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EDITOR'S PICK

Opinion: Bridging generations brings better outcomes for children and parents

Karen Tilkin
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CAP Tulsa offers an English as a Second Language program to non-English speaking parents of children in its early c generation model has been shown to have better outcomes for parents and their children.

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Improving outcomes for children and raising the household income of families in poverty are too often treated as separate goals. However, research shows that these two challenges are deeply interconnected and that addressing them with a two-generation approach can advance solutions for both.

A recent study published in Child Development Perspectives identifies successful two-generation program designs that simultaneously promote child development and the livelihood of children's caregivers, to the betterment of each. Highlighted in this study are exemplary models from Brazil, Vietnam, Colombia, Madagascar and the U.S., notably CAP Tulsa's two-generation English as a Second Language program.

For immigrant parents, proficiency in English is crucial for accessing community resources, continuing their education and securing employment — all of which positively influence their children's development.

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Over the past decade, CAP Tulsa has provided an ESL program designed for parents of children enrolled in the agency's early learning program. This program offers a tested curriculum tailored to parents' motivations, including supporting their children's school experiences, enhancing their family's well-being and integrating into the local community.

The ESL program prepares parents to converse with their child's pediatrician and teachers and better equips them for the workforce. It features high class frequency, a closed, cohort-based enrollment, weekly peer meetings and individualized supports to ensure persistence.

Operating during fall and spring semesters, the ESL program serves up to 80 participants per semester across three levels of language fluency. CAP Tulsa also offers a virtual option for flexible scheduling and learning.

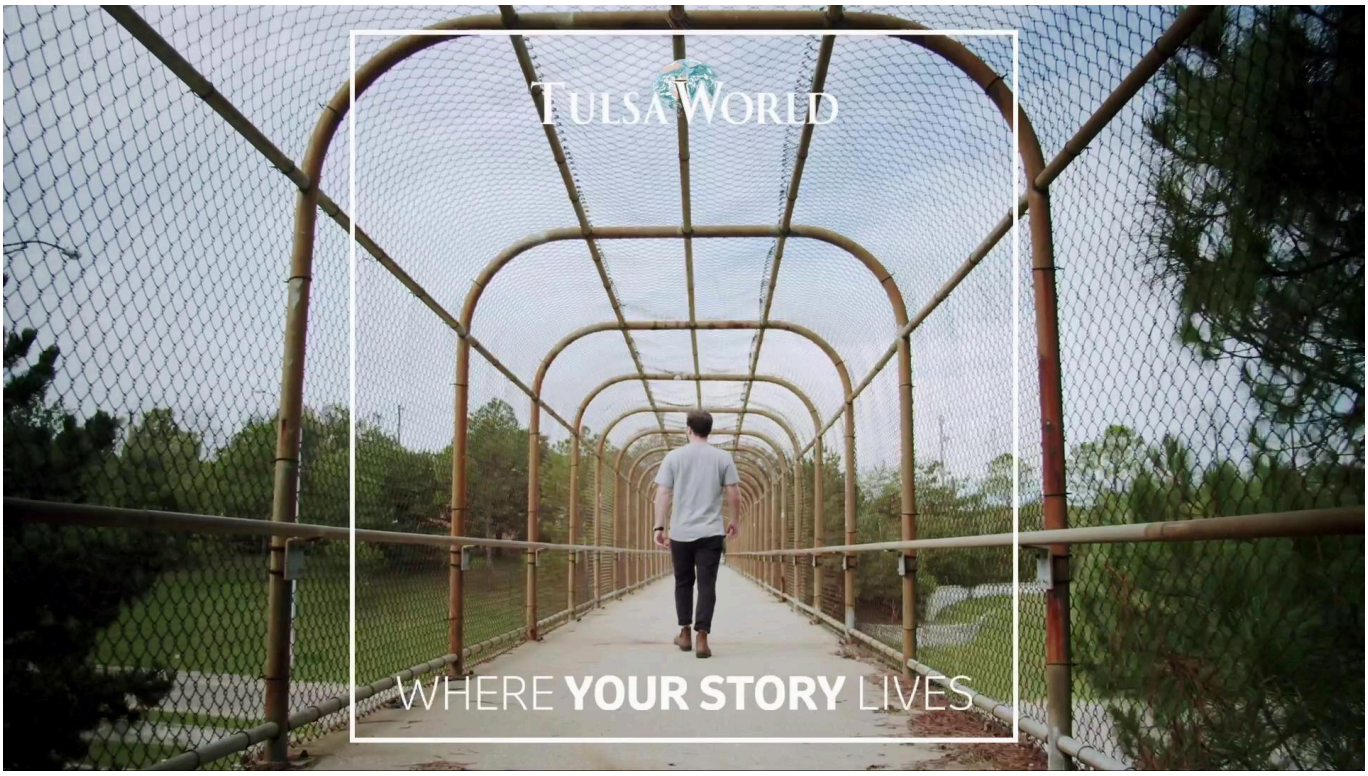
An ongoing study by Northwestern University researchers confirms the benefits of CAP Tulsa's ESL Program. Participants exhibit higher-than-national-average levels of class attendance, course completion and advancement in English language skills. For the fall 2023 semester, 87% of participants completed the course, and 90% of those who completed the semester improved their English proficiency.

These results are far superior than ESL programs without a two-generation design.

The study highlights significant impacts on parents' well-being, families' economic and educational outcomes, and parent-child interactions. After two years in the program, findings show higher parent self-esteem, improved English skills, increased engagement with teachers and reduced material hardship.

At CAP Tulsa, we are proud of our success in using a two-generation approach to serve young children and their families. It is exciting to see our work featured alongside outstanding global programs supporting young children and their caregivers.

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Karen Tilkin is the executive director and CEO of CAP Tulsa.