



# INVESTING IN WHOLE FAMILIES

## THE IMPACT OF 2GEN STRATEGIES IN EARLY LEARNING



COMMUNITY  
FOUNDATION  
of Sarasota County

May 2021

# BACKGROUND

In a three-year pilot partnership with the Community Foundation of Sarasota County (CFSC), Horizons Unlimited Christian Academy (HUCA) adopted a two generational (2Gen), whole family approach to working with families beginning in 2017.

Founded in Sarasota's Newtown community, the preschool has been in existence since 2003 with 90% of its families receiving subsidized tuition support through the Early Learning Coalition's School Readiness Program.

The pilot combined high-quality early education for all students with family supports for 11 targeted Pre-K families. The program promoted parenting skills development and provided parents with post-secondary education opportunities. This two-pronged approach is designed to enhance a parent's economic success, which is known to increase the likelihood of their children reading on level by third grade.

The focus of the 2Gen project was on specific educational and facility enhancements to the school, including the development of an enriched summer learning program, as well as the creation of supportive pathways for parents to pursue their educational aspirations and improve their parenting skills, particularly as they relate to reading. The development of the pilot was part of CFSC's lead partner role in the Sarasota County *Campaign for Grade Level Reading* and its ongoing, long-term investment/commitment to early learning.





# THE 2GEN APPROACH



CFSC's 2Gen work is based on its long-standing partnership with Ascend at the Aspen Institute, which developed the 2Gen model (depicted above) to explain its recommended strategy of building family well-being by intentionally and simultaneously working with children and the adults in their lives.

There are six key components of the 2Gen Approach: 1) Post-secondary Education and Employment Pathways; 2) K-12 Education; 3) Early Childhood Education and Development; 4) Economic Assets; 5) Health and Well-Being; and 6) Social Capital.

According to Ascend, investments in high-quality early education yield a 13% per year return on investment based on increased school and career achievement as well as reduced social costs. At the same time, a parent's level of educational attainment is also a strong predictor of a child's success. A \$3,000 difference in parents' income when their child is young is associated with a 17% increase in the child's future earnings, meaning that a relatively small increase in household income can have a significant, lasting positive impact on the life of a child.



## PILOT STRATEGY

The CFSC-funded program was named “*Our School, Our Families, Our Community*” (O3) by HUCA, and included investments in three primary resource areas:

- 1. High Quality Early Education, which included teacher professional development opportunities, a staff appreciation program, enriched educational materials, tools and activities such as books, experiential field trips, laptops, STEAM-focused Edu-Play equipment, HUCA building improvements, etc.**
- 2. Summer Learning Program in order to prevent summer learning loss and improve parent education in kindergarten readiness factors.**
- 3. 2Gen Parent Pathways & Supports, including access to post-secondary education funds, childcare tuition supports, parent training related to their children's literacy, increased family engagement, and a dedicated resource navigator.**

## Timeline

Summer 2017 – Pilot begins with Summer Learning program and parent meetings.

Fall 2017 – Classroom improvements begin; three parents start college.

Spring 2018 - New curriculum, teacher professional development

Summer 2018 – Year 2 of Summer Program. First parent graduates as LPN.

Fall 2018 – Teachers receive state accreditation trainings. Three additional parents enroll in college.

Spring 2019 – Social & emotional skills building curriculum introduced.

Summer 2019 – Childcare tuition assistance offered.

Fall 2019 - Final facility investments. More parents begin college.

Spring 2020 - Supports offered to families during COVID.

Summer 2020 - Pilot officially ends with 529 Plan gifts.

Fall 2020- CFSC launches Parent Advisory Council with HUCA parent participation.

Spring 2021 - Impact data received from school district.

# PILOT PARTICIPANTS

## Entire School

There were two general target populations in this pilot program. The first group represents the entire school - i.e., all of the students and teachers at HUCA. Given the investment in the overall facility, teacher professional development, curriculum, and materials, the goal was to improve the academic outcomes for all of the students at the school over the course of the three-year engagement and beyond.



## 2Gen Families

Originally 13 families were identified by the preschool to participate in the 2Gen pilot. Two families left the school in the early stages, therefore, 11 parents were targeted for the program. These families were invited to quarterly 2Gen Parent Meetings to learn about children's literacy and early learning, parenting strategies, resources available in the community regarding financial coaching, housing supports, employment services, etc. And all of the parents were given the opportunity to receive college scholarships in order to earn a degree or industry-recognized credential in an area of their interest.



***"Our 2Gen parents are very pleased as they have achieved their goals, set examples for their children and have redefined their financial status."***

**Linda Ferdinand, former director of HUCA**



## 2GEN KEY PARTNERS

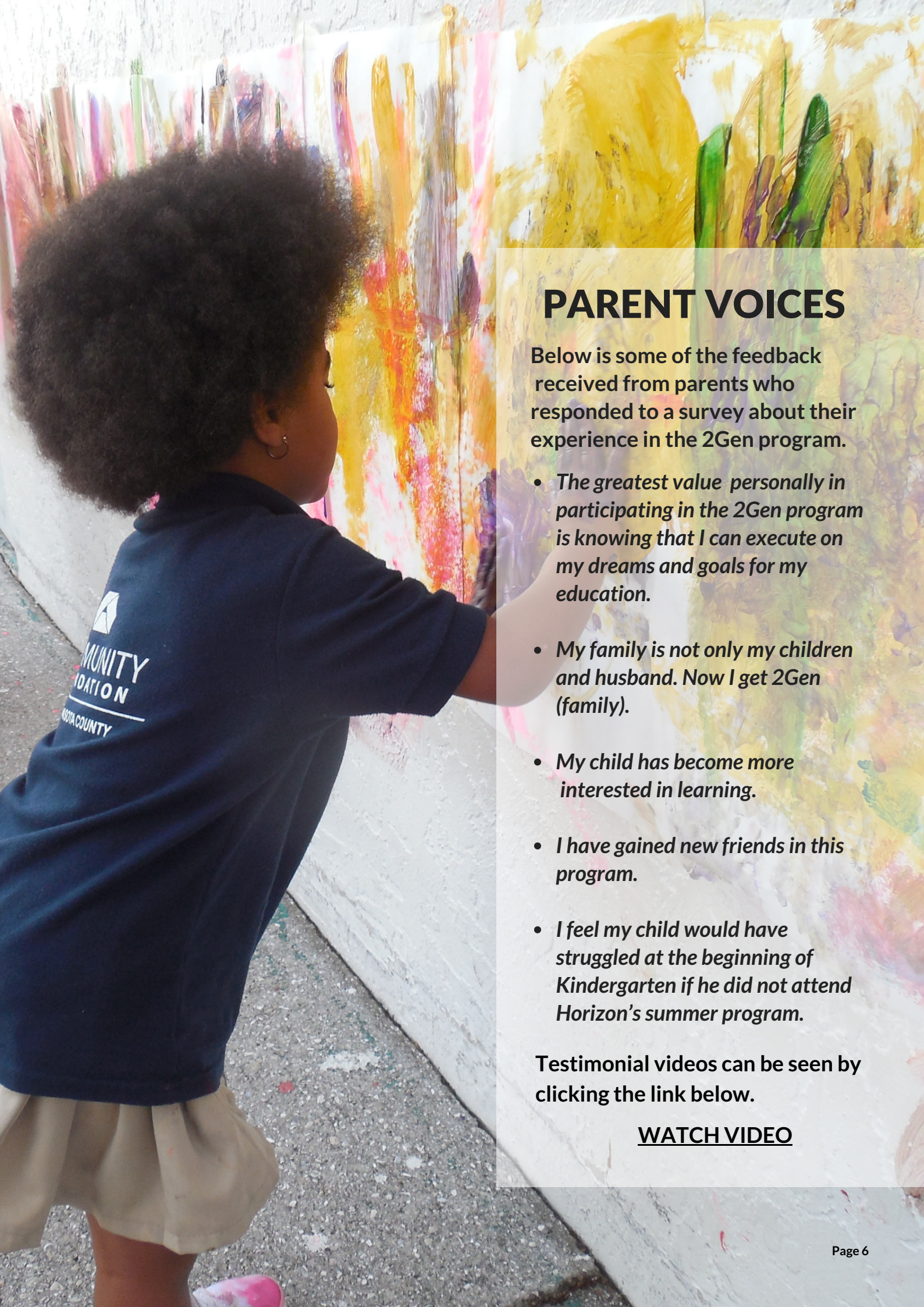
Two key partners of the HUCA pilot program were the Early Learning Coalition of Sarasota County and the Women's Resource Center.



The Early Learning Coalition (ELC) provides administration and oversight of the local, integrated system of early education for preschool age children ages 0 to 5. It serves more than 4,000 children and assists 180 childcare and preschool providers annually. The ELC provided financial assistance to eligible 2Gen HUCA families to help pay for child care, and managed a 529 College Savings Plan distribution to the pilot participants as part of the project culmination.



The Women's Resource Center provided case management to several of the 2Gen parents, assisting them, through a CFSC-funded Stipend Program grant, with accessing funds for college entrance exams, childcare tuition, and other costs associated with their pursuit of a post-secondary credential.



## PARENT VOICES

Below is some of the feedback received from parents who responded to a survey about their experience in the 2Gen program.

- *The greatest value personally in participating in the 2Gen program is knowing that I can execute on my dreams and goals for my education.*
- *My family is not only my children and husband. Now I get 2Gen (family).*
- *My child has become more interested in learning.*
- *I have gained new friends in this program.*
- *I feel my child would have struggled at the beginning of Kindergarten if he did not attend Horizon's summer program.*

Testimonial videos can be seen by clicking the link below.

**[WATCH VIDEO](#)**



## TEACHER VOICES

The HUCA teachers were also surveyed at the end of the pilot and shared the following input.

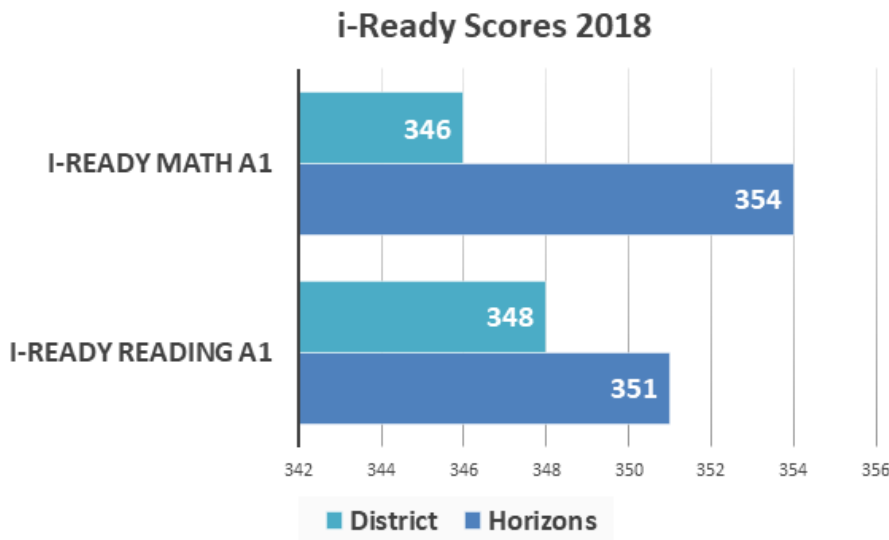
- *I have seen the preschool grow and improve in such an enormous way over the last three years.*
- *The professional development workshops and training provided a wealth of knowledge that enriched me personally.*
- *The teacher incentives help with morale building.*
- *The training gave me confidence to teach children at different levels and stages.*
- *As the children learn, I see them teaching others what they have learned and that makes any teacher smile.*



# STUDENT OUTCOMES

At the end of the Year One Summer Learning program, 100% of the Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) students were deemed *Kindergarten Ready* by the Florida Department of Education.

Academic data from the Sarasota County School District indicates that HUCA Preschool students in this pilot entered Kindergarten at a higher rate of readiness than the comparative population of all district students entering kindergarten, using i-Ready A1 Reading and Math scores.



According to 2021 school district data, on average, the HUCA students' test scores demonstrate that their academic performance is on or above grade level, and higher when compared to students from Title I schools who did not attend HUCA.



# PARENT OUTCOMES



Below are some of the outcomes for the **11 parents** in the 2Gen pilot program.

At the close of Year One, a parent survey showed that 100% of the participants reported:

- *Feeling more empowered to overcome barriers;*
- *Increased motivation to access resources;*
- *Feeling they have a greater capacity to build a better future for their families;*
- *Understand the importance of regular school attendance as it pertains to their child's academic progress;*
- *Understand their role in advocating for and being their child's first teacher.*

**Eight of the 11 parents enrolled in college.** Parent education outcomes include:

- College Graduates in:
  - Practical Nursing (LPN)
  - Business Management
  - Physician Assistant
  - Nursing
  - Supervision & Management
- Current Students in:
  - Practical Nursing (LPN)
  - Nursing - 2 students

One family **purchased a home** as a first-time buyer. One parent is now a **small business owner**. Inspired by her degree-seeking fellow 2Gen participants, another of the mothers reported having the courage to apply for a **supervisor role** which she secured. One of the LPN's has worked in a state-wide Department of Health COVID response team (see center photo above). And eight of the 11 parents have joined CFSC's inaugural **Parent Advisory Council** to offer insights into the Foundation's initiatives and investment priorities.



## PILOT WRAP-UP

### 2Gen Celebration

An in-person special event was planned for Spring of 2020 to bring together the families, teachers and preschool director for a formal celebration of the conclusion of the three-year 2Gen pilot. However, the onset of the pandemic disrupted these plans. Books and gift cards were mailed to the families instead.

### 529 College Savings Plans

In the summer of 2020, each of the 11 2Gen parents were surprised with a gift of \$1,000 for the establishment of College Savings Plans for their children. These 529 Plans were the culminating component the pilot program. Parents could choose the specific distribution of these funds for any of their children, whether they attended HUCA or not.



With administration support from the ELC, a total of 29 college savings accounts were opened, ranging from \$250 to \$1,000 per child. According to Ascend, children with an account designated for college are more likely to enroll and graduate. Even small dollar amounts help children enroll and graduate from a higher learning institution.

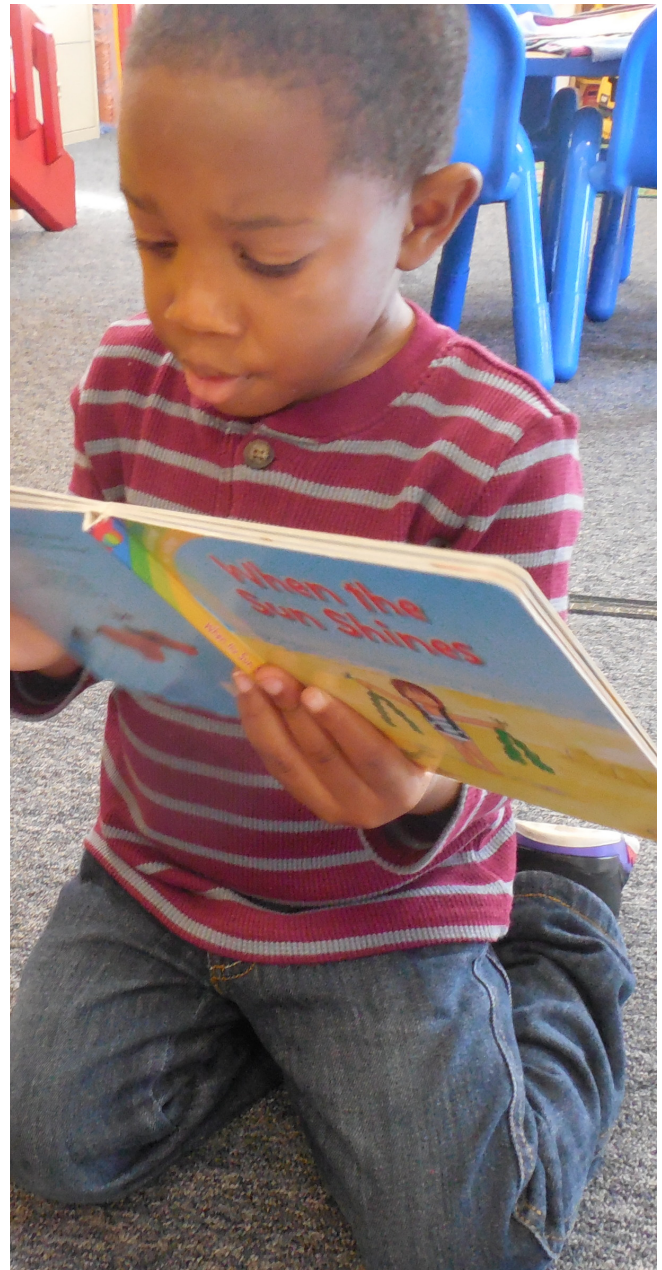
***"Research shows that children with college savings of \$500 or less are three times as likely to attend college and four times as likely to graduate than those without any savings."***

**Kirsten Russell, Vice President of Community Impact, CFSC**

# LESSONS LEARNED

The following are some lessons learned during the implementation of this pilot.

- **Mobility:** The reality that families move between counties for employment and housing.
- **Stability:** Children and families need continuity from the childcare providers and partners.
- **Data Tracking:** The need for a data plan at the onset to better capture both student academic progress and parent wage increases.
- **Communication:** Opportunities to develop more consistent communications with families.
- **Trust:** Change happens at the speed of trust. The significant role the resource navigator plays in maintaining a trusting relationship with the families.
- **Partnerships:** The importance of strong community partnerships for resource referrals and program support.



# NEXT STEPS

## 2Gen Family Supports

While the pilot has officially ended, CFSC continues to work with the parents who are still in college, providing them with scholarships and additional supports to help them in their educational pursuits.

## Parent Advisory Council

CFSC also launched a Parent Advisory Council in the fall of 2020, with eight of the HUCA parents participating. The plan is to continue these quarterly gatherings to get feedback and insights directly from the parents served by CFSC's 2Gen investments. The meetings also offer an opportunity for the parents to stay connected and build their social capital, creating a support network where the parents lean on and learn from each other. The intent is to possibly augment the Council to include professional development and leadership trainings for parents interested in expanding their skills.



## Pre-K Model Replication

CFSC is also exploring ways to replicate this preschool pilot, building off the lessons learned during the project implementation as well as from its experiences with the CFSC-funded Sarasota County School District 2Gen Program, which supports four Title I elementary schools in North Sarasota County and has served 242 parents to date. All of this work is part of Community Foundation's commitment to early literacy and the *Campaign for Grade Level Reading*.

Report developed by Deborah Chapman  
Community Foundation of Sarasota County

**About the Community Foundation of Sarasota County:** The Community Foundation of Sarasota County is a public charity founded in 1979 by the Southwest Florida Estate Planning Council as a resource for caring individuals and the causes they support, enabling them to make a charitable impact on the community. With assets of \$421 million in more than 1,500 charitable funds, the Community Foundation awarded grants and scholarships totaling \$48.9 million dollars last year in the areas of education, the arts, health and human services, civic engagement, animal welfare and the environment. Since its founding, the Community Foundation has been able to grant more than \$323 million to area nonprofit organizations to our community thanks to the generosity of charitable individuals, families, and businesses. For more information, visit [www.CFSarasota.org](http://www.CFSarasota.org) or call (941) 955-3000.

**About our Two-Generation (2Gen) Approach:** Inspired by the work of Ascend at the Aspen Institute, we believe that education, reliable economic supports, social capital, and health and well-being are four vital aspects of helping children and their parents break the cycle of poverty. Our approach has been refined through evidence-based partnerships and programs that address these four key areas, through Summer Learning Academies, Parent University and other initiatives. These programs have earned Sarasota County's Campaign for Grade-Level Reading national pacesetter awards since 2014 and helps inform regional work to improve early literacy through the Suncoast Campaign for Grade-Level Reading.



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