TWO-GEN PARENTS & CHILDREN THRIVING TOGETHER: SURVEY FINDINGS

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INTRODUCTION

In 2016, Georgia was selected as one of five state recipients for the Parents and Children Thriving Together (PACTT) grant from the National Governors Association and the Center for Law and Social Policy. With this grant, Georgia is advancing a two-generation (Two-Gen) approach to support children from low-income families with high quality early learning, while supporting their families in attaining the education, training, and jobs that lead to economic self-sufficiency.

With funding from PACTT, the Department of Early Care and Learning--in partnership with the University System of Georgia, Technical College System of Georgia, Department of Economic Development Workforce Division, and Department of Labor—provided three Two-Gen Innovation Grants to pilot or expand community strategies that connect the early learning and postsecondary/workforce systems at the local level. Family Connection-Communities In Schools of Athens was one of the three grantees.

In the fall of 2017, twenty community partners came together to develop our local Two-Gen PACTT plan. Planning partners included the Early Education Empowerment Zone (DECAL), Athens Technical College, Northeast Georgia Regional Commission, Prevent Child Abuse Athens, Neighborhood Leaders (parent leadership initiative), University of Georgia, Clarke County School District (Office of Early Learning, Early Head Start/Head Start), and others.

The Two-Gen Innovation Grant was aimed at helping implement two-generation strategies that will impact both the children who receive access to high quality early learning, and the ability of parents to attain jobs with family-supporting wages that promote greater economic security.

STUDY OVERVIEW

"Being a single mom, working full time, and going to school is a struggle, but one that I hope, will be more than worth it in the end."
-PACTT Survey Respondent

Our local focus includes improving support for parents who are students at Athens Technical College by improving information access for faculty and staff at the college about the needs of students who are parents, including access to high quality child care; improving support for parents in the early care and education system about opportunities and resources for parents who are students or who would benefit from returning to school; and engaging parents in helping us achieve those systemic changes.

As part of our local initiative, under the leadership of Dr. Grace Bagwell Adams, we conducted research to gather information and further understand the special barriers that parents face when trying to complete post-secondary education. The first survey was administered to students at ATC; the second was administered to ATC faculty and staff.

This report details the results from both surveys, presents relevant data, and closes with an overview of themes and overarching findings that were consistent between both populations surveyed. Current and future efforts of the PACTT committee may be informed by these findings, and should illustrate some of the specific challenges student parents face--as well as the myriad opportunities that the PACTT team has to improve supports for this population.

SURVEY DETAILS

SURVEY DEVELOPMENT

Survey questions were designed by the PACTT team and validated measures were used where possible. The survey was administered online, and respondents were provided with a chance to win a gift card. Email links to the survey were sent to all ATC students for the student parent survey; the second survey was emailed to all ATC faculty and staff.

35%

STUDENT RESPONSE RATE

RESPONSE RATES

ATC enrollment for all campuses total 2,353 students; 834 students responded to the survey yielding a response rate of 35.4%. Part and full time employees of ATC total 568 individuals at the time of survey administration; 196 faculty and staff members responded to the survey, yielding a response rate of 35.4%. Survey response rates reached relative thresholds of respresentativeness for both populations.
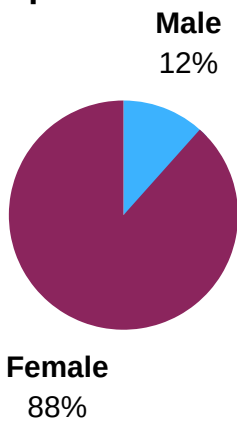
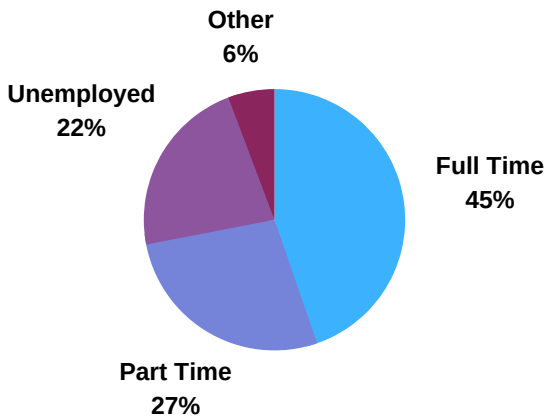**35%**

FACULTY/STAFF RESPONSE RATE
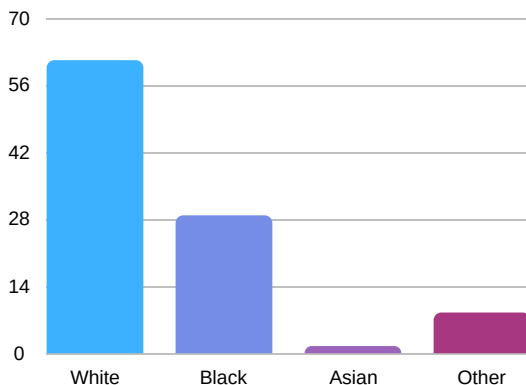
THE DATA: PARENT SURVEY

PARENT DEMOGRAPHICS

Sex of Respondent

Male 12%

Female 88%

Employment Status

Other 6%

Unemployed 22%

Full Time 45%

Part Time 27%

Of the 834 students that responded to the survey, 47% (n=392) indicated that they were parents. All results are reported for student parents only. The vast majority of parent respondents were female (88%), and employed at least part time (72%). Sixty-one percent of respondents were white, 29% were black, 1.5% were Asian and 8.5% identified as "other," which included Asian Pacific Islander, American Indian, and non-responses. Ethnicity was measured separately from race; approximately 10% of the sample identified as being Hispanic/Latinx.

Survey respondents were also asked about marital status--46% indicated that they were married, 54% were single. Highest educational attainment of most respondents was "some college" (54%). Thirty percent of respondents had completed some other form of postsecondary education, yet were pursuing another degree.

Race of Respondent

White, Black, Asian, Other (bar chart, y-axis 0 to 70)

Marital Status

Married 46%

Single 54%

THE DATA: PARENT SURVEY

RESOURCES & SUPPORTS

Parents were asked about what resources they were currently relying on for support. Half of survey respondents indicated they were receiving food assistance of some kind, either in the form of SNAP (food stamps) or WIC (supplemental nutri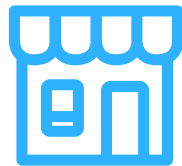tion support for women, infants, and children). Approximately 7.5% of respondents had children in the Early Head Start or Head Start program, while 6.2% were receiving childcare assistance in the form of CAPS (Childcare & Parent Services). Only 2.5% of respondents were receiving cash assistance in the form of Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF). Finally, 7.1% of respondents received support through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).

| SNAP or WIC 50% | Head Start 7.5% | CAPS 6.2% | TANF 2.5% | WIOA 7.1% |

Student parents were asked whom they would ask for assistance if they needed help or support to stay in school. Almost half (48%) rely on family members, 28% rely on their partner, 11% rely on friends, 3% rely on faculty or staff, 3% rely on their faith community, and 4% indicated they did not have anyone for support.
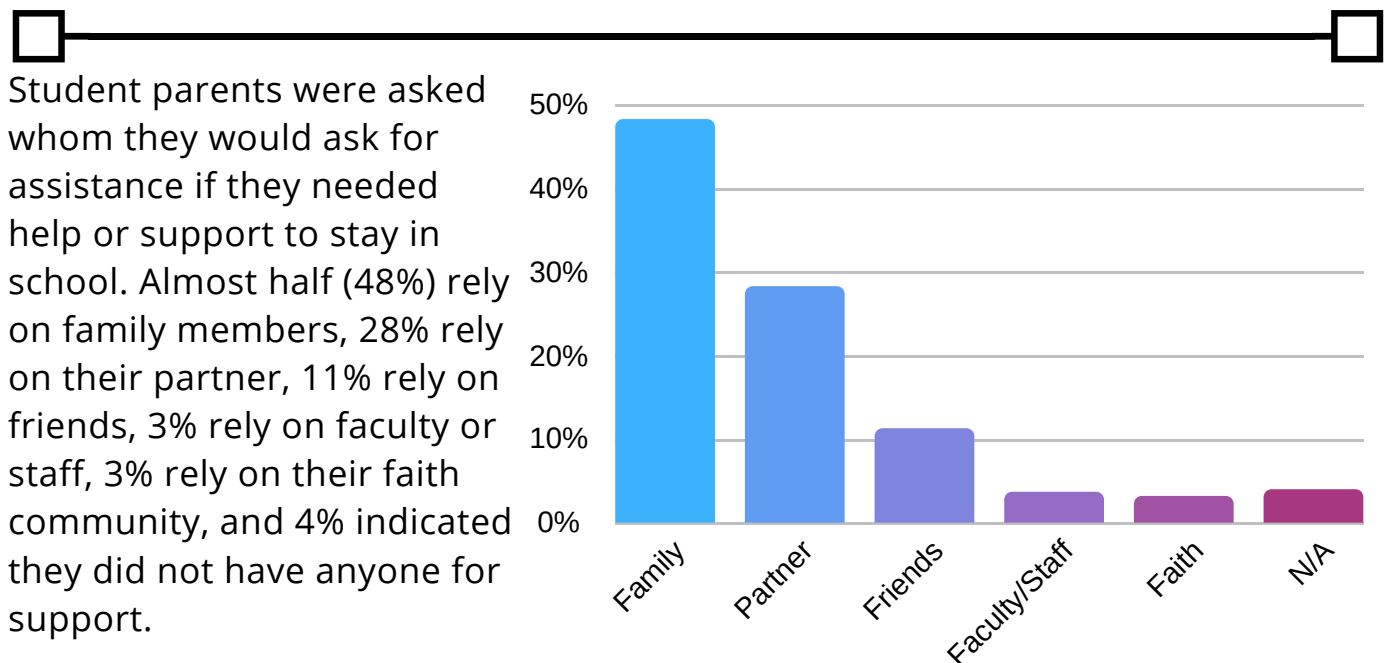
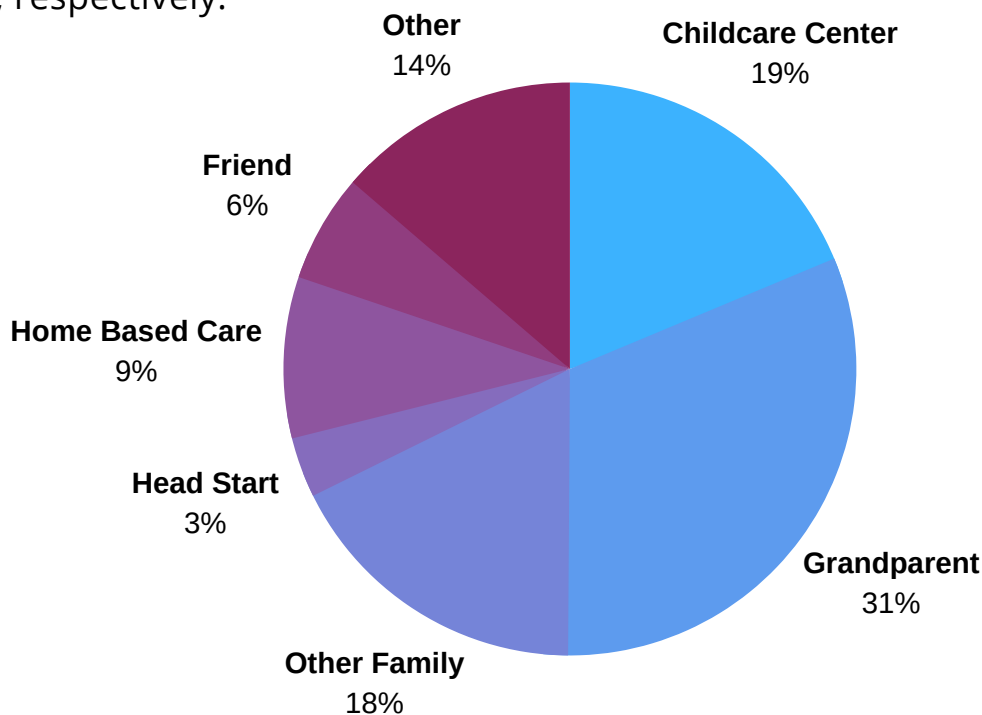# THE DATA: PARENT SURVEY

CHILDCARE FOR STUDENT PARENTS

$ ➔ **$404***

Average monthly childcare expenditure amount reported by survey respondents.

Parents were asked to indicate their *primary* source of childcare. Almost one third of parents rely on a grandparent for care, followed by childcare centers (19%), other family (18%), home-based care (9%), friends (6%), and Head Start (3%), respectively.**

Other
14%

Childcare Center
19%

Friend
6%

Home Based Care
9%

Head Start
3%

Grandparent
31%

Other Family
18%

**Note: 92% *of respondents indicated that they had to rely on other sources of childcare in addition to their primary source.*

THE DATA: PARENT SURVEY

CHILDCARE FOR STUDENT PARENTS

Parents were asked to indicate the degree to which they "Agreed" or "Disagreed" with statements about their childcare. The figure below shows the percentage of parents who indicated they agreed or strongly agreed with each characteristic of their child's care.
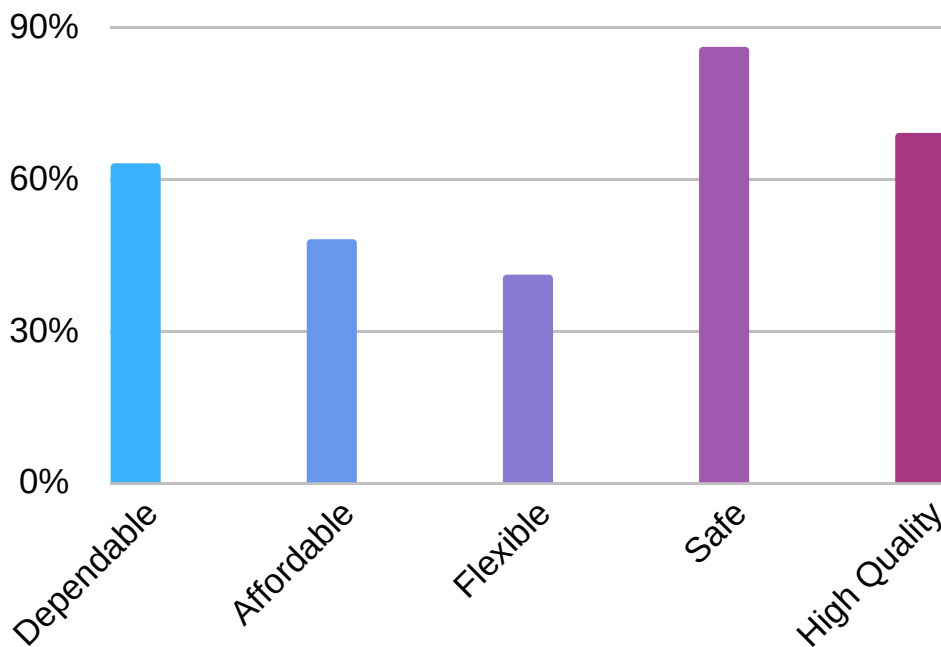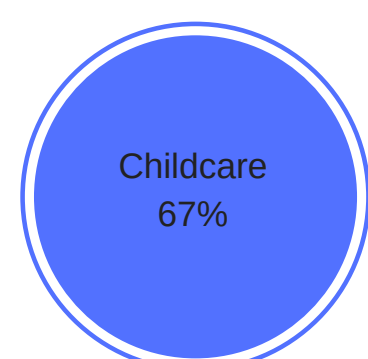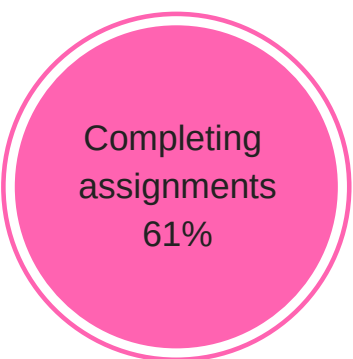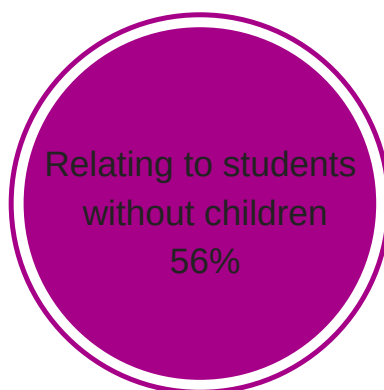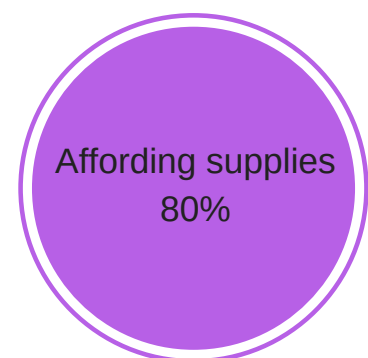

TRANSPORTATION

93%*

*93% of respondents said that their primary mode of transporation to school was a personal vehicle, 4% of respondents rely on getting rides from family or friends, while 3% indicated that they rely on public transportation, taxi, or Uber services.

THE DATA: PARENT SURVEY

CHALLENGES PARENTS FACE

Parents were asked to indicate the degree to which they faced different challenges, ranging from "not at all" to "always." The top five challenges are listed below--the percentage shown indicates the percentage of respondents that indicated they experienced challenges with each issue "some of the time."

Time Management
87%

Affording supplies
80%

Relating to students without children
56%

Completing assignments
61%

Childcare
67%

ADDITIONAL CHALLENGES

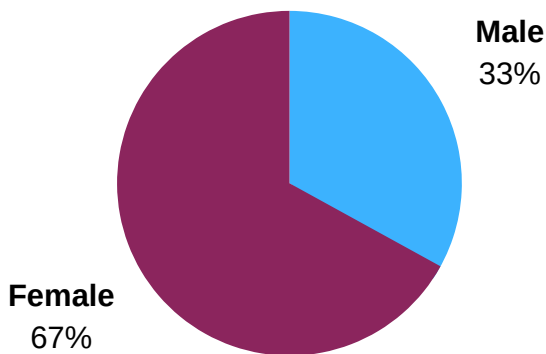Additional survey items focused on other challenges that parents might experience, and were measured on the same scale ranging from "not at all" to "always." Among parents responding to the survey, 42% indicated that attending class is a challenge, 38% said that being on time is a challenge, 25% struggle with reliable transportation, and 39% indicated they are challenged by class schedules that sometimes shift unexpectedly.

THE DATA: PARENT SURVEY

BARRIERS TO SUCCESS

When asked about existing barriers that might keep the student parent from completing their degree program or program of study, there were several themes that emerged. The most common words in their responses were **"time,"** **"money,"** and **"childcare."** These themes reflect the same challenges highlighted in the previous section.

This graphic below captures and highlights the most frequently occurring words in the response to the survey question about barriers. Words are proportional to the number of times they appear across all responses. As shown, balancing work and school and taking care of family responsibilities are the major themes. The central word "time" dominates the word cloud, and reinforces the finding that time management is the biggest challenge of student parents.

THE DATA: FACULTY/STAFF SURVEY

FACULTY/STAFF DEMOGRAPHICS

A total of 196 ATC faculty and staff responded to the employee survey, yielding a 35% response rate. Sixty-seven percent of respondents were female and 33% were male. Over one third of respondents were staff members, 28% identified as administrators, and 26% identified as faculty members. Nine percent identified as "other," which included adjunct instructors and WIOA professionals. Average length of employment for respondents was 8.3 years.

When asked to estimate what percentage of their students were parents or caregivers of dependents, the average response of ATC employees was 43%. The rest of the survey focused on perceptions of student parents among ATC employes.

Sex of Respondent

Male 33%

Female 67%

Type of Employee

Administrator 28%

Staff 37%

Other 9%
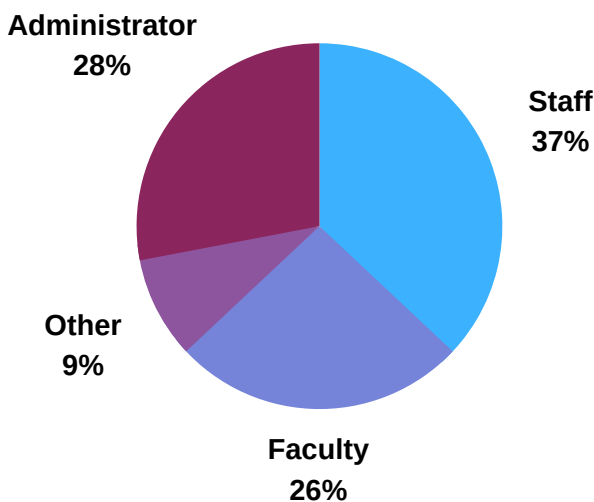
Faculty 26%

Average Duration of Employment
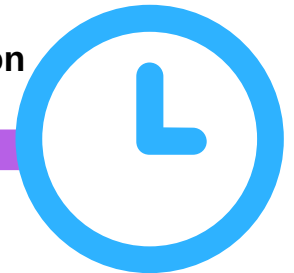
8.3 years

THE DATA: FACULTY/STAFF SURVEY

ASKING FOR HELP

Athens Technical College (ATC) employees responding to the survey were asked if students had ever approached them asking for supports *beyond* those directly related to course material or their program of study. An overwhelming majority of ATC employees indicated that they had been asked for additional support--over 65% had been approached at some point by a student needing assistance of some kind.

Among those who indicated they had been asked for help, a follow-up question asked what type of support was requested from the faculty, staff, or administrator. The most common needs among respondents included childcare assistance, financial aid/financial assistance, transportation to and from school, and help with purchasing items for class such as textbooks and other materials.

Childcare — **Financial aid/ assistance** — **Course Materials** — **Transportation**

PERCEIVED BARRIERS

ATC employees were also asked about their perception of barriers for student parents. The question was "for students with children or dependents, what do you perceive are the most common barriers to student success, outside of course material?" The most common responses were:

- Conflicts with work or work schedules (71%)
- Lack of childcare (65%)
- Economic hardship (50%)
- Lack of reliable transportation (49%)
- Time management (44%)

THE DATA: FACULTY/STAFF SURVEY

RESOURCES & SUPPORTS

Survey respondents were then asked to identify what resources or supports could be helpful to the students they teach and serve. Eighty percent of faculty or staff suggested that CAPS (Child and Parent Services childcare assistance) would be helpful; 39% suggested food assistance (such as SNAP or WIC) as helpful, 50% suggested Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), 32% suggested Medicaid, 48% suggested Head Start, and 57% suggested after school programs/childcare would be helpful to the student parents they serve.
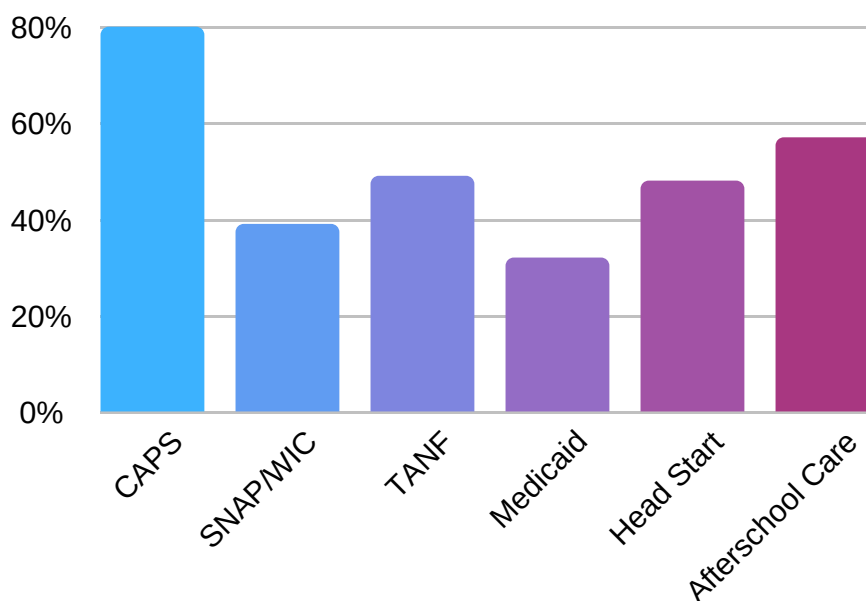
COMMUNICATION

Faculty and staff were asked about the best ways of getting information and resources to them for student support, and the most popular response was email communication (71%), followed by website/online resource (38%), and finally a seminar or information session (34%).

THE DATA: FACULTY/STAFF SURVEY

SCHOOL CLIMATE

Athens Technical College employees were asked about their perceptions of school climate specific to student parents. Among survey respondents, 65% of employees reported that ATC provides a flexible environment for student parents. Similarly, 63% of employees perceive that ATC provides a supportive environment for student parents. Only 38% of ATC employees responding to the survey indicated that they believe the school does a good job of providing information on available childcare resources with faculty and staff for sharing with students.

ATC employees expressed a significant willingness to share information and connect students to resources. Eighty percent of respondents indicated they would be comfortable speaking with students about resources that could help them finish their degree; 82% said they believed removing barriers to student success was part of their professional role with the college. Likewise, 79% of respondents said they would be willing to make referrals to students for childcare resources in the community and 82% expressed a desire to learn more about available resources for students with dependent children.

OPPORTUNITY FOR CHANGE

The vast majority of ATC employees indicated that they want to share information with the students they serve that could connect them to resources and assist them in completion of their program of study. However, only 38% of respondents had any familiarity with childcare resources in the community. By providing employees with information about childcare resources, ATC will create new conduits for student parents to be connected to supports needed for their academic success.

FINAL THOUGHTS & FEEDBACK

TYING IT ALL TOGETHER

The last question on both surveys was an open-ended response opportunity--both ATC employees and student parents were asked to share any additional thoughts or comments regarding barriers to educational success for student parents. The recurring themes in the responses largely mirrored one another between the two groups surveyed.

The main points conveyed included: 1) the need for affordable childcare (over 50% of respondents in both surveys mentioned this), 2) the critical nature of connection between existing resources and student parent needs (over one third of ATC employees focused on this in their written response), 3) a desire for child-friendly environments and spaces on-campus, 4) more opportunities for social connection among ATC student parents to build social capital and connection, and 5) the need for more flexibility for student parents, especially when instances such as having a sick child arise.

The barriers identified to student parent success in both surveys also overlapped. Widespread recognition among survey respondents of the challenges related to time management; lack of financial resources for tuition and course materials; general economic hardship; childcare issues; and lack of reliable transportation emerge for most survey respondents as the main impediments for student parents to thrive in their academic program.

Resources used and the supports needed by student parents converged across both surveys as well. Student parents reported that most often, they have some basic food assistance yet food insecurity remains a problem. Economic hardship also translates into lack of access to reliable transportation and being able to afford course materials--particularly textbooks. On average, student parents are spending at least $400 per month on childcare (many spend $1000 per month or more), yet only 6.2% of student parents were receiving CAPS (childcare assistance) at the point of survey. Economic hardship and time management challenges are inextricably linked: 78% of student parents work part or full time in addition to pursuing a post-secondary degree.

RECOMMENDATIONS

"I am all too willing to refer students to resources if I know of them. When personal needs are lacking, focusing on school is hard."- ATC Employee

IDEAS FOR MOVING FORWARD

Suggestions for addressing the barriers presented in these findings were given by ATC employees and student parents at the end of each survey. A content analysis of open-ended responses identified five key recommendations.

1

On-site Childcare at Athens Technical College
An on-campus childcare center for student parents is needed in the longterm. Immediate assistance is needed in the form of vouchers to existing facilities and connection to quality local childcare options.

2

Peer Support Network for Student Parents
Social isolation and lack of connection to community within ATC could be addressed through creation of a peer support network for student parents, and could create a conduit for sharing information about existing resources with the students that need them most.

3

Internal Channels Sharing Information to ATC Employees
Formalized pathways for sharing up-to-date information about both on-campus and community resources specific to student parents with all ATC employees is essential toward building bridges between need and existing supports. A specific suggestion is to share updated information on the ATC faculty/staff intranet system.

4

Family-friendly Spaces On Athens Technical College Campus
Creation of family friendly spaces--such as a computer lab-- on campus could facilitate student success by allowing students to have a physical space to complete assignments, print course papers, or access online resources while having their children with them

5

Family-friendly Course Policies
Instituting campus-wide policies to facilitate parent success could include specific family-friendly considerations. An example is a statement included on all syllabi that students with children will be given course accommodations in the event of family medical events or illness.

PARENTS & CHILDREN THRIVING TOGETHER

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

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QUESTIONS?

Please contact Tim Johnson, Executive Director of Clarke County Family Connections-Communities in Schools at tim.johnson@fc-cis.org.