Single Moms Success Design Challenge
Fall 2019 On-Site Sessions

Cross-Campus Themes

Education Design Lab synthesized the following themes from those developed by each school participating in the Single Moms Success Design Challenge. These consolidated themes, which provide the foundation for our design process, represent what emerged as significant for single mother learners’ experiences today across all four of these institutions, and likely hold relevance for other schools as well.

**Big picture:** Each school needs to recognize the prevalence of single mothers in their population and develop systemic, structural changes to create meaningful, lasting success for these learners.

Single mother learners need growth-focused educational environments, which remove barriers, give them a sense of progress, and help them feel capable of reaching their goals.

- Single mother learners need sustainable, accessible, flexible childcare options to allow them to be present in their learning and at work.
- Single mother learners often struggle with financial resources, basic needs satisfaction, and time poverty, all of which affect their educational journeys.
- Single mother learners need holistic support to meet them where they’re at, as well as just-in-time communication to make this support more accessible and navigable.

Single mother learners need belonging-oriented educational environments, which provide them with meaningful connection to others, support from their community, and a sense of acceptance and inclusion at their schools.

- Single mother learners need safe relationships on campus to help them feel a sense of belonging and support.
- Supporting single mother learners’ dependents supports single mother learners’ success in school and beyond.
- Schools need to cultivate family-friendly environments by building awareness and understanding of single mother learners’ experiences and needs, resulting in:
  - Policies, protocols, and spaces that consistently support single mother learners and their families.
  - Greater empathy, advocacy, and support from faculty, staff, and other students.

Single mother learners need learner-driven educational environments, which give them the opportunity to make meaningful choices about their school experiences and which align with their goals, priorities, and interests.

- Single mother learners need flexible learning models and choice in academic programming to give them the time and space to learn.
- Schools need to support single mother learners in defining paths to family-sustaining careers.