

SUPPORTED BY GRANT FUNDING FROM
TWO-GEN GEORGIA & THE DEPARTMENT
OF EARLY CARE & LEARNING



TWO-GEN GEORGIA: GNTC SURVEY FINDINGS & FINAL REPORT

Prepared for:
Community Foundation of Northwest Georgia
&
Georgia Northwestern Technical College

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS & COMMUNITY PARTNERS

This project was made possible by funding from the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) through their Two-Gen Georgia Innovation Grant Program.



With leadership provided from the Northwest Georgia Community Foundation and Georgia Northwestern Technical College, the following community partners worked to complete activities related to the planning grant:



This report, and all data collection, analysis, and results, were prepared by Dr. Grace Bagwell Adams. For questions regarding the Two-Gen Georgia Planning Grant in Northwest Georgia, contact Suzanne Harbin at suzanne.harbin@communityfoundationnwga.org. For questions regarding the research findings or analysis, please contact Grace Bagwell Adams at grace.bagwell@gmail.com.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

"I am a single mother of two children... I am currently full time at my job...its hard to manage work, school and kids all at once. Sometimes I feel as if I will never finish my degree. I remind myself that I have no option other than to get my degree. Not just for my kids but for myself as well."- GNTC Student

In 2019, the Community Foundation of Northwest Georgia, in partnership with Georgia Northwestern Technical College (GNTC), was awarded a Two-Gen Georgia Innovation Capacity Building Grant from the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning. With this funding, we set out to understand the barriers in our community experienced by families with children in pursuing their education.

Through this work, we are promoting a "Two-Gen" approach. Two-generation strategies help 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. The goal of this study is to raise community awareness of the link between parent and children's educational success.

In Fall 2019, we conducted survey research to understand the GNTC student population and employee experiences with student parents. Over 2,100 students, faculty, staff, and administrators responded to our survey and here is what we learned:

Many student parents are financially fragile.

Costs of food + childcare, in addition to basic cost of text books, laptop, and other materials are often hard to pay for; for some students this leads to attrition.

Childcare is piecemeal.

Parents are piecing childcare together from multiple sources. 1 in 4 have no other options and are taking care of children at home as well as working and going to school.

Flexibility is needed.

Time management, completing course assignments, and affording course-related items are major challenges. GNTC can assist in providing supports for student parents.

Social capital is critical but lacking.

Families struggle with childcare. Many indicated they have no one to call for help of any kind when they need it. Student parents often feel disconnected from their younger and childless peers.

The Two Gen Innovation Grant was instrumental in helping us understand the challenges student parents face, and community partners are now working to connect these students with resources and supports in the GNTC system and the broader community.

For more information or to access a copy of the report, please contact Suzanne Harbin, Director of Early Childhood Initiatives at the Community Foundation of Northwest Georgia at the following email address: suzanne.harbin@communityfoundationnwga.org.



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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. The Community Foundation of Northwest Georgia was one of these grantees, receiving a Capacity Building Grant.

In Spring of 2019, community partners came together to develop our local Two-Gen plan. Planning partners included the DECAL Early Education Community Partnership Lead Coordinator Clayton Adams; Georgia Northwestern Technical College administrators and leadership; Community Foundation of Northwest Georgia Early Childhood Initiative Director Suzanne Harbin; Dalton Greater Chamber of Commerce Educational Partnership Director Stephani Womack; and local Head Start partners.

The Two-Gen Georgia Planning Grant was aimed at understanding the barriers in our community for families with children to thrive in pursuing their education, 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, and raising community awareness of the link between parent and children's educational success.

STUDY OVERVIEW



*"Sometimes I feel as if I will never finish my degree. I remind myself that I have no option other than to get my degree. Not just for my kids but for myself as well."
-GNTC Student*

Our local focus includes improving support for parents who are students at Georgia Northwestern Technical College (GNTC) 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.

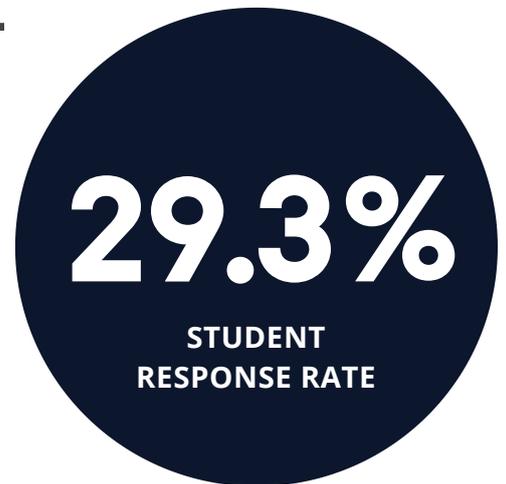
As part of our local initiative, working with researcher Dr. Grace Bagwell Adams, we conducted a study to gather information and further understand the special barriers that parents face when trying to complete post-secondary education. The first survey was administered to students at GNTC; the second was administered to GNTC 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 local Two-Gen 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 Two-Gen committee and GNTC have to improve supports for this population. The long term effect of providing such supports could have significant influence on persistence in school and completion of postsecondary degrees for families with children.

SURVEY DETAILS

SURVEY DEVELOPMENT

Survey questions were designed by the Two-Gen team and Dr. Bagwell Adams; 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 GNTC students for the student parent survey; the second survey was emailed to all GNTC faculty and staff. The survey was launched in August 2019 and closed at the end of September 2019.



RESPONSE RATES

GNTC enrollment for all campuses total 6,368 students; 1,865 students responded to the survey yielding a response rate of 29.3%. Part and full time employees of GNTC total 732 individuals at the time of survey administration; 256 faculty and staff members responded to the survey, yielding a response rate of 34.9%. Survey response rates reached relative thresholds of representation for both populations.

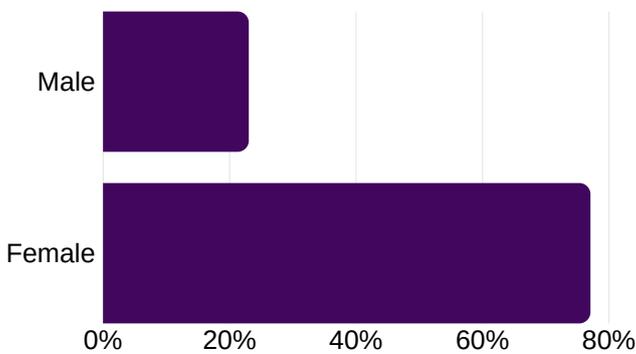


THE DATA: PARENT SURVEY

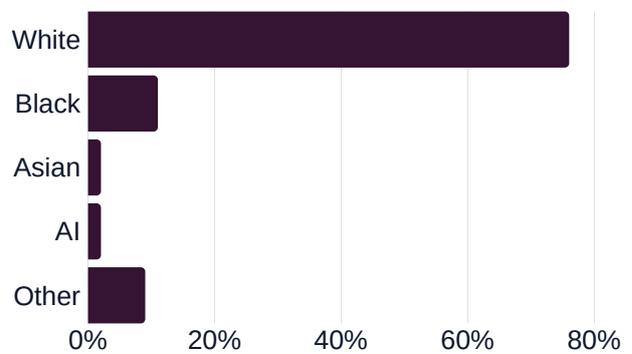
PARENT DEMOGRAPHICS

Of the 1,865 students that responded to the survey, 45.1% (n=841) indicated that they were parents. Most of the children parented by these students at GNTC are less than 6 years of age. All of the following results are reported for student parents only. The vast majority of parent respondents were female (77%), and employed full or part time (77%). Seventy-six percent of respondents were white, 11% were black, 2% were Asian, 2% were American Indian, and 9% identified as "other," which included Asian Pacific Islander, American Indian, and non-responses. Ethnicity was measured separately from race; approximately 12% of the sample identified as being Hispanic/Latinx. Survey respondents were also asked about marital status--55% indicated that they were married.

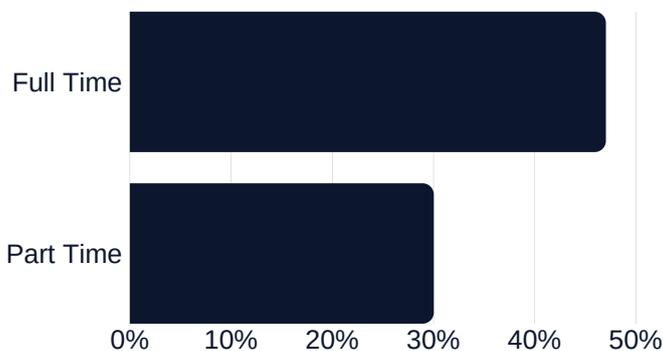
Sex of Respondent



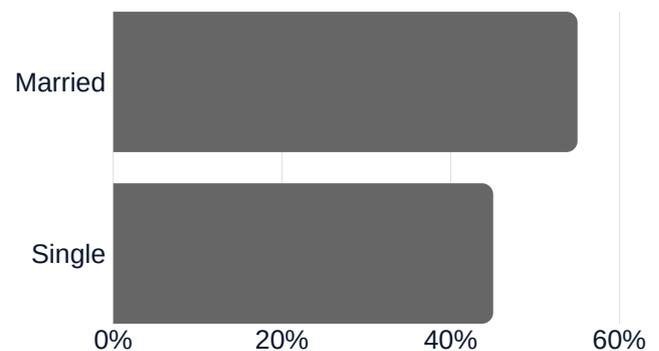
Race of Respondent



Employment Status



Marital Status



THE DATA: PARENT SURVEY

RESOURCES & SUPPORTS

Average monthly household income for student parents at GNTC is \$2,100 (pre-tax). Parents were asked about what resources they were currently relying on for support. **Forty percent** of survey respondents indicated they were receiving food assistance of some kind, either in the form of SNAP (food stamps) or WIC (supplemental nutrition support for women, infants, and children).

Approximately 7.6% of respondents had children in the Early Head Start or Head Start program, while 6% were receiving childcare assistance in the form of CAPS (Childcare & Parent Services). Only 2.4% of respondents were receiving cash assistance in the form of Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF).

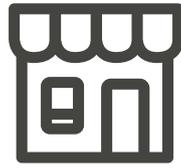
Finally, 9% of respondents received support through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).



SNAP or WIC
50%



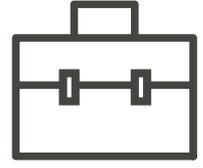
Head Start
7.6%



CAPS
6%



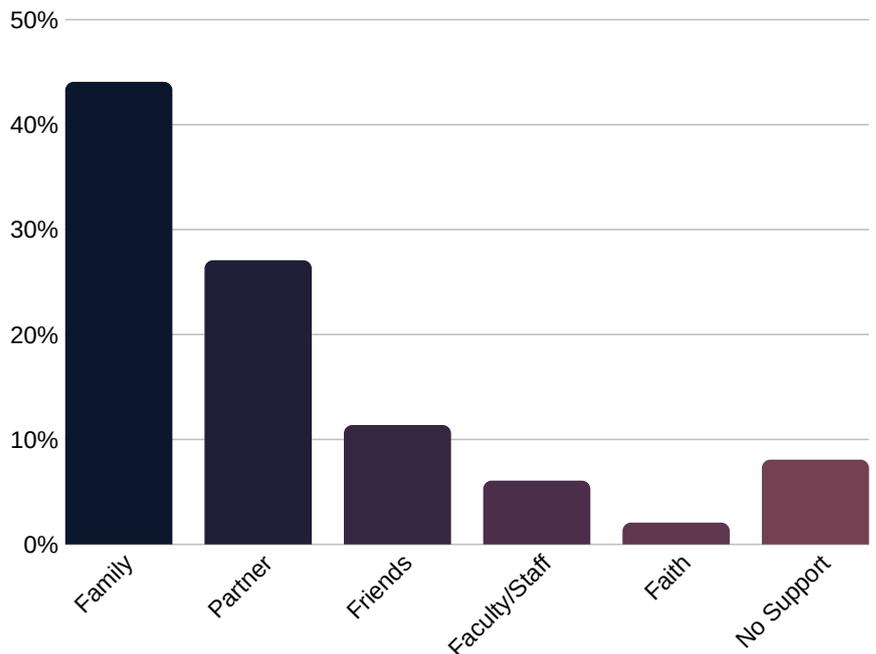
TANF
2.4%



WIOA
9%

Student parents were asked whom they would ask for assistance if they needed help or support to stay in school.

Almost half (44%) rely on family members, 27% rely on their partner, 11% rely on friends, 6% rely on faculty or staff, 2% rely on their faith community, and 8% indicated they did not have anyone for support.



THE DATA: PARENT SURVEY

CHILDCARE FOR STUDENT PARENTS

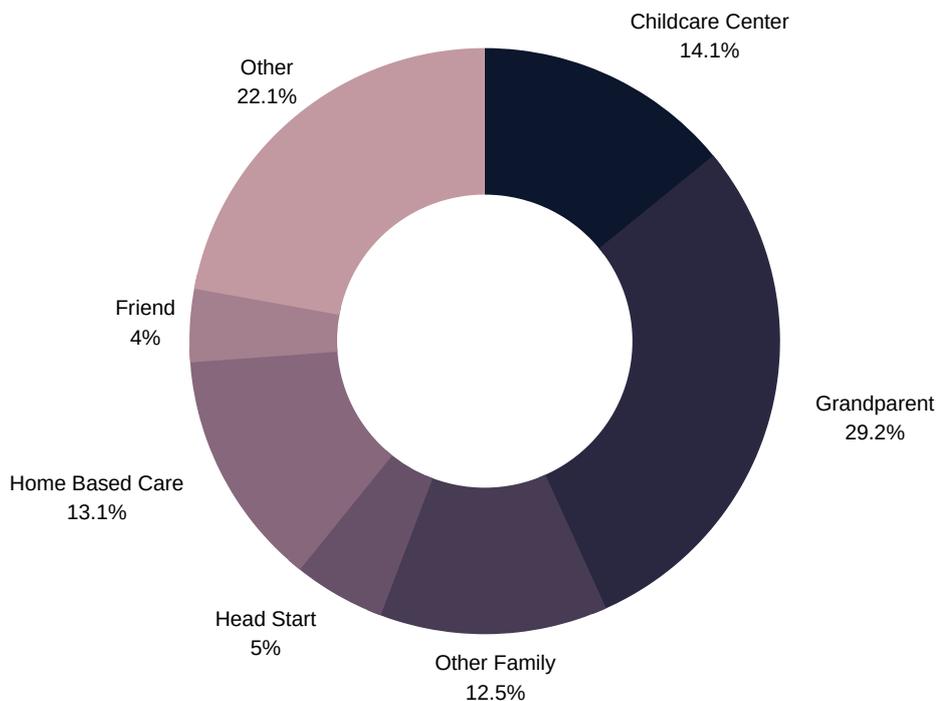


\$400

**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 (14%), home-based care (13.1%), other family (12.5%), Head Start (5%), and friends (4%). Notably, 22% said "other," which included a predominant response that the family had no primary childcare arrangement.**

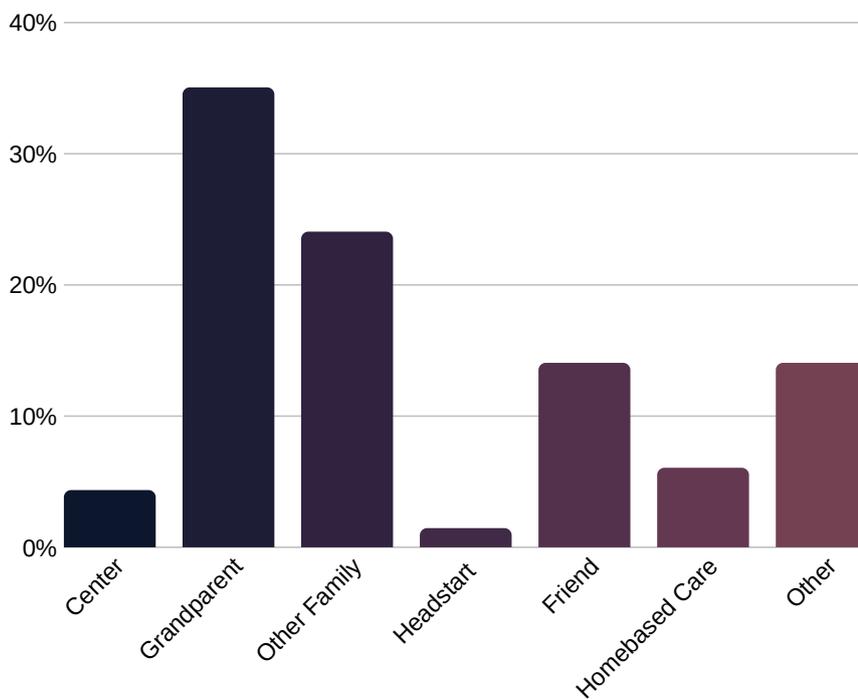


****Note: 92% of respondents indicated that they had to rely on other sources of childcare in addition to their primary source.**

THE DATA: PARENT SURVEY

SECONDARY CHILDCARE SOURCES

Parents were also asked, in addition to their "primary" source of childcare, what other sources they relied on--and to select "all that applied." Many parents rely on multiple sources to meet their primary and secondary childcare needs.



TRANSPORTATION



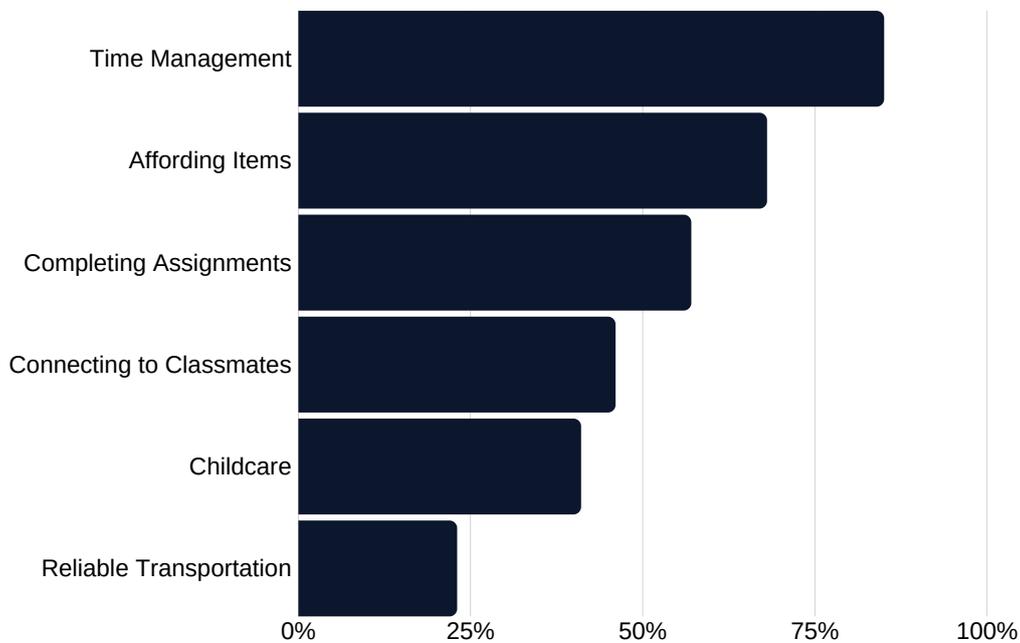
92%

Ninety-two percent of respondents said that their primary mode of transportation to school was a personal vehicle, 8% of respondents rely on other methods, with most of those respondents say they depend on rides from family members or friends.

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 six challenges are listed below--the percentage shown indicates the percentage of respondents that indicated they experienced challenges with each issue "some of the time." Eighty-five percent of respondents said time management was a challenge.



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.

There were two other findings of note:



Food security is a major issue. 16% said they often could not afford to eat balanced meals; 38% said this was true sometimes.



When childcare sources usually relied upon are closed or unavailable, most people stated they called out of work and school and had to stay home.

THE DATA: PARENT SURVEY

OPEN-ENDED RESPONSES

We asked "What are the barriers or challenges you face to completing your degree?" Here is what we learned.

Working full time, being a single mother with little support makes it difficult to find the time to focus as much as I would like to.

My car broke down and my laptop broke one week before school started...I had no way to log into my classes because I couldn't afford to get my laptop fixed... I had no way to get to school. I live an hour and a half from my school and an Uber was \$100 each way. I just want to get my degree but every time I enroll in school something seems to happen. How can I make my life better if there are so many challenges?

In post secondary education instructors should be a little understanding because most of us are non-traditional students, hoping to get an education to help take better care of our families.

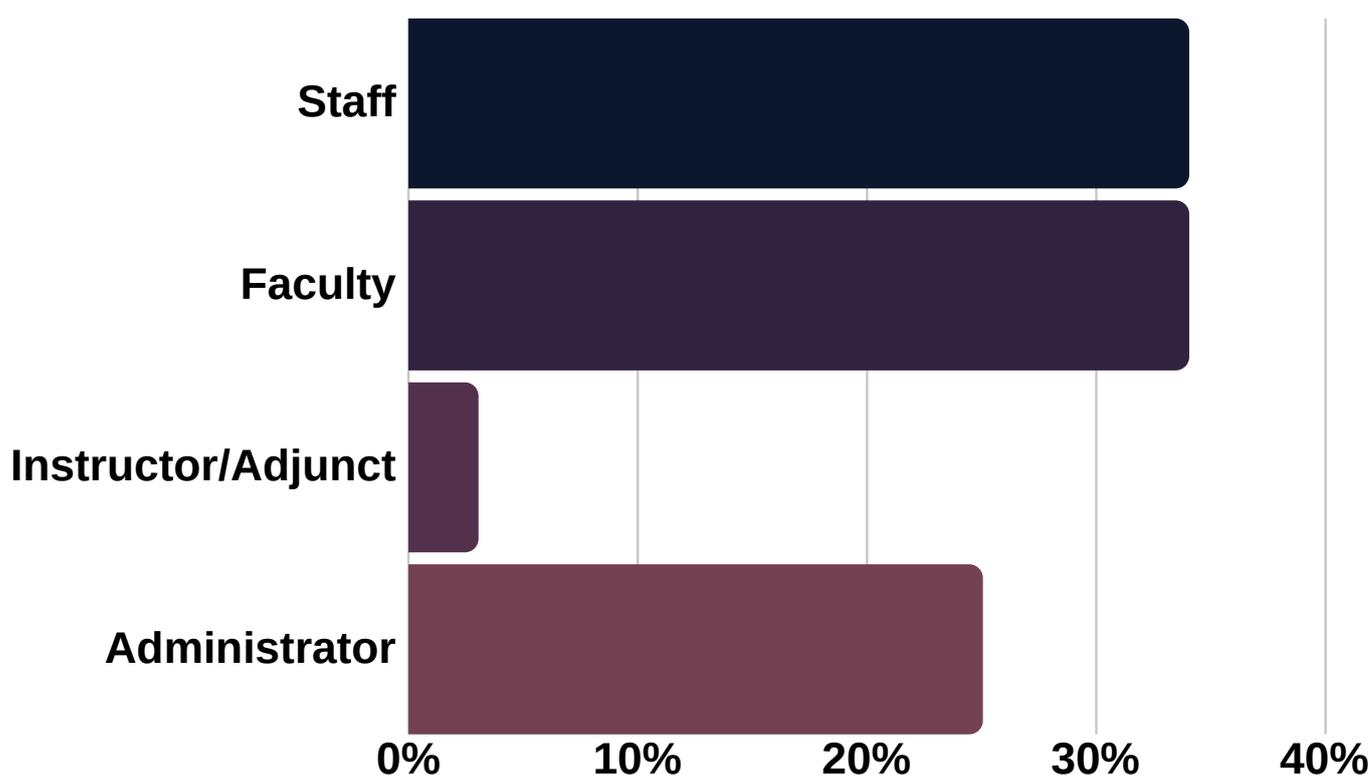
THE DATA: FACULTY/STAFF SURVEY

FACULTY/STAFF DEMOGRAPHICS

A total of 256 GNTC faculty and staff responded to the employee survey, yielding a 34.9% response rate. Sixty-seven percent of respondents were female and 33% were male. Over one third of respondents were staff members, 25% identified as administrators, and 34% identified as faculty members. Four percent identified as instructor/ adjuncts and WIOA professionals.

When asked to estimate what percentage of their students were parents or caregivers of dependents, the average response of GNTC employees was 51%. The rest of the survey focused on perceptions of student parents among GNTC employees.

Type of Employee



THE DATA: FACULTY/STAFF SURVEY

ASKING FOR HELP

Georgia Northwestern Technical College (GNTC) 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 GNTC employees indicated that they had been asked for additional support--over 60% 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.



**Financial aid/
assistance**



Course Materials



Childcare

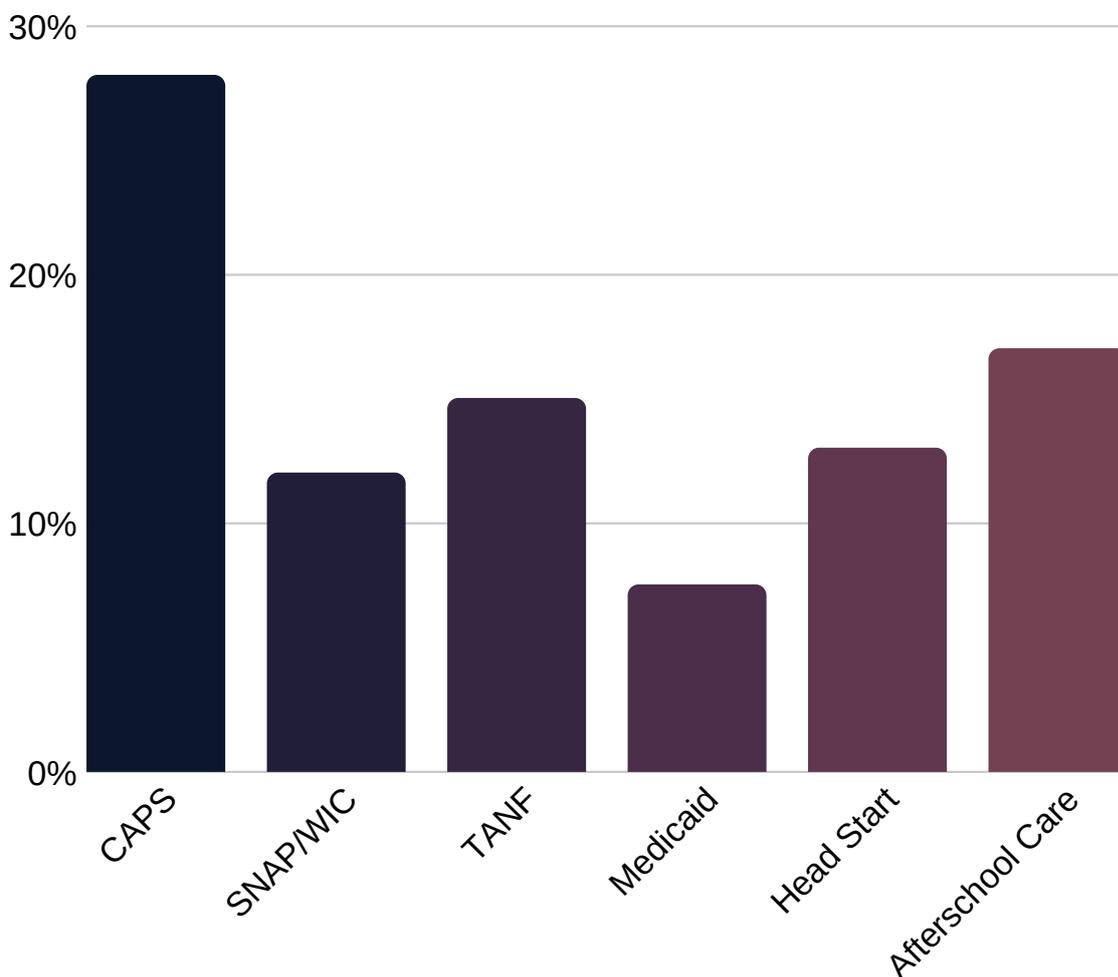


Transportation

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. Twenty-eight percent of faculty or staff suggested that CAPS (Child and Parent Services childcare assistance) would be helpful; 12% suggested food assistance (such as SNAP or WIC) as helpful, 15% suggested Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), 7.5% suggested Medicaid, 13% suggested Head Start, and 17% suggested after school programs/childcare would be helpful to the student parents they serve.



THE DATA: FACULTY/STAFF SURVEY

SCHOOL CLIMATE



PERCEPTIONS OF GNTC

"GNTC provides a flexible environment for student parents." 70% Agreed

"GNTC provides a supportive environment for student parents." 73% Agreed



ROLES AT GNTC

"GNTC does a good job providing available childcare resources to faculty and staff for sharing with students." 34% Agreed

"Part of my role as a GNTC employee is to assist students in completion of their degree by addressing barriers to their success." 87% Agreed



WILLINGNESS TO HELP

"I am comfortable speaking to students about accessing potential resources to assist them in completing their degree." 80% Agreed

"I would be willing to make referrals for the students I teach or serve to childcare resources in the community." 79% Agreed



KNOWLEDGE OF RESOURCES

"I am familiar with GNTC resources that are available to the students I teach or serve." 74% Agreed

"I am familiar with childcare resources in the community." 31% Agreed

THE DATA: FACULTY/STAFF SURVEY

PERCEIVED BARRIERS

GNTC 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 (23%)
- Lack of childcare (18%)
- Economic hardship (15%)
- Lack of reliable transportation (13%)
- Time management (16%)

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 (43%), followed by website/online resource (21%), printed material (19%), and finally an in-person seminar or meeting (16%).

OPPORTUNITY FOR CHANGE

The vast majority of GNTC 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, given that only 31% of respondents had any familiarity with childcare resources in the community. By providing employees with information about childcare resources, GNTC 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 GNTC 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 quality, 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 GNTC 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 GNTC 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% of student parents were receiving CAPS (childcare assistance) at the point of survey. Twenty percent of pre-tax income is going directly to childcare. 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.

Faculty put forth innovative and comprehensive recommendations that included: flexible, affordable, on-campus childcare; financial management classes; more night class offerings, on-campus food pantries or assistance, counseling options, a special parent orientation; allowing children on campus.

RECOMMENDATIONS

"I believe all the barriers listed can at some point be a problem for students that have children. Having resources and being able to get that information to the students is important in their success."-GNTC Employee

IDEAS FOR MOVING FORWARD

1

Family Resource Center Located On Campus

Formalized pathways for sharing up-to-date information about both on-campus and community resources specific to student parents is essential toward building bridges between need and existing supports. An on-campus family resource center is one such pathway.

2

A Focus on Food Assistance

Even though half of families with children receive SNAP and/or WIC through participation in these food assistance programs, many families indicate that they struggle to provide balanced meals to their family on a regular basis. GNTC efforts should consider this special need among their student populations

3

Connection to Existing Peer Supports for Student Parents

Social isolation and lack of connection to community within GNTC could be addressed through leveraging 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--one existing pathway is GNTC Phi Beta Lambda Chapter. Additional existing supports for these efforts are listed in an Appendix to this report.

4

Bridge the Perception & Reality Gap for GNTC Employees

GNTC faculty, staff, and administrators demonstrated willingness to assist student parents. However, many employees responded with uncertainty about how to help and perceived their students to have more formal assistance than the students actually have. Educational efforts for employees could bridge the gap between perception and reality.

5

Time Management & Other Skill Building Opportunities

Professional development and skill building opportunities for student parents that are focused on time management, financial literacy, soft skills for employment, and parenting skills could assist students in overcoming one of their most significant challenges.

TWO-GEN PLANNING GRANT COMMITTEE

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Clayton Adams, Georgia Department of Early Care & Learning

Doug Belisle, Bartow Collaborative

Audra Falconer, Community Foundation of Northwest Georgia

Michael Fennell, Georgia Northwestern Technical College

Jan Lanier, Georgia Northwestern Technical College

Suzanne Harbin, Community Foundation of Northwest Georgia

Stephani Womack, Believe Greater Dalton

QUESTIONS?

Please contact Suzanne Harbin, Director of Early Childhood Initiatives at the Community Foundation of Northwest Georgia.

Email: suzanne.harbin@communityfoundationnwga.org

APPENDIX: GNTC EXISTING RESOURCES

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EXISTING RESOURCES FOR GNTC STUDENTS

Name	Description of Resource/Specific Supports Provided	Eligibility Requirements	How do students find out about this resource?
Student Assistance Program - ESPYR	Counseling support, Coach services, Work-Life Services.	GNTC Student	On campus marketing and Faculty/Staff referral
Lending Library	Lends textbooks on semester basis	GNTC Student	On campus marketing and Faculty/Staff referral
Customized Workshops/Seminars	Workshops/Seminars on topics such as stress management, parenting skills, job readiness.	GNTC Student	On campus marketing and Faculty/Staff referral
Customized Workshops/Seminars	Workshops/Seminars on budgeting, job search, resume writing, setting goals, dressing for success.	AE Student	Instructors
Transition Services	Assistance with applying for college or searching for a job	AE Student	Transition Coordinator
Accessibility Services	Provide students with disabilities the necessary accommodations for access to programs and services.	GNTC Student	On campus marketing and Faculty/Staff referral
Exemption Testing	Provides students with credit by exam options for many courses.	GNTC Student	On campus marketing and Faculty/Staff referral
Tutoring Services	Face-to-face and online tutoring in many subject areas.	GNTC Student	On campus marketing and Faculty/Staff referral
WIOA	Federally funded work training program. Can assist with child care expenses.	GNTC Student	On campus marketing and Faculty/Staff referral