

The Impact of Child Care on Student Parent Success

SUMMARY REPORT
August, 2020



QUALITY CARE
for CHILDREN



The following is a summary report and recommendations regarding the impact of Boost: Making College Possible (Boost: MCP), a child care tuition assistance initiative led by Quality Care for Children (QCC), at four participating universities from spring semester 2017 through spring semester 2019. Funded by philanthropic contributions, Boost: MCP provided child care scholarships for 237 children of 214 student parents during this period, including 133 single parents and 125 first-generation college students.

Authored by QCC, the report relies on research and evaluation conducted by Dr. Deborah Deckner-Davis of Clayton State University, who also served as the faculty liaison for the duration of the project. The views expressed herein are those of the author and do not reflect the position of any other entity.

Please visit:

qualitycareforchildren.org

for the full report. Questions and comments may be directed to Pam Tatum, President and CEO, Quality Care for Children at Pam.Tatum@qccga.org.

MAKING COLLEGE POSSIBLE FOR STUDENT PARENTS

Through Boost: Making College Possible (Boost: MCP), QCC helps low-income student parents pursue a four-year college degree without the financial burden of child care by providing scholarships for their infants and young children to attend a Quality Rated child care program. Increasing parents’ educational attainment yields positive short- and long-term gains for children, in the form of higher earnings, greater access to resources, more involvement in their children’s education and greater likelihood of their child pursuing a higher educational degree. Boost: MCP focuses on two generations, parents and children, and employs two strategies, direct service and policy change, to help low-income parents and their children be successful now and in the future.

In fall 2016, QCC piloted Boost: MCP at three university partners—Clayton State, Columbus State and Armstrong State (now Georgia Southern University: Armstrong Campus). Full implementation began in January 2017. Savannah State University was added in January 2018. The universities were selected based on need, their readiness to implement the subsidy scholarship, geographical representation and willingness and ability to help with data collection and analysis.

Boost: MCP is open to currently enrolled junior and senior students who have completed a minimum of 60 hours and are accepted in a major. They must be enrolled full-time (12+ hours per semester) and plan to graduate within 30 months. Applicants must meet the eligibility requirements for Pell Grants, have at least a 2.0 GPA to apply and maintain a 2.5 semester GPA or higher once enrolled. Children must be between the ages of zero and four and residents of Georgia, and enroll in a Quality Rated child care program. Boost: MCP pays for child care tuition of up to \$125 weekly for the children of eligible students to attend a designated Quality Rated program.

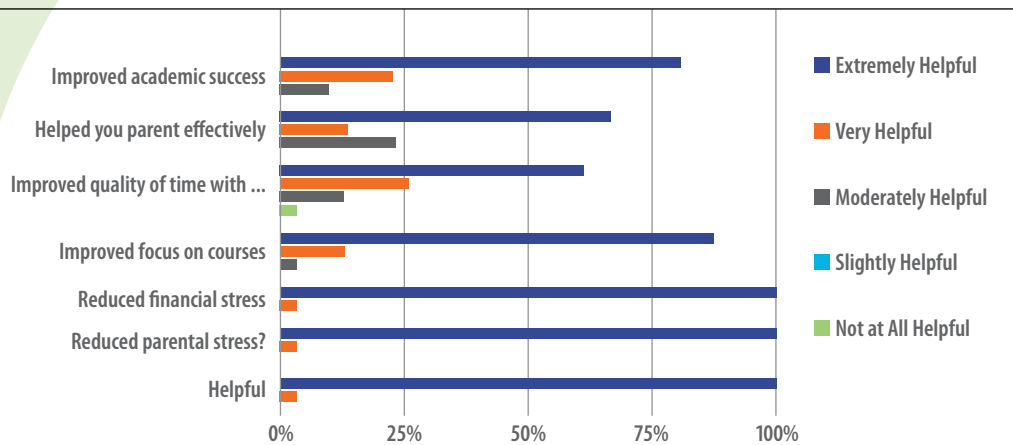
BOOST: MCP EVALUATION AND RESULTS

Boost: MCP increases access to Quality Rated child care. Fifty-five percent (118/214) of parents secured higher quality child care for their children. Fifty-two percent (111/214) were able to move their children from unlicensed or informal care to Quality Rated child care.

Participating student parents are highly satisfied with Boost: MCP. The vast majority of parents reported that Boost: MCP reduced parental and financial stress, improved their ability to focus on courses and to be academically successful, improved their ability to have quality time with their child and to parent more effectively, and was in general extremely helpful (see Figure 1).



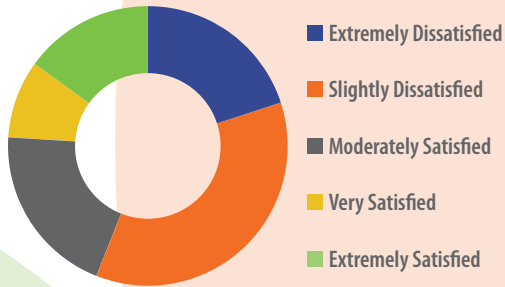
BOOST PARENT SURVEY
Figure 1



Boost: MCP parents are highly satisfied with their child care arrangements. More than 50 percent of parent respondents indicated that they had been either slightly or extremely dissatisfied with their child care arrangements before entry in Boost: MCP (see Figure 2). In contrast, 100 percent indicated that they were either very or extremely satisfied with their child care arrangement after entry in Boost: MCP (see Figure 3).

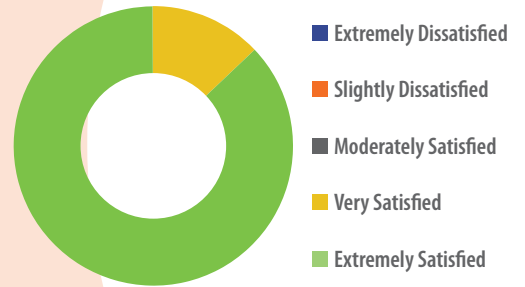
SATISFACTION WITH CHILD CARE PRIOR TO BOOST

Figure 2



SATISFACTION WITH CHILD CARE AFTER BOOST ENTRY

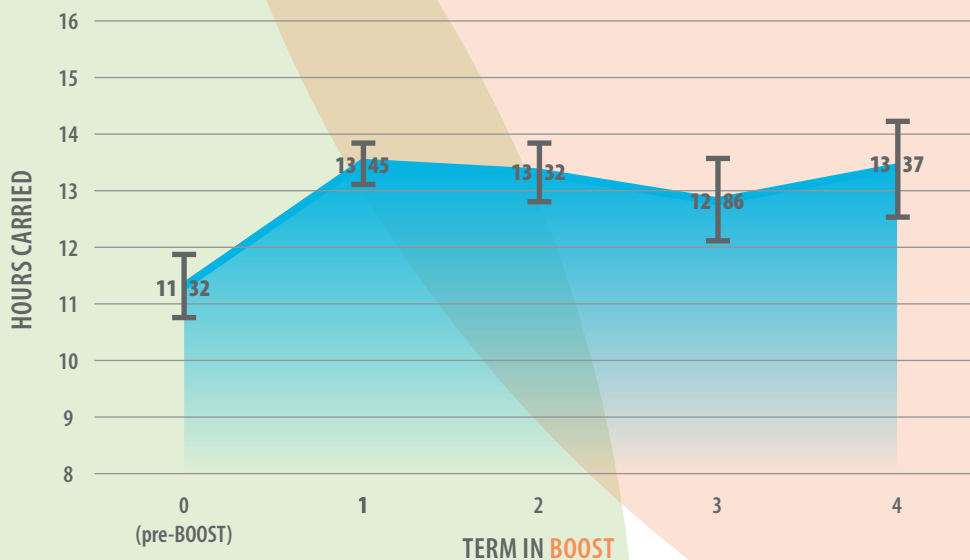
Figure 3



Boost: MCP propels students toward degree attainment by increasing their pace of course completion without jeopardizing success in their classes. Following entry into Boost: MCP, participants exhibited an immediate increase in course load carried that was then sustained for subsequent terms (see Figure 4). GPAs for the term prior to entry in Boost: MCP and in terms after entry were all on average 2.9 (i.e., just below a B average).

BOOST COURSE LOAD

Figure 4



Boost: MCP helps close the gap in graduation rates for participating parents. Nationally, only 33 percent of student parents will earn their degree within six years.ⁱ However, as of July 2019, 48 percent (102/214) of Boost: MCP parents have earned their degree, and another 23 percent (49/214) are still actively pursuing their four-year degree with support from QCC's Boost: MCP initiative and are on track to graduate.



“**B**efore Boost, we didn’t have our daughter enrolled in a daycare. Being in school and not able to work much, we decided to keep her home and try to work out child care between my husband and me.

I was always worried that I wouldn’t have anyone to watch her and that I would have to miss class. Now that I’ve finished my degree, I am so thankful for being able to have Boost to help tremendously with child care costs.

Since receiving Boost, we haven’t had to worry about child care expenses. It has been a huge relief for us and I was able to focus more on my school without having to stress over it.

—Carly Burrell,
Georgia Southern University

Boost: Parent-Child Success initiative—Results beyond the evaluation. Until spring 2020, Georgia was one of only 10 states that did not allow the pursuit of a four-year college degree to count toward eligibility for subsidized child care. ⁱⁱ QCC’s dual-strategy approach for Boost: MCP helped bolster advocacy efforts leading to a successful change to Georgia’s child care subsidy policy that will allow enrollment in a four-year college as an approved activity for CAPS eligibility. The success of Boost: MCP has also helped to leverage federal funding for student parents through the Child Care Access Means Parents in School (CCAMPIS) Program. In addition, the Boost strategy is being adopted more broadly as an effective two-generation strategy, including the Atlanta Early Education Leadership Council’s PAACT (Promise All Atlanta Children Thrive) and privately-funded Parent-Child Success scholarships to families on the west side of Atlanta.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Data from the Boost: MCP evaluation supports data collected elsewhere that provides compelling evidence of the return on investment in removing child care as a barrier to college completion for student parents. In order to truly move the needle on this issue, multiple stakeholders from diverse settings need to address this issue in a coordinated and collaborative fashion.

In addition to QCC and our Boost: MCP partners, several other organizations have studied, researched and written extensively on student parent issues, including Georgia Budget & Policy Institute (GBPI) and Institute for Women’s Policy Research (IWPR). Many of the recommendations made by GBPI, IWPR and others are supported by QCC and the results of the Boost: MCP evaluation. Of course, any advancement of new policies or programming should intentionally address systemic barriers that perpetuate inequities for students of color, Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) and Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSI). Below are practical recommendations, many of which can be pursued immediately and effect meaningful change. Please see the full report for a complete list of recommendations.

Government

1. Align child care subsidy policy, workforce development, higher education and anti-poverty policies and investments.
2. Provide need-based college scholarships targeted to college student parents.
3. Expand CCAMPIS, the federal grant that supports child care for student parents.
4. Increase funding for child care subsidies in Georgia.

Philanthropy

5. Expand/target funding to recognize two-generation strategies, connecting investment to social justice/poverty issues and breaking the cycle of generational poverty.
6. Support efforts to develop child care networks surrounding colleges and universities that can meet the unique scheduling needs of college student parents.
7. Fund the creation of a model for student parent-friendly campuses that can be replicated across the university system.

Higher Education

8. Require Georgia colleges and universities to collect data on the number, needs and educational outcomes of student parents on their college campuses.
9. Make student parents a priority for scholarship funding, understanding the high return on investment in this population.

10. Recognize the growing number of student parents and partner with the early childhood community including DECAL, QCC and other child care resource and referrals agencies in Georgia to develop strategies to support student parent success.
11. Audit college/university policies through the student parent lens and revise as needed.

Employers

12. Provide child care support for student parent employees so they can pursue advancement opportunities.

Child Care Providers

13. Develop partnerships with local colleges and universities to support student parents.
14. Consider providing non-traditional hour, flexible hour, and part-time care to meet the child care needs of student parents.

Student Parents

15. Make your voices heard on college campuses and advocate for university policies and programs to support your success.
16. Develop allies among college professors and administrators who will support your efforts.

“**M**y fear was failing. I had come too far in college to fail, and I did not want to give up on completing my degree. Now that I have graduated a huge weight has been lifted from my shoulders and I am now ready to see what the world has to offer.

I was able to go to school without worrying about child care and fear of a baby sitter calling out. My GPA also went back up tremendously as I was able to finish my last semester receiving all As and making the Spring Semester's Dean's List.

Boost put education first, and not too many other child care resources do that.

The Boost Program helped me become a first-generation college graduate.

—*Chantal Sampson,
Clayton State University*





“**F**iguring out how I was going to pay for Jade to get a head start in her education and social experience was a real challenge. I was not sure we were going to afford for her to go to school, although she needed it because she was in speech therapy. I think that she needed more time communicating with people other than her parents and now, not only because of maturation, but her being in preschool she communicates so well.

[I worried] my daughter would not have the best opportunity to excel. The more opportunities the earlier the higher possibility for potential growth.

[High-quality child care] developed her communication skills, helped her form relationships with people outside my home, and gave her a place to play.

I was also far less stressed having a placement for my Jade to be cared for while I completed my education.

—*Stephen Price,*
Savannah State

ABOUT QUALITY CARE FOR CHILDREN (QCC)

For more than 40 years, QCC has worked to help Georgia’s infants and young children reach their full potential. QCC’s mission is to ensure that Georgia’s infants and young children are nurtured and educated. Our primary focus is creating excellence in child care and early learning by:

- ▶ **BUILDING QUALITY:** providing training and resources to child care providers to increase the overall quality of care.
- ▶ **ENSURING ACCESS:** helping parents access affordable, quality child care so they can attend college or succeed in the workplace while their children receive the quality learning experiences they deserve and need to grow and thrive.

QUALITY MATTERS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

The first five years of life provide the best opportunity to affect a child’s healthy growth and development. Ninety percent of a child’s brain is “hardwired” by age five, laying the groundwork for all future learning and success. Economists estimate the return on investment in high-quality child care to be as high as \$7 to \$12 for every dollar spent. ⁱⁱⁱ

CHILD CARE AFFORDABILITY AND ACCESS

Child care and early education costs are often one of the most significant expenses in a family budget. The average cost of child care in Georgia is \$8,530 per year for an infant and

\$7,306 per year for a four-year-old. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), child care is affordable if it costs no more than seven percent of a family's income. By this standard, only 16.8 percent of Georgia families can afford infant care. Infant care in Georgia costs \$1,324 (18.4 percent) more per year than in-state tuition for four-year public college.^{iv} Administered by DECAL, the Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) program assists families with the cost of safe, high-quality early childhood education. Limited funding for CAPS child care subsidies means DECAL can only serve about 14 percent (50,000 of 364,000) of income-eligible children in need of quality, affordable child care.^v

GEORGIA'S EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE NEEDS

It is projected that by 2025 over 60 percent of jobs in Georgia will require a degree or certification beyond high school^{vi} and an estimated 250,000 additional college graduates are needed to meet Georgia's workforce needs.^{vii} Georgia invests in solutions such as Complete College Georgia and the High Demand Career Initiative to close the gap in the state's professional workforce demand. However, these initiatives do not include child care, a major barrier to college completion for students who are parents. Recent reports estimate that 23 percent of all undergraduates in Georgia (108,200 students) are parents and 49,830 college students are single mothers.^{viii}

AFTERWARD

In March 2020, nearly every industry and system in the United States came to an abrupt halt due to the COVID-19 pandemic. While schools pivoted to virtual learning and businesses modified operations and implemented teleworking, the child care system was less able to adapt to being socially distant from its consumers. While it is too early to know the full extent of the damage, we do know that stabilizing the child care system is critical to families and our economy. We must take this opportunity to build a child care system that works for all families, including student parents working to create a better and brighter future for themselves and their children.

ENDNOTES

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- v Camardelle and Lee, op.cit.
- vi Complete College Georgia. (n.d.). Retrieved March 16, 2020, from <http://completegeorgia.org/>
- vii Young, B. (2019, February 1). From the Publisher: Workforce Woes. Retrieved March 13, 2020, from <https://www.georgiatrend.com/2019/02/01/from-the-publisher-workforce-woes/>
- viii Reichlin Cruse, L., Milli, J., Contreras-Mendez, S., Holtzman, T., & Gault, B. (2019). Investing in Single Mothers' Higher Education in Georgia: Costs and Benefits to Individuals, Families, and Society. *Institute for Women's Policy Research*, R611. Retrieved from <https://iwpr.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Georgia.pdf>



QUALITY CARE *for* CHILDREN

3 Corporate Blvd. NE
Suite 230
Atlanta, Georgia 30329



(404) 479-4200



info@qccga.org



QualityCareforChildren.org

SOCIAL MEDIA:

@QCCgeorgia

