

We Make the Road by Walking with Families: 35 years of Systems Change at Briya Public Charter School

Ashley Simpson Baird, Ph.D.
January 2025

Report developed in partnership with Ascend at the Aspen Institute's 2Gen Accelerator Fund.

We Make the Road by Walking with Families: 35 years of Systems Change at Briya Public Charter School

Executive Summary

For over 35 years, Briya Public Charter School has been a national leader in two-generation (2Gen) education for immigrant families in Washington, DC through its cohesive model of early childhood and adult education, family integration programming, and comprehensive wraparound services. Serving over 1,100 students annually across four campuses, Briya's holistic approach is rooted in the belief that the success of children and parents is intertwined. By providing culturally responsive, family-centered programming, Briya has helped families achieve their educational and career goals while creating pathways to long-term stability and economic mobility.

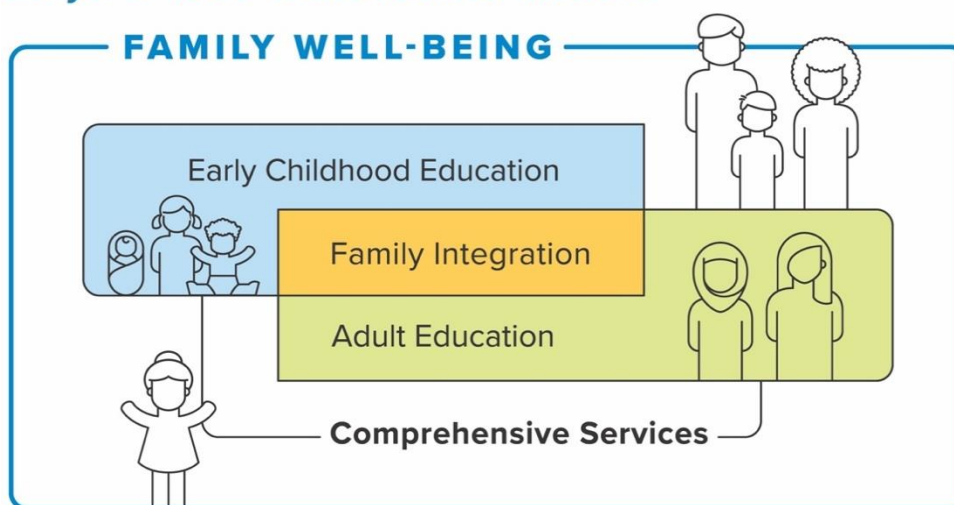
Integral to Briya's existence is the need to create the supportive systems that allow the school—and consequently Briya families—to thrive. This report highlights Briya's past and future systems change efforts, including advocacy for policies and funding that support families, such as increases to adult education funding in DC, the Parent-Child School Lottery Preference, and a streamlined enrollment process for DC's public health insurance program. It also details innovative programming shifts, such as outdoor learning during the pandemic, workforce development pathways, and a bilingual associate degree program in early childhood education that were developed in partnership with families.

Looking ahead, Briya is preparing for expansion into Maryland by braiding funding streams and developing partnerships to create new structures and systems that support its 2Gen approach in a new policy landscape. In DC, the school continues to work closely with policymakers to codify funding and regulations for 2Gen childcare settings. With its unwavering commitment to elevating family voices, strong community partnerships, and proven results, Briya is leading the way in creating a brighter future for immigrant families and communities.

Introduction

For over three and a half decades, Briya Public Charter School has been a pioneer in two-generation (2Gen) education, transforming the lives of immigrant families in Washington, DC. Rooted in the belief that the well-being and success of children are intrinsically linked to that of their parents, Briya has created a model of integrated learning that serves the whole family. By combining early childhood education, adult education, and comprehensive wraparound services, Briya empowers families to break cycles of poverty, achieve their educational goals, and build pathways toward long-term prosperity.

Briya's Two-Generation Model



At Briya, parents and their children go to school together. Children ages 0-5 enroll in bilingual (English and Spanish), Reggio-Emilia inspired classes while their parents improve their English, work on their high school diploma, or earn a workforce credential. Families also engage in Family Integration programming that equips parents to be their child's first and most important teacher and advocate for their child's success within the US public school system.

Embedded in the adult education program are opportunities for leadership development through curricular and extracurricular experiences. Briya's adult education classes are rooted in students' life experiences and units are designed around learners' collective educational goals and interests. Families have weekly co-learning time where they engage in play-based educational activities.

Each adult class elects two members to serve on the school's Student Council where they share feedback from their classmates and offer input on schoolwide decisions. Two seats on Briya's Board of Trustees are also reserved for Briya students or alumni to have representation of families in the school's governance. Through Briya Voices for All, Briya students have earned a reputation as effective advocates for improved city systems and structures to help their families reach their goals.

Student services coordinators partner with families to reduce any barriers that may impede their access to meeting their educational goals. Staff are skilled in accessing a wide variety of wrap-around services to ensure families' success, from mental health care to housing, food, and legal support. Briya's colocation with [Mary's Center](#), a Federally Qualified Health Center, allows families to easily access medical, dental, and social services on site.

Briya families are often some of the furthest from opportunity in the nation's capital and their histories include immigration, asylum, poverty, and/or interrupted formal education. In the 2024-2025 school year, 84% of families qualify for free or reduced-price meals. Briya families reflect many minoritized communities in the nation's capital. Racially, 58% identify as indigenous to the Americas, 19% are White, 16% are Black, and 5% are Asian. The majority (81%) of Briya students ethnically identify as Hispanic and 79% percent speak Spanish as a home language. Eighty-four percent of Briya's adult learners identify as female. Many of Briya's adult learners have not had the opportunity to complete their education. The majority (96%) scored at or below the 8th grade level in reading and/or math at time of enrollment.

Briya's inclusive early childhood model has demonstrated success in supporting young children with special needs and those with home languages other than English. In the 2024-2025 school year, 30% of prekindergarten students receive special education services and 97% are English learners.

Outcomes

Briya's educational outcomes have led to a Tier 1 rating by the DC Public Charter School Board every year that the rankings have been awarded. In the 2023-2024 school year, 91% of prekindergartners met or exceeded growth expectations from the fall to the spring administration of the Teaching Strategies GOLD literacy assessment. Similarly, 93% met or exceeded growth expectations on the GOLD math assessment, and 93% did so on the GOLD social-emotional assessment. One hundred percent of prekindergarten parents enrolled for the full academic year attended at least one individual or group parent-teacher conference.

In the adult education and workforce development programs, 70% percent of students who post-tested increased at least one Educational Functioning Level (EFL) on the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System exam exceeding the national performance level of 67%. EFLs are established by the National Reporting System for Adult Education to measure adult progress in English literacy and math skills. Additionally, 83% of adult students enrolled in the 2Gen program for at least six months scored 5 or above on the Family Reading Journal Rubric, exceeding the annual target of 70%.

One hundred percent of Child Development Associate (CDA) students who took the Early Childhood Studies Review certification exam passed to earn their credentials. In the Medical Assistant (MA) program 87% of students passed the Registered Medical Assistant exam required for credentialing. Survey data indicated that 96% of CDA students and 92% of MA students were employed within 180 days of program completion and for at least 13 weeks.

A History of Systems Change

Briya's history is rooted in the innovative ways it supports families and the incredible results of those innovations, but inherent in those successes has been the need to build the systems that allow 2Gen education to thrive in Washington, DC and beyond.

From its early beginnings as a federal Even Start program in the 1980s, Briya has continuously adapted to meet both the needs of its community and respond to evolving legislative, policy, and funding landscapes. The school's ability to sustain and scale its impact is rooted in its unique approach, strong partnerships, and dedication to family-centered decision-making. This report highlights Briya's strategic efforts over the years to create and/or change systems to support its 2Gen mission. It explores key moments of advocacy and innovation, the themes that underpin the organization's success, and the collaborative partnerships that amplify its impact. Finally, the report outlines Briya's vision for the future as it works to expand into Maryland and further codify supportive policies for 2Gen education in Washington, DC. Briya's story exemplifies how schools can work hand in hand with families and policymakers to create sustainable change, making education a cornerstone for equitable opportunity and stronger communities.

Building Systems for Success

Throughout its history, Briya has created and adapted systems that enable its 2Gen model to thrive. These systems not only address the immediate needs of the families Briya serves but also ensure the sustainability and scalability of its mission. From advocating for policy changes

and funding increases to creating innovative programming, Briya has consistently worked to advocate for systems and build structures that support families holistically.

Shifts in Funding

Briya's journey began as a federal [Even Start Family Literacy Program](#) in the late 1980s, which allowed it to deliver services to recently arrived immigrants from Vietnam and El Salvador. Briya was initially one of 76 pilot programs across the US to receive a four-year Even Start grant. Even Start had three stated [goals](#): "(1) to help parents become full partners in the education of their children; (2) to assist children in reaching their full potential as learners; and (3) to provide literacy training for their parents." These goals still undergird Briya's work today.

Federal funding for Even Start continued to grow until 2002, when it peaked at \$260M under the No Child Left Behind Act. However, that same year the US Department of Education (ED) reduced their appropriations request, eliminating \$50M and then \$25M in funding for Even Start in subsequent years. ED cited the mixed results of [national evaluation studies](#) despite substantial [critique](#) of the research methodologies deployed in each.

In the face of declines in federal support for family literacy, Briya sought out creative ways to obtain local funds to sustain its program. In 2005, the school successfully applied for public charter school status. [DC Charter Law](#) encompasses public education beginning in pre-K 3 through adult basic education. As a charter school, Briya receives per-pupil funding for every PK3, PK4, and adult learner. Briya does not yet have a public funding source for its infant and toddler programs. However, it is currently partnering with the DC Office of the State Superintendent of Education to devise a solution.

Briya, in partnership with other adult education schools, has also successfully advocated for a cumulative 11% increase in adult education funding between FY23 and FY25. Briya families and staff led advocacy efforts by writing letters, sharing social media messages, meeting with Council members, and testifying at Council hearings.

Policy and Legislative Change

Briya's existence is predicated on specific local and national policies and funding that allow for families to learn together. The federal Even Start Family Literacy Program was the impetus for Briya's establishment in the 1980s. This program and its four-component model of early childhood education, adult education, parenting education, and Parents and Children Together (PACT) Time is still the foundation of the school. Similarly, Title II of the [Workforce Innovation](#)

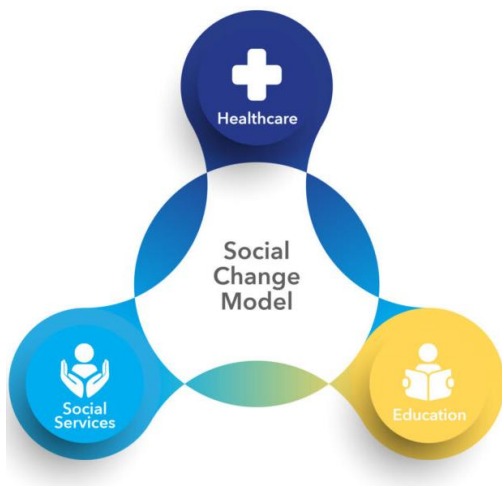
[and Opportunities Act](#) established the [Adult Education and Family Literacy Act](#) to support parents who are furthering their education.

At the local level, Washington DC’s progressive public education law—the DC School Reform Act—stipulates that the public education system starts at three years of age and continues through adult education below a post-secondary level. Public funding for universal prekindergarten and adult education at levels on par with K-12 education is essential to delivering a high-quality 2Gen program.

Briya’s history of policy advocacy demonstrates its commitment to breaking down systemic barriers for immigrant families. One of its major successes came in 2020 with the addition of a [Parent-Child Lottery Preference](#) to the [DC School Reform Act](#). This change adds a school lottery preference that allows parents and their children to seamlessly enroll in Briya together, solidifying the foundation of the two-generation model.

Another recent win includes simplifying enrollment requirements for [DC Healthcare Alliance](#)—DC’s locally funded medical assistance program—to ensure that families can access vital health services without missing days of work or school. Briya Voices for All, Briya’s student-led advocacy group, has been instrumental in securing these changes by amplifying the voices of families at city council hearings and other public forums. Briya students, staff, and Board members also contribute to advocacy campaigns by meeting with Council members, sending emails, making phone calls, and engaging in social media campaigns.

Holistic Social Change Model with Mary’s Center



In 1999, Briya established a strategic partnership with Mary’s Center, a Federally Qualified Health Center serving immigrant families in the heart of DC’s vibrant Adams Morgan neighborhood. The two organizations operate under that theory that families’ long-term outcomes improve if their health, educational, and social service needs are addressed simultaneously. Together they designed a co-location and integrated referral models to provide comprehensive support to families. Today the organizations are co-located at three DC sites, allowing families to move with ease between medical, dental, mental health, pharmaceutical,

education, and social service resources. This Social Change Model has been studied by [The Urban Institute](#) and [Brookings](#) as an innovation with promising multi-generational benefits for families.

Facilities Growth

Meeting the demand for Briya's services has required significant expansion over time. Starting with a single site, Briya has grown to four campuses strategically located in Wards 1, 4, and 5 in Washington, DC. Adequate school space is limited in DC. Over the years, Briya has creatively partnered with traditional public schools, other public charter schools, a health clinic, and community-based organizations to share facilities. Three of those four sites are co-located with Mary's Center. In 2024, Briya opened its [most recent site](#) in a former school building where it partners with the Boys and Girls Club and the Metropolitan Police Department.

Every facility includes classrooms for both early childhood and adult education, as well as spaces for wraparound services and community engagement, ensuring families have access to the resources they need all in one location. Expansion has been driven by community needs and designed to reach more families while maintaining high quality programs. When considering a new site, Briya engages families in selecting convenient locations and designing spaces that meet their needs. The school also analyses neighborhood demographics to strategically locate near families' homes, considers the accessibility of public transportation, and prioritizes facility design features such as ground floor locations that enable ease of access for strollers.

Pandemic Innovations

In addition to impacting local policy, Briya has also continued to innovate its internal systems to deliver high-quality, family-centric programming. The COVID-19 pandemic challenged Briya to adapt its programs and systems to meet families' needs in new ways. Within weeks of campus closures, Briya provided over 800 computers, secured home internet access for more than 200 families to enable virtual learning, and delivered at-home learning materials to children. Briya also established a bilingual IT helpline to address students' questions about their devices and online learning. This saved valuable instructional time and made sure that students felt comfortable using their devices.

Adult educators adapted their instruction for online delivery, while early childhood educators designed and launched [innovative outdoor learning classrooms](#) to ensure continuity for pre-kindergarten students. These changes not only helped families navigate the immediate crisis

but also informed long-term programmatic improvements, including the adoption of hybrid learning models to increase access for working parents.

These innovations proved successful. Today Briya is a fully one-to-one school where every adult learner receives a Chromebook, and students have the option to enroll in fully in-person or hybrid classes. Similarly, prekindergartners continue to spend each morning learning in [outdoor classrooms](#), where teachers have observed increased self-regulation along with steady academic progress.

Workforce Pathways

Recognizing the importance of economic mobility, Briya has developed robust workforce development programs in direct response to student requests. As adult learners improved their English, they expressed the need to increase their skills to obtain family-sustaining jobs in high-demand fields. In 2007, Briya launched its Child Development Associate Program where students prepare to earn a nationally recognized credential to work in early learning settings. Similarly, in 2013, Briya started a Medical Assistant program for learners to gain nationally recognized entry-level credentials to work in the healthcare industry. Both pathways allow students to complete their required practicums directly onsite in either Briya early childhood classes or in the Mary's Center clinic.

In partnership with the University of the District of Columbia Community College, Briya [helped establish a bilingual associate degree program](#) in early childhood education, enabling Spanish-speaking CDA graduates to earn [state-required advanced degrees](#) for employment in early childhood settings. All students in the program are eligible for a scholarship to cover their tuition and materials.



This initiative, along with Briya's workforce pathways for Medical Assistants and Child Development Associates, exemplifies how the school leverages partnerships to create new educational systems across the city that empower families to achieve long-term economic stability.

Through its focus on systemic change, Briya has built a foundation for sustainable success. Each of these efforts—whether in policy advocacy, program expansion, or innovative solutions—reflects the school’s commitment to serving as a model for 2Gen education. By working collaboratively with families, policymakers, and community partners, Briya continues to create systems that allow its students to thrive.

Foundational Themes

Briya’s ability to create systems that are supportive of 2Gen education is underpinned by several key themes that guide its work. These themes reflect the school’s mission, values, and approach to empowering families through education, advocacy, and community engagement. By remaining grounded in these principles, Briya has been able to adapt to changing circumstances and sustain its impact for more than three decades.

Mission and Mindset

At the heart of Briya’s work is a steadfast commitment to its mission: strengthening families through culturally responsive, holistic education. This mission is driven by a mindset that centers family voice in decision making, treating them as partners rather than recipients of services. By focusing on the interconnectedness of child and parent success, Briya’s programs are designed to create opportunities for long-term stability and prosperity. The school’s responsiveness to family needs—whether through programmatic adjustments or advocacy efforts—ensures that its mission remains relevant and impactful.

Consistent Leadership

Strong and consistent leadership has been instrumental in Briya’s growth and resilience. Executive Director Christie McKay, the senior leadership team, and the Board of Trustees have guided the school through pivotal transitions, from its early days as an Even Start program to its status as a Tier 1 public charter school. Ms. McKay has been part of the organization for over 25 years, and many other staff leaders have also been involved in the school for decades. Briya’s leadership team has cultivated a culture of collaboration, innovation, equity, and advocacy, allowing the school to navigate challenges and seize opportunities for expansion and improvement. This stability in leadership has also fostered trust and continuity within the school community.

Student Outreach: Building Trust from the Start

Briya’s approach to student recruitment is rooted in trust, relatability, and cultural responsiveness, ensuring that prospective students feel welcomed and supported from their first interaction. The Outreach Team, which plays a vital role in connecting with the community,

is primarily composed of former Briya students. These team members bring their personal experiences and identities to the work, creating a unique level of trust and relatability with prospective students. Their firsthand knowledge of Briya's programs and their ability to connect authentically with others in the community are key factors in the school's outreach success.

In addition to its dedicated Outreach Team, Briya has implemented innovative strategies to bring new families into its programs. A previous student outreach ambassador program empowered current students to engage with prospective students in their communities, leveraging personal connections to build awareness and trust. Initiatives like "Refer Friends and Family Month" further encourage current students to recommend Briya to others, drawing prospective students through people they already know and trust. Outreach efforts also take place within Mary's Center clinics, where the longstanding partnership between the two organizations adds another layer of credibility and trustworthiness. Finally, Briya ensures that outreach materials are available in prospective students' home languages, removing language barriers and demonstrating cultural sensitivity. Together, these strategies form a holistic culturally aware outreach approach that strengthens community ties and expands access to Briya's transformative two-generation education model.

Ensuring Family Voice Across the Organization

Briya's unique model thrives on the active participation and leadership of its families. The school has created multiple avenues for families to influence decision making, ensuring their voices shape both programmatic and policy outcomes. At Briya, families are not just participants—they are architects of Briya's success.

The Student Council, which meets three times per year and includes two members from each adult class, provides adult learners and parents with a platform to share feedback on curriculum, schedules, and school services, directly informing day-to-day school operations. Many of Briya's programmatic changes started as a request from the Student Council, including the switch from half- to full-day prekindergarten and the addition of the high school diploma and workforce programs. Briya also reserves two seats on its Board of Trustees for current or former families to ensure their representation in the school's governance.

Similarly, the student advocacy group [Briya Voices for All \(BVFA\)](#) equips advanced English learners with the tools to advocate for systemic change, achieving significant policy wins like the [Parent-Child Lottery Preference](#) and [improved healthcare enrollment processes](#). Briya ensures that students are prepared to take on leadership and advocacy roles by embedding

leadership into the adult education curriculum and providing practical applications of learning in class.

Continual Programmatic Evolution



Briya's programs have evolved in direct response to the needs of its families. For instance, transitioning pre-kindergarten classes from half-day to full-day schedules, and later adding optional aftercare, addressed the challenges working parents faced in balancing education with family responsibilities. Briya's early childhood and prekindergarten classes became Reggio-Emilia inspired to model for parents how they can replicate learning activities at home with easy-to-obtain, no-cost materials.

Similarly, the addition of the National External Diploma Program for students who have not yet completed high school and workforce development programs in the fields of healthcare and early childhood education reflects families' desire to continue their education and advance their careers in ways that align with their personal goals. And not only does the school respond and adapt in ways that meet student needs, but it is also intentional in doing so through seeking out and following best practices and proven resources. By maintaining flexibility, listening to families, and following evolving best practices in its fields, Briya ensures that its programs remain relevant, accessible, and high-quality.

Representation and Hiring Practices

Briya embodies its values through intentional hiring practices, prioritizing alumni and members of the immigrant community as staff. Currently 35% of Briya staff are school alumni who work within every department. Many managerial and leadership roles are held by former students, including several early childhood managers and coordinators, whose lived experiences resonate with those of Briya families. These practices not only create meaningful career pathways but also ensure that staff members reflect the school's diverse community, fostering a sense of belonging and trust. This deep integration of staff and student communities is a cornerstone of Briya's two-generation approach.

Through these foundational themes, Briya has created a strong and adaptable framework that sustains its 2Gen model. By remaining rooted in its mission, empowering families, and building partnerships, Briya continues to lead the way in two-generation education, proving that holistic, family-centered approaches can transform lives and communities.

Power of Partnerships

Briya's success and sustainability are deeply intertwined with its strategic partnerships. By collaborating with a diverse network of organizations, policymakers, and institutions, Briya has expanded its impact, created innovative programming, and addressed systemic challenges that affect the families it serves. These partnerships exemplify how collective action can strengthen a 2Gen approach to education.

Mary's Center: A Model Partnership

At the core of Briya's partnership network is its long-standing collaboration with Mary's Center. Three of Briya's four campuses are co-located with Mary's Center, allowing families to access education, health care, and social services in one location. This shared Social Change Model integrates health and education to address families' needs holistically. Together, the organizations coordinate care, provide cross-staff professional development, and host joint events and educational workshops that connect families to essential resources and one another. For instance, a care coordination committee facilitates regular training for Briya and Mary's Center staff, ensuring seamless referrals and resource sharing between the two entities. The Briya-Mary's Center collaboration allows both organizations to better fulfill their missions and achieve economies of scale.

Collaboration with Community-Based Organizations

Briya has cultivated partnerships with over 60 local organizations, including service providers, advocacy groups, schools, government, and legal aid organizations, to address the holistic needs of immigrant families. These collaborations enhance access to resources ranging from housing assistance and legal support to mental health services and financial counseling. Initiatives like the Collaboration for DC Immigrant Families—a quarterly gathering of service providers convened by Briya—have created a robust support network for families. Events such as “Know Your Rights” panels and school choice workshops further exemplify Briya's role as a trusted convener, connecting families with critical information and resources. Briya is also a member of the DC Values Coalition, which advocates for increasing DC's support for and access to immigrant legal services, as well as the DC Language Access Coalition, which keeps government agencies accountable to the city's language access law.

Policymaker Engagement

Briya's partnerships extend to policymakers and local and federal government agencies, including the US Department of Education, DC Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE), the DC Public Charter School Board, the Deputy Mayor for Education, and the DC Council. By sharing data, insights, and recommendations, Briya has influenced policies that support 2Gen education. Notable examples include advocating for the Parent-Child Lottery Preference and working with OSSE to address childcare licensing challenges for 2Gen programs. Briya staff regularly serve on local and national advisory committees to bring a 2Gen perspective to decision makers. These efforts demonstrate Briya's ability to leverage its expertise and relationships to create systemic change that benefits Briya families and the broader community.

National Networks and Philanthropy

Briya is an active member of national networks like Ascend at the Aspen Institute, the National Center for Families Learning, and the Coalition of Adult Basic Education, which provide platforms to share best practices and advocate for 2Gen education nationwide. Philanthropic partners have also played a pivotal role in supporting Briya's innovations. Flexible funding from foundations has allowed Briya to pilot initiatives like outdoor learning and hybrid adult education programs during the pandemic. These projects not only address immediate challenges but also inform the broader field of education by demonstrating the unique potential of 2Gen models to strengthen instructional practice and boost family outcomes.

Higher Education and Workforce Development

Briya's partnerships with institutions like the University of the District of Columbia Community College (UDC-CC) have opened pathways to higher education and workforce credentials for its students. By co-developing a [bilingual associate degree program](#) in early childhood education, Briya has created pathways for Spanish-speaking educators, including Briya graduates and staff members, to advance their careers while continuing to work full-time. Such collaborations exemplify Briya's commitment to reducing barriers to education and creating economic opportunities for immigrant families.

Another example of Briya partnerships to support its workforce development programs are the employer advisory boards for its Child Development Associate and Medical Assistant Programs, which are made up of employers and experts in the fields who help ensure Briya's curricula and programming are responsive to the latest developments in these high-demand industries. The partners who serve on these advisory boards are also critical to Briya's work-based learning

experiences, as they provide opportunities for job shadowing, externships, practicums, and eventually job placements.

Through these partnerships, Briya has built a powerful ecosystem of support for families, demonstrating that collaboration is essential to the success of the 2Gen model. By working hand in hand with community organizations, policymakers, and national networks, Briya continues to expand its reach and impact, offering effective, replicable strategies for two-generation education programs.

Briya's Role in Civic Engagement

At Briya, advocacy is not just an organizational priority—it is a core part of the [educational experience](#) for students, families, and staff. Through strategic campaigns and initiatives, Briya has positioned itself as a powerful advocate for immigrant families in Washington, DC, and a model for how 2Gen education can drive systemic change. By equipping families with the tools to engage in democracy, Briya empowers them to shape policies that affect their lives and communities.

Advocacy by Families, for Families

Briya's advocacy work is driven by the priorities of the families it serves. Programs like Briya Voices for All (BVFA) have played a critical role in amplifying these voices and achieving significant policy wins. For example, BVFA's advocacy led to [a major victory in changing the enrollment process](#) for the DC Healthcare Alliance. Families across the District no longer need to endure hours-long waits to renew their health insurance every six months, thanks to testimony and organizing efforts by Briya students and staff. This change has made healthcare more accessible for thousands of working immigrant families.

Student Leadership in Action

Briya's Student Council provides another powerful platform for civic engagement. Elected student representatives bring their peers' perspectives to school leadership, influencing decisions about programming, schedules, and services. Beyond the school, student leaders have also testified before the DC Council on critical issues, including funding for adult education and public transportation subsidies for students. These [experiences](#)



build students' confidence and leadership skills, equipping them to advocate for their needs both within the school and in the broader community.

Influencing Policy for Two-Generation Education

Briya has established itself as a key voice in advocating for policies that support the two-generation approach. By working with agencies like the DC Office of the State Superintendent of Education and the DC Council, Briya has successfully influenced changes to regulations and funding mechanisms. Briya is currently advocating for a new 2Gen childcare licensing designation that would address barriers faced by non-licensed programs like its own. These efforts aim to create more equitable access to funding and support for innovative educational models.

A Catalyst for Community Change

Through its advocacy, Briya is helping to create a more inclusive and equitable community. Families who participate in Briya's advocacy initiatives not only gain practical skills but also develop a deeper sense of agency and belonging. As one student advocate noted, "When I speak at city council, I feel proud to represent my family and my community. My voice matters." By providing training, tools, and meaningful opportunities to engage in civic life, Briya is fostering a generation of leaders who will continue to advocate for justice and opportunity. Through its [civic engagement efforts](#), Briya demonstrates the transformative power of two-generation education in shaping policies and creating systemic change. By partnering with families to advocate for their needs, Briya helps build the inclusive, supportive community that its families—and all residents of Washington, DC—deserve.

Briya in the Future

As Briya looks to the future, it remains steadfast in its commitment to scaling the 2Gen model through sustainable systems and policies that support families. With plans for expansion into Maryland and efforts to address systemic challenges in Washington, DC, Briya is poised to deepen its impact and serve as a model for 2Gen education nationwide.

Expansion to Maryland

Briya's planned expansion into Maryland represents an exciting opportunity to extend its transformative educational approach to new communities. As housing prices increase in the nation's capital, Briya has found that increasingly immigrant families are moving to neighboring Prince Georges and Montgomery Counties in Maryland. Briya's longtime partner, Mary's Center also has locations in both jurisdictions.

Recognizing that the policy and funding landscapes differ significantly from those in DC, Briya—with the support of Ascend—has spent the past year laying the groundwork for this move. The school plans to braid funding from multiple sources, including applying to become a [Patty Center](#) for infant and toddler programming, seeking prekindergarten funding [Maryland's Blueprint for Education](#), and utilizing federal [Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act](#) and [Maryland High School Program](#) funds for adult education.

To prepare for this expansion, Briya has been building on the themes that undergirded systems change in DC: staying true to its mission and centering families. Briya staff have been meeting with key stakeholders, developing partnerships, and building a comprehensive playbook for establishing its first Maryland site. By leveraging its experience and lessons learned in DC, Briya aims to create systems that are responsive to local needs while staying true to its 2Gen model. This expansion will not only serve immigrant families in Maryland but also establish a framework for scaling 2Gen education outside the DC Metropolitan Area.

Codifying Two-Generation Education in DC

In DC, Briya is focused on securing a pathway for sustained funding for 2Gen early childhood programs by addressing the challenges faced by non-licensed infant-toddler programs like its own. The existing childcare licensing regulations do not account for a 2Gen program nor one that operates within an existing school. Thus, the regulations unintentionally create duplicative and burdensome oversight and compromise the integrity of 2Gen approaches.

Consequently, Briya is unable to access benefits such as income-based childcare subsidies and the [Pay Equity Fund](#), which raises early childhood educator salaries to that of public-school teachers. Without access to these benefits, Briya faces an existential threat in recruiting and retaining early childhood educators.

To address these barriers, Briya has been working closely with the DC Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) to propose solutions. In July 2024, Briya submitted formal comments during OSSE's public rulemaking process, recommending waivers for two-generation programs where parents are on-site with their children.

Following these comments, Briya met with OSSE leadership to explore additional avenues for change. At OSSE's suggestion, Briya conducted an audit of the childcare licensing regulations, identifying redundancies with existing charter school oversight and provisions misaligned with 2Gen practices. This collaborative approach underscores Briya's commitment to finding solutions that maintain the integrity of its model while ensuring safety and quality for its families.

Scaling Impact and Advocacy

Looking ahead, Briya is focused on scaling its impact through continued advocacy, partnerships, and sharing its success stories. In DC, the school plans to build on its successes by advocating for systemic changes that support 2Gen education, including expanding access to funding for early childhood programs and workforce pathways. In Maryland, Briya will engage policymakers, educators, and community leaders to create a supportive environment for its innovative model – laying the groundwork to reach many more immigrant families who have left DC to pursue affordable housing and work opportunities in the neighboring state. Briya’s vision for the future is grounded in its belief that education is the key to creating equitable opportunities for immigrant families. By expanding its footprint and influencing policy, Briya is setting the stage for broader adoption of the 2Gen model, ultimately benefiting families and communities across the region and beyond.

Conclusion

Briya’s 35-year journey exemplifies the transformative power of 2Gen education. From its origins as a federal Even Start program to its status as a Tier 1 public charter school serving over 1,100 students annually, Briya has consistently prioritized families as partners in shaping its mission and approach. Through innovation, collaboration, and advocacy, Briya has created systems that empower families, achieve measurable outcomes, and influence broader policy and practice.



By addressing challenges head-on—whether through adapting to changing funding mechanisms, navigating policy constraints, or responding to the pandemic—Briya has proven its resilience and leadership. Its strong partnerships with community organizations, government agencies, and national networks have further amplified its impact, demonstrating the importance of collective action in driving systemic change. Briya’s holistic approach, which

integrates education with health care and social services, continues to be a model for family-centered education across the country.

As Briya looks to the future, its focus on expanding into Maryland and codifying policies in DC highlights its vision for scaling its innovative 2Gen model. These efforts will not only benefit the families it directly serves but also set the stage for other communities to adopt similar approaches, ultimately creating a stronger, more equitable society. With families at the center of its work, Briya reaffirms its commitment to improving educational outcomes, economic mobility, and overall well-being for generations to come.

This report celebrates Briya's achievements, shares its lessons learned, and envisions a future where two-generation education becomes a cornerstone of educational equity. Briya's work is a testament to the power of families, schools, and communities coming together to make lasting change. By walking this road with families, Briya continues to build a brighter future—one step at a time.

Briya Public Charter School

Briya is a two-generation school located in Washington, DC serving parents and children since 1989. To learn more about Briya, visit www.briya.org or contact info@briya.org.

Ashley Simpson Baird, Ph.D.

Dr. Simpson Baird partners with educational organizations to develop equity-focused research, policy, and evaluation solutions that further outcomes for students and families. Formerly she worked at Briya from 2008-2011.