

PARENT VOICES AT THE CENTER

– Spring 2021 –

The [Ascend Parent Voices website](#) provides an array of resources developed by and with parents to help two-generation (2Gen) leaders, organizations, and policymakers partner, elevate, and center the voices and experiences of parents in their work. Parents, caregivers, and guardians are core to the development of their family's success and their access to resources and supports opens up the potential for their entire family to grow and thrive. Every family deserves the opportunity to reach their full potential, but many families – particularly families with low incomes, families of color, families led by single parents, and non-English speaking families – face barriers to existing structures and systems that limit their ability to benefit from these foundational environments and experiences.

[Listen to Parent Voices:](#) *The most important aspect of moving families toward prosperity is meeting families where they are and dream.* On this site, the blogs, interviews, surveys, and resources are authentically developed by and with Ascend parent advisors and contain lessons and opportunities for policies and programs to advance family outcomes.

[Learn from Parent Voices:](#) *Over the last decade, Ascend has partnered with and learned from parents across the country.* Parent collaborations demonstrated the impact and importance of intentionality when lifting and centering parent perspectives. Resources in this are intended to guide organizations and leaders in strengthening parent partnerships and building family prosperity to redefine systems to meet the needs of all children and the adults in their lives.

[Elevate Parent Voices:](#) *Ascend's learnings have demonstrated the critical role parents and those with lived experiences play in shaping effective policies, programs, and initiatives that work to support family outcomes and alleviate poverty.* Far too often the decision-makers are not those with lived experiences, who are regularly sidelined. Organizations and initiatives that have parents and family voices at their cores are able to honor and understand the various experiences and how to best meet the needs of families.

What's in a Word? To capture parent voices and perspectives, Ascend, working with Lake Research Partners, conducted 12 online focus groups in fall 2020 to ask parents with young children how they were experiencing this unique moment in our history. In these focus groups, parents defined the three words below. Click on each word to read what it means to these families.

- [Ascending](#)
- [Family Well-being](#)
- [Family Prosperity](#)

NEXT STEPS

- 1) Read how these organizations ([Family Futures Downeast](#) | Machias ME; [PeletonU](#) | Austin, TX) elevated and centered their Parent Voices work. Tell Ascend what changes your organization has made to partner with and lift up parents and caregivers.
- 2) Share this page with your organization and your stakeholders and determine actionable short-term and long-term goals and steps to advance parent voices with the work you lead.
- 3) Get the word out about elevating #ParentVoices and #2Gen (two-generation approaches)
 - *Parents' insights, strengths, and lived experiences are the greatest tools to advancing #2Gen equity and strengthening family well-being. Check out @AspenAscend's new #ParentVoices page with resources that help orgs put parents at the center of work.*
<https://ascend.aspeninstitute.org/parent-voices>
 - *Listen to parents and have it drive your work. @AspenAscend's new #ParentVoices page shares resources for organizations to elevate and give agency to parents as partners and decision makers.*
<https://ascend.aspeninstitute.org/parent-voices>
 - *Parents are experts when it comes to knowing what supports they and their children need for success. @AspenAscend's Parent Voices work is filled with resources to give parents a seat at the table.* <https://ascend.aspeninstitute.org/parent-voices>
 - *We can all guess how parents are feeling during this time – but it makes a difference to hear it in their own voices. Dig into the results of our Parent Voices 2020 survey here:*
<https://ascend.aspeninstitute.org/parent-voices>

Parent Voices website: <https://ascend.aspeninstitute.org/parent-voices>

Ascend at the Aspen Institute