up whole families, leaving them better prepared to integrate and succeed.

Recommendations

I. Fund Collaborative Work

Funding issues were at the top of the list of barriers most organizations struggle with in creating fully two generation programs. By focusing on collaboration between organizations as a goal, programs in the same geographical area can use their current capabilities to maximum effect without needing to fund multiple new kinds of programs within individual organizations when each individual program may already be at capacity in terms of physical space and staffing capabilities. Additional funding specifically geared towards supporting collaboration would supplement current sources of funding in adult literacy and early childhood, bringing together two or more organizations that may not otherwise have the capacity to work together. Buffalo organizations in particular have displayed a promising amount of cooperation between organizations with different specialties, and offer a model for how to do this effectively.

Where collaboration has been possible, it has provided communities with integrated services they would not otherwise be able to access. Partnerships may be between community based organizations, New York's CUNY and SUNY systems, legal services providers, and other organizations that provide services that may be outside the education realm but are desperately needed in their communities. With additional funding,

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including built-in time for organizations to negotiate their terms and agree upon their desired processes, organizations could best leverage their existing skills while providing parents with the support they need for themselves and their children in a geographically sensible way. Funding cross-organizational work has the potential to provide immigrant families with a centralized source for multi-generational education and access to necessary resources while rewarding the work and collaboration each individual organization brings forth by leveraging each program's strengths to create a greater whole.

II. Implement/Pilot the LIFT Model: An Integrated Workshop Series

A second major gap that organizations cited during their discussion of barriers was that many parents and guardians wanted to take adult literacy classes and be more involved in two generation work, but were unable to consistently attend the required hours of classes over the course of weeks or months. This was usually due to either external factors such as unpredictable work schedules or other family responsibilities, or to internal limitations on the seat availability in those programs. Parents felt disconnected from critical information that would help them integrate, but many were unable to dedicate the time that was required for the more involved programs that could teach English and native-language literacy through a context-based approach.

A wider view of two generation work includes programs that are specifically geared towards supporting parents in areas that will directly and indirectly benefit their children and are not limited to English literacy. The NYIC worked closely with the Migration Policy Institute to develop a model for a locally based workshop program series specifically geared towards parents that could help to fill this gap in knowledge and access. This model covers eleven topics and subtopics that parents will need to understand to navigate their communities, including basic digital literacy and basic education, health, legal and financial systems navigation information with a focus on current, locally available support systems.

A workshop program designed to inform parents of critical integration information would be a major addition to the existing adult and early childhood systems without being a replacement for them. This workshop series could be attended in full, or parents could choose those topics where they most require support and attend just those individual workshops. Each workshop would operate independently of the others, with the theme of integration support for non-English speaking parents running throughout the whole series. Workshops would be run by English language teachers accustomed to communicating with non-English speakers, and would assume no preexisting knowledge of New York state and local systems. Each workshop would convey the basic information a parent needs to know to begin to explore and access these new systems, and would provide local information on where to find additional assistance in each area.

This workshop series would be available both to parents who are already involved in adult literacy classes as well as to parents whose schedules either do not currently allow for a full adult literacy class or for whom a seat in a program is not currently available. It could be especially effective in providing the critical first step to getting parents engaged in their local community based organizations, connecting them to wider neighborhood resources, and creating a gateway for parents to enter into more intensive support programs for themselves and their children.

By combining financial support for cross-organizational collaboration and a new integration-based, parent-focused workshop series with preexisting adult literacy and early childhood programs, we can create a more robust and effective full family support system that would help to bridge the gap for parents and their children as they integrate into New York State.

III. Fully Fund Foundational Adult Education and Early Childhood Systems

For a fully integrated two generation system to be possible, New York State must bolster funding for the existing programs that make up the structure of the two generation system. A two generation system is best supported by a strong foundation of adult education, early childhood education, and affordable and accessible child care. The adult literacy system, for example, is drastically underfunded within New York State. With over 3.4 million New Yorkers lacking English language literacy, a high school diploma, or both, there is a huge need for adult literacy funding. Over 400,000 of these adults are parents of young children with limited English proficiency. Currently, under 4% of these adults are being served.

The New York State Adult Literacy Education (ALE) funding stream, funded at $7.8M in FY20, is the only current source of state funding that requires that 50% or more of the students in each program are beginning level English speakers and does not rely purely on workforce-related outcomes. It is an ideal source of funding for programs that serve parents who wish to learn English to better integrate into their communities and support their children.

Statewide, prekindergarten systems are not yet universal, and parents struggle to find affordable child care options for their young children while they are in work or at school. High quality early childhood education is a fundamental building block to financial and academic success. New York State must expand its early childhood education system to ensure that all 3- and 4-year olds have access to seats in a high

quality, culturally responsive prekindergarten programs, and ensure that all parents have access more generally to affordable child care options.

The two generation approach to education provides a holistic, family-centered approach to education that addresses each generation simultaneously and creates a whole that is larger than the sum of its parts. By fully investing in two generation work, New York can lift up its immigrant families and fuel their success.

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