Involving Fathers in Partnership Activities

Objectives

- Discuss research and importance of father and other male role model involvement to student success.
- Explore practices to overcome challenges and strengthen participation of fathers and positive male figures.
- Generate ideas and develop strategies to involve fathers and significant male figures.

In a Word

- What do you think?

NOM

BOTH

DAD

Share with your neighbor

Parents are the ultimate role models for children. Every word, movement and action has an effect. No other person or outside force has a greater influence on a child than the parent.

Take the Money?

- Financial Support
  - Fathers tend to earn more than mothers
  - Child support payments

- Past discussions and research (80’s) centered more around “dead beat dads”

The Extent of Fatherlessness

According to the National Center for Fathering

More than 20 million children live in a home without the physical presence of a father. Millionaire have dads who are physically present, but emotionally absent. If it were classified as a disease, fatherlessness would be an epidemic worthy of attention as a national emergency.

Fatherlessness is associated with almost every societal ill facing our country’s children.


57.6% of black children, 31.2% of Hispanic children, and 20.7% of white children are living absent their biological fathers.


Why Do We Want (and Need) Fathers Involved

Father involvement protects children from engaging in delinquent behavior and is associated with less substance abuse among adolescents, less delinquency, less drug use, truancy, and stealing and a lower frequency of externalizing and internalizing symptoms such as acting out, disruptive behavior, depression, sadness and lying.

From Minnesota Fathers & Families Network.
Quick Takes - Table Talk

- What do you already do to encourage more and different dads to participate in your program or school?
- How did you initially invite them to attend?

Father’s Involvement in Children’s School-Based Lives

- Influenced by whether or not they liked school and believed they had teachers that cared
- Influenced by whether or not they were asked to be involved by teacher and their child.
- Mother’s can help insure that father’s are involved.
- Helpful to make the involvement task oriented.

Overcoming Challenges to Father Involvement

Challenges are what make life interesting. Overcoming them is what makes it meaningful.

Barriers = Challenges to Father Involvement

1. Right or wrong, parents often assume that invitations to get involved are for mothers only
2. Institutional practices by the workplace
3. Language and culture
4. Disconnect with community-based organization results in missed opportunities to interact and attract fathers
5. Low education
6. Lack of time
7. Don’t know what to do to assist children with education
8. Acrimonious divorce or separation

Jumping Hurdles

- What are YOU already doing?
- How is it helping?

“The best thing a father can do for his children is to love their mother”
John Wooden

“It is much easier to become a father than to be one.”
Kent Nerburn, Letters to My Son: Reflections on Becoming a Man, 1994

FAMILIES NEED FATHERS
Calcasieu’s Focus on Fathers

- NNPS Advance Topics; April 28, 2009
  *Involve Fathers in Partnerships*
- October 2009; 17 of our Title I Schools, 2 persons from each school traveled to Baltimore for the NNPS-LDC
- October 2010; our 21 remaining Title I Schools traveled to Baltimore for NNPS-LDC
- 2010 School Update *Focus on Fathers*

Calcasieu @2009 NNPS-LDC

Ask and They Will Come!

- Ask men in person, not a note.
- Tell them the what, when, where, why and how?
- Use bulleted lists, summary points, emails or texts to communicate.

CPSB’s Focus on Fathers continues

- 2011 Father sessions at our district cluster trainings.
- 2012 Marsha and Darcy of NNPS returned for more Advanced trainings.
- 2013 Introduced ALL PRO DADS website.
- 2014 Co-ordinated District ALL PRO DAD breakfast.
- 2015 Local child counselor Scott Riviere, guest speaker at our District ATP training.
- 2016 Invited local ministers to support our Parenting Partners program at 6 local schools.

Father Focus in Our Schools

- Watch D.O.G.S. & Hot Dogs - Dolby
- Donuts for Dads & Dad on Patrol - Combre
- *Men @ Work! Learning with Legos* - Dolby
- A Day with Dad - Johnson
- Million Father March - Combre and Barbe
- Dance with My Father - Fairview, Kennedy and Wilson
- ALL PRO DAD Breakfasts - 6 schools
Yo! Yes?...Are you the Man?

- Continue to encourage schools to include men on their ATP teams.
- Communicate with fathers; include places for both parents to sign.
- Present our Family Engagement program to clubs such as Kiwanis, Rotary, 100 Men or Lions Clubs.
- Make men visible; hire more male staff, recruit more male volunteers, have photos of men in nurturing roles.
- Kick off the year with a Father-Child event.
- Use NNPS Samplers to continue our focus this fall.
- Remember: DADS don’t want to meet, they want to work!!!

2010 School Update Focus on Fathers

Marsiglio, Amato, Day, & Lamb (2000)

- It is not the amount of time spent with a child, but how they interact with their children that is important.
- Never-married fathers are less likely to be involved in their child’s life than divorced fathers.
- Contact with non-resident fathers reduces behavior problems unless there is a high level of parent conflict, then contact with non-resident father increases behavior problems.

Beyond “Disneyland Dads”

- Non-residential fathers can do more than take their children out to fun activities.
- When limited to this role, their children are less likely to succeed in school and more likely to experience psychological stress or depression.

Fantasy Land

Resources from NNPS

- NNPS Samplers
- Research and involvement activities

Promising Partnership Practice

Dads Reading at School

"It seems as though they all just wanted to be asked to come to school"

D.A.D.S.: College Bound or Left Behind

"Many powerful relationships were built here tonight... that will challenge our boys to be college bound by providing them with positive role models who believe in them.”
Promising Partnership Practice

Cookies with Dad
Everyone was laughing, chatting and enjoying the cookies. Said a student, “I loved spending time with my dad.”

Promising Partnership Practice

Super Tailgaters’ Rewards Day
The principal of Brock Elementary School was delighted to see at least 50 male volunteers. It was the first time in her more than nine years at the school that she had seen that many male volunteers at once.

Sampler - Involving Fathers in Partnership Activities

Our school welcomes dads and all that they know to help their children learn and grow.

Table Talk
Read the PPP assigned to your table.
With your table discuss:
• What did you think of the activity?
• Was it task-driven?
• How could you use what you read in your school or district?
• If you finish read one more.

Summary
• Schools need more fathers or positive male role models to support student achievement
• How fathers (or significant others) are involved is what matters most
• Relevance and quality is what matters most
• View fathers’ roles as generative, not deficit-based.

Cooking Up Father Involvement
• From what you have heard today what will you do to increase father or other role model involvement in your district, school, or organization?
• Did you have an ah-ha moment during this workshop that will help you in your work?
• What are 2 actions you can do right away to increase father involvement?
• Who can help?
You Can Do It!
NNPS Can Help!
Thank you so much!

Marsha Greenfeld
mgreenfeld@thu.edu
410-516-4193

Loree Smith
loree.smith@cnsb.org
337-217-4170 Ext. 2406
In a Word

Involving Fathers and Other Male Role Models in Partnership Activities

➤ On the Venn Diagram list 3 words or thoughts that come to mind when you think about each - Moms, Dads or Both.

➤ When you are done, share your ideas with your neighbor. Circle the one word or idea that you both think is critically important to this topic.
All Action Teams for Partnerships (ATPs) face challenges in developing programs of school, family, and community partnerships. ATPs work to solve challenges and improve activities to reach more families, strengthen community ties, and boost students’ success.

- List **ONE EXCELLENT ACTIVITY** that your school presently conducts to involve fathers in students' education at home, at school, or in the community.
- Identify **ONE CHALLENGE** or obstacle that your school faced in implementing this involvement activity.
- Briefly describe how your school **SOLVED** that challenge.
- Note one **NEXT STEP** that your school could take to make the activity **even more** successful.

**ONE SUCCESSFUL FATHER INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITY**


**CHALLENGE**


**SOLUTION TO THE CHALLENGE**


**NEXT STEP to IMPROVE the activity **EVEN MORE**


Fathering

The Importance of Positive Male Role Models

Many boys today do not know what it means to be a man because they don’t have a man in their lives. Sadly, children will go to bed tonight without saying goodnight to their father because he just isn’t there.

Nearly one-fourth of America’s children live in mother-only families. Out of the families living in Hamilton County, 39 percent of them are headed by a single mother.

Of the children living with their mothers, 35 percent never see their father and 24 percent see their fathers less than once a month.

These children live with a woman and more than likely, they are taught by a woman at school. Where do they see and interact with positive male role models? Or, if they are a boy, how do they learn what it means to be a man? Television? Movies? On the street?

Even in homes where the father is present, research shows that the average father spends less than 10 minutes a day one-on-one with his child. In our society, emotional and spiritual fatherlessness is becoming the norm. Many of today’s fathers did not have positive role models to show them what it meant to be a father, so they are not there to show their children what it means to be a father.

No matter how great a mother is, she cannot replace what a father provides to a child. Irrefutable research shows that mothers typically are nurturing, soft, gentle, comforting, protective and emotional. Fathers tend to encourage risk-taking and to be challenging, prodding, loud, playful and physical. Children need a balance of protection and reasonable risk-taking. If a positive male role model is not present in the life of a child, there is a void in this area. Children who live in this environment are more likely to be involved in criminal activity, premarital sexual activity, do poorer in school and participate in unhealthy activities.
Studies have shown that involvement of a father or a positive male role model has profound effects on children. Father-child interaction promotes a child’s physical well-being, perceptual ability and competency for relating with others. These children also demonstrate greater ability to take initiative and evidence self-control.

How can you make a positive difference for these children?

- A mother can encourage positive male role model involvement in her child’s life.
- Non-custodial dads can make the effort to visit with their children more often and be intentional about teaching them important life lessons.
- Educators can encourage fathers to be more active in the classroom.
- Positive male role models can influence the lives of children in their communities.
- Faith-based institutions and programs can bring fathers together with their children and also encourage male role models to be involved with children in their sphere of influence.
- Business leaders can encourage employee involvement in community efforts such as mentoring, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Big Brothers-Big Sisters, youth groups, Boys Club or Girls Inc.

Every child needs someone who is absolutely crazy about them. Let’s make sure they have that person.

IN INVOLVING FATHERS IN PARTNERSHIP ACTIVITIES

Our school welcomes dads and all that they know
To help their children learn and grow.

Right or wrong, parents often assume that invitations to get involved in school are for mothers only. Yet, studies show that excellent partnership programs engage all stakeholders—moms, dads, grandparents, community partners and other important people in children’s lives.

Increasingly, educators are becoming aware that they must design strong, goal-linked activities to engage fathers and father figures in their children’s education at school and at home. This is an important—sometimes complicated—extension of school-based partnership programs due to the diverse family structures in all communities. That is, some dads live at home with their children, whereas others do not. Also, other father figures and male role models may be important influences in children’s lives and learning.

Schools must recognize that:
- not all students live with two parents.
- not all students have fathers who are active in their lives.
- some students have important non-relative males (and females) who are “family partners” in their education.

Despite these complexities, students have families—however structured—that are important in their lives. When families are welcomed as partners in their children’s education, students tend to do better in school at all grade levels.

Research confirms that it is important to engage fathers and father-figures in children’s education. When teachers, mothers, fathers, and other family members work in partnership, more students will work to meet their full potential.

Studies indicate that dads need to feel welcome at school and want good guidance and information on productive ways to support their children’s learning and development.

The activities in this Sampler report different ways that fathers and father figures are playing important roles in their children’s education—at school and at home. Schools designed involvement activities that engaged fathers in supporting students’ math, science, and reading skills; good behavior; and plans for college and careers; and to improve the school climate.

Improve Classroom Teaching

The sample activities were conducted by schools’ Action Teams for Partnerships (ATPs) and involved fathers with students across grade levels. Individual teachers and grade-level teams may adapt these activities to strengthen partnerships with their own students’ fathers.

For example, individual science teachers at any grade level could adapt Discovery with Dad to engage fathers with students on hands-on science activities linked to specific science units. Or, grade level teams of teachers could design a Sports Math Night of games focused on grade-level state standards for math learning.

The ten examples in this Sampler, arranged alphabetically, are a few of many excellent activities in NNPS annual collections of Promising Partnership Practices. See more at www.partnershipschools.org in the section Success Stories.

This Sampler was developed by Marsha D. Greenfeld, Joyce L. Epstein, and Steven B. Sheldon.

NNPS thanks MetLife Foundation for its support to improve programs of family and community involvement.
This booklet is a collection of activities/initiatives to encourage the engagement of men in the lives of children in our schools and communities. These activities are from several Promising Partnership Practices annual collections from the members of the National Network of Partnership Schools at Johns Hopkins University.

The 6 Types of Involvement: Parenting, Communication, Volunteering, Learning at Home, Decision Making and Collaboration with the Community are represented in this booklet.

Compiled by:

Loree L. Smith, Federal Programs
Family Engagement Coordinator
Engagement of Men/Fathers in Partnership Activities

Anyone can become a father, but it takes a real man to be a Dad. Father and other male role model engagement will provide a safety net to help more children reach their potential. Strong district and organizational leaders can encourage and support school teams to design activities to recruit more male engagement in schools. In this way research and best practices can be utilized to offer supports that are goal linked for stronger student success.

All Pro Dad’s Day provides an opportunity for dads to spend quality time with their children that will strengthen their relationship, as well as benefiting the child’s school and the entire community.

A thank you letter from child that experienced an All Pro Dad group at his school.
C ooper Elementary School shares a problem with many other schools—a disparity between the level of involvement of dads and moms. To get more dads to the building and involved in other ways, Cooper conducted a Day with My Dad to develop fathers' and other father-figures' sense of ownership and comfort with the school. Fathers who attended spent the day at school and with their children in interesting collaborative activities.

To kick off the day, every dad received a small trophy commemorating the occasion. During a breakfast buffet, participants conversed with each other and played games with their children. A short icebreaker activity helped everyone get acquainted. After the meal, a motivational speaker kept everyone laughing with a humorous talk on a wide variety of school-related topics. The family units moved on to the main event—a mousetrap car-building contest and race.

Arranged in teams, dads and kids sharpened their competitive spirits and devised catchy team monikers as teachers distributed car parts. Fathers and their children put their minds and hands to work. They put the pieces together only to find that they all were short one part. Everyone soon realized that the only way to make their contraptions work was to borrow pieces from another team.

The dads and kids made use of various negotiation strategies. Some groups conducted diplomatic missions to make their requests. Others sent their daughters to make sad-faced pleas for spare parts. Others had more or less direct strategies.

Once the mousetrap cars were fully assembled, the moment of truth arrived. With the fruits of their labor in hand, each team marched to a hallway where teachers had set up a race track. Under the teachers’ supervision, the father/student teams cheered on their makeshift vehicles in races. Ribbons were awarded to those with the speediest cars.

The collaborative activity helped everyone relax and have some thought-provoking fun. Looking back on the day, Cooper’s Parent Involvement Facilitator wrote that “it was great to see [the fathers and father-figures] so lively and working and laughing with their children.”

It was clear to all that everyone was a winner. Indeed, each father/father figure received a certificate noting that they were “the best” and had a photo taken. At least 150 students and 200 parents participated in Day with My Dad. Organizers were thrilled that so many dads came and demonstrated their willingness to involve themselves in school activities. As a previously disproportionately absent group, their presence was a real step forward.

Adrienne Woods
Parent Involvement Facilitator
awwoods@sbo.hampton.k12.va.us

©2010 National Network of Partnership Schools
Johns Hopkins University
ME AND MY GUY NIGHT

RUTH LIVINGSTON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
PASCO, WASHINGTON

A prize-winning student-generated idea turned into a great activity that brought dozens of dads, uncles, grandfathers, and other male role models to Ruth Livingston Elementary—some for the first time. Me and My Guy Night originated with a district essay contest that a Livingston student entered to write his ideas for getting more men involved in his school. The school received $500 prize money to implement the idea. This paid for most of the expenses for the night of fun, food, and games.

The student's ideas focused on "guy favorites" of pizza and sports. To implement this, the school invited all students to bring an important guy in their lives to school for dinner and games, such as basketball, tetherball, and volleyball. There also was an I'm Game for Anything category and a sports blooper video for entertainment. Every 15 minutes, school staff held a prize drawing.

The idea was clearly a winner. Nearly 200 students accompanied by about 140 of their "guys" joined the fun. "So many dads at our school. What a beautiful sight," said one teacher. "This was the best event ever," said one of the dads.

Because of the large turnout, teachers served dinner in three shifts. It was a simple meal—cheese and pepperoni pizza and bottled water. The school served 100 pizzas that night, enough to qualify for a discount from a local pizza store owner. The principal welcomed everyone during each dinner shift and talked briefly about the importance of male role models in children's education.

After eating, students and their guys played soccer and other games. Volunteers helped the teams get organized and encouraged the adults to play. "With friendly competition, guests rotated among games, interacting in a very relaxed atmosphere where new acquaintances and friends were made along the way," said the school counselor and chairperson of the Action Team for Partnerships (ATP).

ATP members helped with planning, setting up and cleaning up. They also shopped for the prizes, picked up the food and supplies and kept track of the RSVPs to ensure that everyone had dinner. The team also asked the Parent Teacher Organization for $200 to supplement the prize money and to cover expenses.

A few families inquired if they could be included even if they did not have a "guy" who could attend and they were told to come anyway. About five families came with their moms.

Livingston usually has good family participation in its activities, but, often, it is mothers and grandmothers who attend events and volunteer for projects. Me and My Guy Night boosted the school's goal to involve more males in school events, and some will volunteer in the future. It seemed to please the students to have the attention of a special guy for the night.

Kelly Longsdorff
Counselor, ATP Co-Chairperson
klongsdorff@psd1.org

©2010 National Network of Partnership Schools

Johns Hopkins University
DONUTS AND DATA WITH DAD

Sunset Middle School
Sunset, LA

Record-breaking cold weather did not deter 80 parents from heading to Sunset Middle School one morning last winter to learn about the new Common Core State Standards. What were the standards? What do they mean for student learning? How can parents help their children meet the academic goals for the year? These were a few questions on parents’ minds.

The school’s Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) made a special effort to boost participation by fathers and other father-figures in students’ lives by calling the Common Core meeting Donuts and Data with Dad. Mothers, grandparents, and others were welcome to attend. The title helped—mostly dads and other male role models for students attended the breakfast meeting.

The ATP publicized Donuts and Data with Dad in several ways. Students were given flyers to take home with a section for families to RSVP. An announcement was placed in the Community Events section of the local newspaper. Text message reminders were sent to parents using the school’s automated communication system. The ATP believed that this publicity-package would help many parents make time to attend the breakfast meeting. Coffee, hot chocolate, and donuts were served.

At the school, dads and other family members were greeted by ten ATP members and 15 teachers. They socialized and enjoyed breakfast, and received information prepared by the school’s Instructional Specialist. The handouts were personalized for each family, and included the student’s test scores in language arts, math, science, and social studies from 2013 and the target for improving skills for the upcoming state test in the spring of 2014. Families appreciated receiving information specific to their children.

The school Parent Educator and principal welcomed everyone, and shared an overview of the Common Core State Standards. Parents were curious. Information outlined what students at each grade level should know and be able to do in specific subjects. The Instructional Specialist explained how the curriculum and teachers’ instructional methods would help students meet the standards. The Science Coordinator explained specific curricular changes. The presenters also shared strategies that parents could use at home to support their child’s learning. “This was great information,” said a dad.

The district’s Supervisor of School Choice and Accountability attended and was pleased by the number of parents at the breakfast. She thanked them for participating and praised the school for the academic advances its students made in the past few years. Sunset Middle School, she reported, with about 70% of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, had been named a “Top Gains School” in St. Landry Parish. After the presentations, family members were encouraged to visit their students in their classrooms.

Donuts and Data with Dad was a great way to strengthen the connections of educators with families. Dads, moms, and others gained a clear sense of what their students needed to achieve in the upcoming months and were ready to help them reach these goals. As students move through the middle grades, all parents will need information on Common Core State Standards and how to work as partners with teachers to help students advance their skills.

Monica Singleton
Parent Educator
mls0556@slp.k12.la.us

©2014 National Network of Partnership Schools

Johns Hopkins University
DADS AND DRILLS

LINCOLN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
KENNEWICK, WASHINGTON

Leaders at Lincoln Elementary School knew that parents’ presence at the school can have a profound effect on children. Further, research indicates that the involvement of fathers and father figures adds an extra influence on children’s learning, behavior, and commitment to school. The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP), principal, and teachers at Lincoln wanted to encourage more fathers and father figures to spend some time at school and add a bit of excitement to students’ school days.

They developed Dads and Drills, scheduled four times during the year in October, January, March, and May. With the repeat schedule, families could find time to put at least one of the days on their calendars. Although named to attract “dads,” all adults in children’s lives—male and female—were invited to participate. Reminders were plentiful in the school newsletter, on flyers, and on the school marquee. The 4th and 5th graders decorated the gym with motivational slogans to encouraging participation. About 50 parents or other family figures attended each event, along with their students, teachers, and others.

The “drills” were stations or locations for physical fitness and academic skill building activities. The fitness activities were developed with a personal trainer from the community. He and his assistant designed some of the stations and they brought special equipment to the school for some Dads and Drills.

Different activities were scheduled on the four days to keep things interesting for students and repeat attendees.

Fitness stations included a balance of races, organized games (e.g., basketball), balance activities, juggling (with the principal), speed stacking, and fun skills (e.g., hula hoops). Academic activities challenged students with grade-appropriate basic skill-building, such as reading sight words and producing math facts combined with wall climbing.

Some activities were so popular that they were included in all fitness sessions. Other activities varied from time to time. There also was one station for students and adults to gather information on healthy practices. For example, Dentistry for Kids and Benton Franklin Health District participated and shared useful information on maintaining good health.

Some stations were set up the night before. Or, the ATP co-chairs and volunteers came early to set up other stations. Volunteers also helped out to conduct relay races and scooter races so that everyone could participate. The school paid for some equipment and materials with a gift certificate earned from the National Walk and Bile to School Day in October.

Dads and Drills began at 8 a.m., before the start of school. Students and their dads, moms, grandparents, and other caregivers went through stations that interested them at their own pace. If parents had to leave for work, students could continue for the full scheduled time.

Many attendees invested themselves with enthusiasm. One student asserted, “I’m going to beat my dad on the scooters. I’m super fast.” After 25 minutes for a workout, participants were given water bottles and snack bars. The gym teacher, then, had a short time to prepare for the school day.

On Dads and Drills days, the mix of exercise, academic brain-jogging, and a snack proved to be an energizing way to start the day.

Denise Hogg and Jacki Moore
ELL Specialist and LAP Specialist
denise.hogg@ksd.org
jacki.moore@ksd.org

©2016 National Network of Partnership Schools
Johns Hopkins University
What's the best way to a dad's heart? At Edwin Markham Elementary School's Dads and Dr. Seuss's *Green Eggs and Ham*, the answer was food, books, and fun.

At 8:00 in the morning on Dr. Seuss's birthday, dads and other male family members followed signs to the school gymnasium. They signed in and received a Dr. Seuss pencil and bookmark for their children. Then, dads, father figures, and other family members and students went to the cafeteria, where teachers and volunteers from the donating restaurant served biscuits, drinks, and delicious (yes, delicious) green eggs and ham.

After breakfast, guests returned to the gym to enjoy an enthusiastic student performance. Arranged by grade level, the students presented a choral reading of the *Green Eggs and Ham* story, which they had developed and practiced in their music class.

Students were involved in the Dads and Dr. Seuss event from start to finish. In class, during writing time a week before the event, every student made a personalized invitation to invite their dad, grandfather, uncle, brother, or special friend to the literary morning. Students hand-delivered their handmade invitations to their guests, and the school sent flyers home and hung posters at school as event reminders.

The activity cost about $100. Costs were covered by a grant from the local teachers union for implementing a Dr. Seuss-themed activity. Edwin Markham's community partner, The Country Gentlemen restaurant, donated the green eggs and ham.

With 100 dads and 200 students participating, the green eggs and ham nearly ran out. The restaurant responded by bringing extra eggs and ham that were not dyed green, but that were still delicious. The ATP and other planners urge others conducting a similar activity to have ample food supplies, because the meal was such a hit.

One dad remarked, "This is how you get dads to come to school—offer a great breakfast."

While Edwin Markham typically has a lot of support from mothers, the teachers believe that students benefitted from having their fathers in attendance. Students who saw their fathers enjoying books became more eager to improve their own reading abilities.

In the relaxed atmosphere, teachers were able to make new connections with students' dads and extended family members. And students gained exceptional familiarity with *Green Eggs and Ham* through their choral reading. They not only learned the story, but also learned to express the correct rhythm of the book.

In the future, Edwin Markham plans to have boxes of different books on hand and will encourage students and dads to bring a book they want to read together. The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) was pleased with the activity, and did not see much to improve. Students, teachers, and male role models got to read, learn, perform, and enjoy each other's company. No one was heard saying that famous phrase, "I will not eat green eggs and ham!"

---

Stephanie Hoeft  
Teacher Co-Chair  
shoef@psd1.org
DIGGING WITH DAD

MEADOWS PARKWAY EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTER
ST. CHARLES, MISSOURI

Little kids will always find ways to get dirty; it's a fact of life. At Meadows Parkway Early Childhood Center, though, they wanted to encourage getting dirty in order to learn. They created outdoor classroom experiences for the young students. To further motivate the students, the school's Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) recruited experts in playing outside—the children's dads.

The partnership team of teachers, parents, and the administrator planned a mix of teaching, learning, playing, and bonding experiences for students and their fathers or father figures. They created a series of learning stations to provide a variety of activities in outdoor classrooms.

Digging with Dad took place from 6:30 p.m. to accommodate working parents' schedules. As students and their fathers arrived, they received necklaces with one of four pendants: a bird, a flower, a bug, or a butterfly. The different pendants guided groups to their first stations to begin their explorations. Butterflies began in the Motor Area; bugs began in the Music Area; birds started with a Scavenger Hunt; and flowers started in the Digging Area. After set periods, the groups moved through all of the explorations.

The Motor Area introduced families to the school's new playground. Wooden balance beams and logs formed an interesting, textured, and adventurous climbing area. Children explored the new wooden jungle gym under their dad's supervision. They could also play with parachutes provided by a staff member at this station.

The Music Area featured a pair of instruments in the outdoor classroom—a large xylophone and a drum made from a barrel. Children also could play other instruments brought out from inside or make an instrument with materials at the Music station.

For example, some students and dads made "shakers" from paper towel tubes. A local band volunteered to play music, ranging from the Alphabet Song to bluegrass.

The other two areas introduced the real dirty work. For the Scavenger Hunt, the school showcased its nature trail. Students and dads traveled that scenic walkway. A local conservationist set out animal pelts along the trail for the hikers to find. With the pelts came wildlife information for the dads to share with their children.

In the well-named Digging Area, there was a big pile of dirt for students to dig into using student-sized shovels, spades, and rakes. They could plant sunflower seeds, shrubs, and trees donated from a local nursery. Getting dirty while learning about plants was fun, and their work and play also benefited the environment and beautified the school.

Fathers seemed to enjoy the activities as much as their children did. One dad commented, "This was a great opportunity to spend time with my son. We really enjoyed everything—especially the digging!" Students and dads enjoyed their time together and learned some things about the world around them. No one had to dig very far to see the value of providing children with opportunities to learn outside of school.

Janet Longenecker
Early Childhood Coordinator
janet.longenecker@fhsdschools.org

©2011 National Network of Partnership Schools

Johns Hopkins University
R.E.A.L. MEN

MAIN STREET ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
LAKE CITY, SOUTH CAROLINA

It's true—barbecue is delicious! A little barbecue and a good book are even better together than alone. Throw in a little extra excitement—say a crime scene investigation—and you have a memorable occasion. Main Street Elementary School combined these elements and more to create the R.E.A.L. (Raising Expectations, Achievement, and Leadership) Men program.

One of the school’s improvement goals is to increase parental involvement in ways that contribute to student learning and success in school. Teachers want to close the achievement gap between students in different racial groups by increasing the skills and scores of African American males in the school. R.E.A.L. Men focused on these goals. As one parent said, “The only thing better than having a great time is having a great time with those you love and hold dear. The R.E.A.L. Men program provided me and my son with wonderful educational growth experiences.”

With the help of male volunteers, the school planned four activities to show its male students what it takes to be a “real man.” Boys got the chance to work with their fathers, grandfathers, uncles, or other male guardians on a quartet of projects that appealed to both their manliness and their curiosity.

First, in R.E.A.L. Men Cook, boys and their male role models practiced math and analytical thinking by creating their own kind of barbecue sauce. They chose among three kinds of ingredients: spicy, tangy, and sweet. Students and their fathers or father figures made sauce by combining the ingredients in various fractional parts. They measured and kept track of the amounts they used as they went along. At the end of the event, the boys took home some of their newly made sauce, each of which had a unique name thought up by the boys themselves.

Next, the activity R.E.A.L. Men Read brought special guests to the school. These guests were the R.E.A.L. Men who selected books from the school’s front office and traveled to various classrooms to read their favorite stories to students in grades K to 5. They showed, clearly, that strong, manly men do, in fact, read. Not only that, they are willing to read aloud with others, share stories, and discuss ideas.

Third, R.E.A.L. Men Explore brought the boys and men together to solve a mystery. They worked together to fill their investigation notebooks with information from a fictitious crime scene, Interrogation Room, and Footprint Analysis Room. Gradually, the boys and men developed a picture of a culprit for the local authorities, who arrested the perpetrator. This fun activity gave students a chance to think and analyze information with the help of their male role models. They all enjoyed playing detective for a day.

The final event of the year was R.E.A.L. Men Dream. Students set personal learning goals in their Parent-Student-Teacher conferences. Their fathers or male role models helped the students dream big. They discussed students' goals and how to reach them, and stressed the importance of learning and achieving in school and out. Whether completing tasks or dreaming about the future, the boys at Main Street Elementary learned that they could count on R.E.A.L. Men to help them go in the right direction.

Linda Gray
Assistant Principal
lgray@florence3.k12.sc.us

©2011 National Network of Partnership Schools
Johns Hopkins University
MEN AT WORK! LEARNING WITH LEGOS!

DOLBY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
LAKE CHARLES, LA

What do you get when you cross a group of involved dads, their elementary school-aged kids, and a school building full of Lego sets? The answer at Dolby Elementary School is Men at Work! Learning with Legos—a fun way to help dads understand and support their children’s math learning at home.

Dolby held Men at Work! one November evening from 6-8 p.m. When dads and their students arrived at the school, they found four Lego stations through which to rotate to build various math skills. Activities, iPad apps, and game stations helped students and fathers learn about parts, part totals, building square numbers, fractions, and addition and subtraction. Activities were selected for two grade ranges: Pre-K to 2nd grade and 3rd to 5th. Dads with students at both grade spans worked on different activities with each of their children.

In addition to the fun of working together with Legos, dads and students received a packet of activities to take home from each station. The dads and grandparents used some of the time to ask their math homework questions. This gave teachers an opportunity to meet the dads, share information on new math curricula, and demonstrate math instruction with hands-on models. The morning after Men at Work, the KIDS TV news station announced four lucky attendees who won Lego kits as door prizes.

Many dads came in curious about linking Legos and math. They had Lego sets at home, but did not realize that there were math connections that could be made while playing with their children. Teachers modeled how to use playtime with Legos as a learning time to ask their children questions that require mathematical reasoning.

One parent told the assistant principal, “This was the most fun I’ve had at a school event.” He was glad to see that something he had used as a child was useful in the education of his own child. Another noted that this was the first school event he attended “on my own” with the children. The dads also extended their social networks as they met and talked with other dads.

Dolby reports that Dads at Work! was an easy practice to implement, but had to be well planned. The idea for Men at Work was sparked by an NNPS conference session on involving fathers with hands-on, fun, and educational activities that could be easily replicated at home. Dolby’s team used the Scholastic website on Using LEGO to Build Math Concepts as a resource in selecting the topics for their activity stations. The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) publicized the event through school newsletters, School Messenger telephone calls, and Watchdog Dads meetings.

In addition to Watch Dog Dads and the Dolby PTO, McDonalds—a school partner in education—and Title I funds also helped cover the $350 cost. The ATP plans to watch for Lego sales during the year to establish a collection of materials for future Men at Work sessions.

The focus on Learning with Legos! gave fathers and their kids time to connect and learn through play. These popular toys can be learning blocks for building a stronger foundation in math.

Julie Ortego
Assistant Principal
julie.ortego2@cpsb.org

©2015 National Network of Partnership Schools

Johns Hopkins University
rooms filled with launching zones, air velocity measurement instruments, and black lights may seem more like something at NASA than at a preschool. Discovery with Dad was a two-day activity that brought fathers and other male role models to the Early Childhood Family Education Center—Hackmann Road in the Francis Howell School District for scientific exploration and discovery.

About 150 fathers, grandparents, uncles, and special guests came to school with their favorite preschoolers on Discovery with Dad days. They traveled as classes to eight exploratory stations, each with several activities on each scientific theme. Some activities included black lights to explore positional concepts; Gak-making for chemistry fun; eight ways to explore sink/float and measuring concepts; soda pop geyser at the launching zone; paper airplanes to demonstrate air velocity; play dough color mixing for color investigations; levers, pulleys, and Wedges to learn about simple machines; and popcorn-popping for experiencing the five senses and to enjoy a snack.

Throughout Discovery with Dad, one classroom teacher or assistant stayed in the classroom to facilitate a particular science station. The other teacher traveled with the class and dads to supervise the activities and to support students who did not have dad-guests. Each station lasted about 18 minutes, with two minutes to travel from one activity to the next.

Because the Early Childhood Family Education Center is a preschool with half-day programming, the 2 hour and 40 minute event was conducted over two days, with activities for students in the morning and afternoon sessions.

The visiting dads and father figures received a flyer that explained the science theme and activities in each room and suggestions for follow-up activities to conduct at home to help students continue learning. These ranged from instructions for home-made lava lamps, finger paints, parachutes, and marshmallow poppers, to activities gathered from www.brainpopsjr.com. One parent said, “I read over the...ideas for home and was...impressed! We will be trying many of them soon.”

The Hackmann Road Action Team activity fund, raised through the Action Team’s fundraising efforts, supported the $300 cost for supplies that were not readily available. The Action Team recommends planning at least six months in advance to involve local businesses or community groups in activities like Discover with Dad. The Planning Committee also noted that holding the event after school for all students, rather than on two school days for morning and afternoon sessions might be a good variation on this theme.

Discovery with Dad introduced preschoolers to hands-on science activities with their teachers guidance and with the participation of their special male role models. When her husband and children came home from the event, one parent noted, "As a mom of girls, I love that they have the chance at such a young age to dig into science. It is so important to start their love and interest in a fun field!" One dad described the day as "awesome!" Another impressed (and wiped-out) dad said, "You guys work harder in two hours than I do in an entire day." Clearly, the teachers were able to bring science learning and science fun to young and old.

Susan Lane
Site Leader
susan.lane@fhsdschools.org

©2012 National Network of Partnership Schools

Johns Hopkins University
ALL PRO DADS

GREENWOOD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
FLORENCE, SC

It has been said that any man can be a father, but it takes someone special to be a dad. In that spirit, the Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) and others at Greenwood Elementary School implemented All Pro Dads—a year-long series of activities in a variety of settings. The goal was to empower and enable dads to be more involved in motivating their children’s behavioral and academic success. The first group of dads was so engaged that they planned other ways to invite more dads to do the same.

All Pro Dads began with a series of three breakfast meetings with motivational speakers. In October, the former principal and superintendent of schools talked with over 125 dads in the school library. In November, the breakfast was moved to the cafeteria to accommodate a larger group. There, a former San Diego Padres shortstop spoke to about 300 fathers and their children. The sports theme continued in January, with a talk by a television wildlife and fishing expert.

The second component of All Pro Dads was Take Dad to the Library Night with the local professional, minor league basketball team. As 125 families arrived at the public library, they enjoyed refreshments and a PowerPoint presentation about reading comprehension strategies to use before, during, and after reading. Basketball players then read with students and practiced these strategies. Families also toured the library and applied for library cards. Each student received a bookmark and two children’s books to take home, along with chances to win door prizes of board games and basketball tickets.

In March, Bring Dad to School enabled students to bring their dads on one of two visiting days, decided alphabetically by last name. Fathers read to and with students, attended class, ate lunch with their children, and helped out at recess. One happy boy commented, “This is the first time my dad has come to this school when I wasn’t in trouble.”

In April, one father felt so inspired that he wanted to expand All Pro Dads to reach more Greenwood fathers. He organized a fishing trip to a popular pond. Even in the rain, nearly forty dads went fishing with their children. A daughter noted that this was her first field trip with her dad.

Cookout with Dad Day rounded out the year with another event organized by the involved fathers. By grilling and playing kickball and baseball, dads bonded with their children and with other parents over good food and good sportsmanship.

Greenwood’s ATP recommends planning an All Pro Dads series during the summer to schedule speakers, contact local sports teams, arrange breakfasts, include other parents in the planning process, and obtain donations from local merchants. All Pro Dads yielded fantastic results. Not only did student behavior improve on activity days, but discipline referrals decreased 10% overall compared to the prior year. For some dads, this was their first time visiting school and engaging with their children in an academic environment. Greenwood’s dads hope all schools in the district adopt the idea because they know that All Pro Dads are better equipped to support and champion All Pro Kids.

Angela Newman
Intervention Teacher
aneorman@fsd1.org

©2015 National Network of Partnership Schools

Johns Hopkins University
MAN-UP INITIATIVE: MALE MENTORING

SOUTH FLORENCE HIGH SCHOOL
FLORENCE, SOUTH CAROLINA

South Florence High School set a goal to improve the lives of male students who were at risk of failing. Based on their grades, discipline, attendance, and/or personal situations at home, about 75 students were paired with male mentors. The mentors for each group were selected by the students, were school staff, or were volunteers from the community. The program, said one student, “got men to come into our lives when our own fathers were absent.”

Three groups were formed that focused on academic progress, life skills, or behavior. Students could participate in some or all three groups to help themselves get back on track for graduation from high school.

The Diligent Pupils of Character program enabled about 35 students to meet one-on-one with their mentors once every three weeks to check on their grades and academic progress. Students were urged to maintain an 80 per cent average grade in all classes. Mentors discussed specific strategies and tips for success in the classroom, and urged students to set and attain goals for academic performance.

The second group, South Florence Strong, helped students focus on life skills, including small things (e.g., tying a necktie, changing a tire) and big things (e.g., preparing for a job interview, applying to college). Many of the students in this program had been suspended from school. The mentors brought all participants together for a group meeting, once a week for one hour. Guest speakers discussed important events and decisions in students’ lives.

The third group of students met weekly to talk with the school’s behavior health counselor.

At three points during the year, all students and mentors in the three Man-Up groups met for breakfast in the school library. This allowed all students and mentors to meet, connect, and discuss important challenges and successes in the last period. Other special events were conducted such as providing tickets to a University of South Carolina basketball game.

The program was supported by grants from Francis Marion University’s Center of Excellence, the PTSA, and other donors, totaling about $2000. The mentors were not paid, but the assistant principal and coordinator of the initiative said, “The . . . feeling that one gets from sponsoring events like these and working with children in this capacity is the most rewarding part.” Parents supported their student’s attendance at meetings with mentors and were proud of the youngster’s accomplishments.

The initiative gave young men time to stop, think, and talk about the things that are most important to them. One student explained that the program “gives us a different mindset so I think about things now before I do them.” Not all students in the Man-Up Initiative were successful on all aspects of the program, but many, previously at risk, qualified for the school’s honor roll, received full athletic scholarships to continue their education after high school, or had limited disciplinary referrals after joining the program. Most of the participants passed the majority of their classes. One student explained the success when he stated that the program “keeps me out of trouble.”

John Cedrick Kennedy
Assistant Principal
cedrick.kennedy@fsd1.org

©2016 National Network of Partnership Schools

Johns Hopkins University
Too often the focus of teenage pregnancy, birth, and parenting programs is only on the mother. Although teen moms definitely need support, teen fathers also need guidance and encouragement. Many teen fathers have no role models or knowledge about how to care for a new baby or the mother of their child. They need assistance to become good fathers and to set a path for their own education and futures.

Hamilton Learning Academy in Little Rock provides alternative education for students who are not succeeding in their regular schools due to truancy or academic or behavioral problems. The school and community were aware of the need for programs to guide young fathers in a better way. The Christian Ministerial Alliance (CMA) stepped up to help young men in the city, beginning with young fathers at Hamilton Learning Academy. CMA leaders saw this as an opportunity to contribute to a need outside the walls of the church. A school administrator served as coordinator for the project.

CMA mentors met with young fathers, one-on-one. They started by building trust so the mentees felt comfortable talking with someone from outside the school. The pairs met once or twice a month at the school on a regular schedule. Although the sessions were closed and confidential, some topics were shared across mentors. These included helping each student set individual education and career goals, creating steps for attaining these goals, and discussing individual students’ challenges and how and where to find help.

The session on long-term goals, called “Destinations,” ended with an activity, “My Commitment,” for students to outline specific actions to reach their goals. Mentors also provided tutoring and encouragement to help their young fathers improve their grades, complete assignments, and pass their courses. Mentees of age were shown how to register for Selective Service. Others were given information on a summer college prep program.

Parents of the young fathers were asked to volunteer for three hours, which included a parenting class, training about edline to access their student’s grades, and a visit to their son’s classroom. A dinner was served to the parents, mentors, and mentees to reinforce their shared goals for student success.

CMA also hosted the young fathers at a Central District Luncheon for ministers in Little Rock and Central Arkansas. To encourage replication of the Young Fathers’ Mentor Initiative, three of the mentees spoke about the power of the program and how it helped them to focus on graduating from high school and future plans.

This partnership was a positive force in the lives of the participants. Parents of the mentees reported that their teen had more positive attitudes about school. Teachers reported fewer disruptions by these students, and mentors reported many positive results in their interactions with their mentees. All of the first cohort of mentees transitioned back to their regular schools and one man registered for Selective Services.

The project makes clear that it is a serious mistake for schools and communities to ignore young fathers. By providing them with role models and a road map, the young men can take a place in their families and in the lives of their children.

Neva Johnson
Assisting Staff / Drop-out Prevention and Volunteers in Public Schools
neva.johnson@lrsd.org

©2015 National Network of Partnership Schools
Johns Hopkins University
DADS IN THE DUGOUT

JOHN W. MOORE INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL
FLORENCE, SC

Baseball icon Babe Ruth once said, "Baseball was, is, and always will be to me the best game in the world." Agreeing with this, the Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) at John W. Moore Intermediate School partnered with Francis Marion University’s baseball team. The goal was to strengthen relationships between students and their dads or other male role models, and to strengthen core character skills including good sportsmanship. The leaders hoped that Dads in the Dugout would provide a powerful bonding opportunity and result in improved student behavior at school and at home.

The activity began with an essay contest in which all 815 students at the school were invited to interview their father or a male role model and write about what they learned. The essay contest enabled girls and boys to deepen their relationships with their fathers, develop their communication skills, and polish their writing skills.

A series of communications publicized the essays and the day with FMU. This included notices home, RSVP invitations, flyers posted at the school, and information shared on TV monitors in the cafeteria and hallways. The Principal added her invitation for participation to her weekly phone call to parents. Over 115 students, 75 of their dads and role models, and every teacher from the school joined the FMU baseball team to play games, think about desirable character traits, and exercise good sportsmanship.

The FMU baseball coach kicked off the event by talking about the Moore Intermediate School’s ROAR program. ROAR aims to increase students’ Responsibility (making good choices); Opportunity (doing the right thing at school and at home); Accountability (owning up to one’s actions); and Respect (treating adults and peers well in all settings). It was fitting for the FMU coach to reinforce the middle school’s initiative to encourage positive student behavior. The ten winners of the essay contest were announced and honored for their work.

The coach invited everyone to play baseball games and skill building activities at three stations. At each station, FMU college baseball players taught students basic baseball skills and modeled appropriate sportsmanship and character. The players also distributed ribbons and prizes and autographed a baseball for each student. The middle school students saw the college players as role models, too.

“The FMU team and coach made this such a memorable event for our students and their fathers and male role models!” a teacher exclaimed.

At the conclusion of the event, everyone gathered for a feast of hot dogs, chips, and Cracker Jacks—a true baseball menu. The treats, materials, and prizes were purchased for $500 using Title I funds and a $1000 grant from FMU’s Center for Excellence for the Moore Intermediate School’s partnership program.

Dads in the Dugout knocked it out of the park. Said one student, “It was fun to spend time with my dad and the FMU baseball team!” “I had a fantastic time with my daughter and niece,” said one parent. “I am thrilled that Moore did this for us!” The game plan is to repeat Dads in the Dugout with FMU and to encourage the participation of more students, fathers, and other important males in students’ lives.

Dr. Aneta Bhojwani
Behavioral Health Counselor
aneta.bhojwani@fsd1.org

©2014 National Network of Partnership Schools

36

Johns Hopkins University
DAD AND ME SCIENCE AND SUPPER NIGHT

LAKELAND FAMILY RESOURCE CENTER
SPOONER, WISCONSIN

What do you get when you combine dads, daughters, food coloring, and a whole lot of flour? A really cool erupting volcano! That was one of the featured activities at the Dad and Me Science and Supper Night at the Lakeland Family Resource Center.

Too often, girls are underrepresented in science; some are intimidated by the subject. With that in mind, the Resource Center staff planned an enjoyable night for dads and their daughters to “play around and get messy” with science.

The Center received a grant from the Green Bay Packers to create four different Dad and Me activities for families in the district’s four schools. Science and Supper Night was one of the activities. About 100 girls and 50 dads participated, experiencing how much fun and interactive science can be.

To begin the evening, a member of the University of Wisconsin Extension program demonstrated the Germ Light. She explained the importance of thoroughly washing your hands before meals and she used the light to rate just how well each participant did. Luckily, everyone did a great job of getting rid of all their germs, so dinner could be served. The menu was sloppy Joes followed by chocolate chip bars.

After dinner, dads and daughters paired up to learn how to make a volcano. First they filled bottles with warm water and a few drops of red food coloring. Then they mixed flour, salt, oil, and water to form the dough that went around the bottle to create the shape of a volcano. They added liquid detergent and baking soda, poured in vinegar, and stepped back to experience their creations. What excitement when the volcano erupted and red foam spewed out everywhere!

After a thorough clean-up of the volcanoes, the student and dad scientists had an opportunity to make Wave Bottles, using oil, water, and food coloring. This helped the scientist teams observe the motion and patterns of waves and to consider how waves moved in oceans and in tsunamis. When asked to choose their favorite activity of the evening, dads and daughters alike answered with a resounding “All of it!”

The evening’s price tag was $143. That bought a good deal of excitement and learning as dads and daughters worked together and learned that science can be fun. The positive responses to the evening confirmed what a happy event it turned out to be. “What a fun night,” said one father. “Now, mom needs to take a turn with your new science book, and make and clean up a mess!”

One of the goals of the Family Resource Center is to get into the community to support families and learning. This activity helped the Center meet its goal in a very worthwhile way.

Sara J. Hubin
AmeriCorps Vista Volunteer
sarahubin@hotmail.com
Fathers of children at two elementary schools in the Richland-Bean Blossom district should feel pretty special. The schools offered three events just for them this year: Donuts with Dads, Dads Reading at School at Edgewood Primary School, and Guys’ Night Out at Edgewood Intermediate School. The district leaders want to sponsor activities that welcomed fathers and other male family members to their children’s schools and show them that learning can be fun.

“We noticed that some of our young male students were lacking a consistent male role model who was invested in their educational outcomes,” said the district’s family involvement coordinator. The events for fathers strengthened schools’ connections with families and made the schools friendlier places for all family members.

Guys’ Night Out at the intermediate school, grades 3-5, included a spaghetti dinner, raffle, inspirational after-dinner speaker, and activity stations that offered adults and students interesting and enjoyable learning opportunities. Every student chose three stations to visit with their guest to participate in a 20-minute program. They could learn-to-juggle, conduct hands-on science, play board games, and compete in “noodle” hockey, among other choices. The raffle and a photo session ended Guys Night Out in a picture-perfect way.

Donuts with Dads at the primary school, grades K-2, not only offered students and their guest breakfast but also an opportunity to learn about the “read with the dogs” program at a nearby library. The Humane Society trained dogs for children to read to at the library. The librarian brought the dogs to the Donuts with Dads breakfast, talked about the program, provided guidelines on picking books for children at different age levels, and discussed how to provide stress-free reading time at home.

Dads Reading at School started with a short program on how to read to and with primary school children. Then, each student chose a book to read with their guest using some of the strategies they learned about. Students got to take home the book they chose.

“This was one of the most rewarding and fun things we have done as a district,” said the parent coordinator. “Our dads responded enthusiastically. It seems as though they all just wanted to be asked to come to school. It made a difference that this was not for moms and that they could not fill in for the dads.”

About 320 students, 295 adults and 12 community members participated in the three events, along with 20 school staff members and three district colleagues. The schools offered to provide a “parent substitute” for any child without a family member who could attend. One father thanked the schools for “having this for the kids.” Another said, “I just hope she always wants me to be involved.”

A grant from the county and a community foundation financed the events, which cost about $975, including food and books. Because the grant was written for more than $3,000, the district has funds for future fathers’ functions.

The district’s school-based Action Teams for Partnerships, here called Partners in Education, helped organize the events, planned programs, solicited raffle prizes, ran activity stations, surveyed adults, and invited community members. The success and the positive feedback strengthened not only school-family ties, but also the action teams, which are even more committed to planning future family programs linked to student learning and success in school.

Annamaria Mecca
Family Involvement Coordinator
amecca@rbbcs.k12.in.us

©2010 National Network of Partnership Schools

Johns Hopkins University
D.A.D.S.: COLLEGE BOUND OR LEFT BEHIND?

MAIN STREET ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
LAKE CITY, SOUTH CAROLINA

Picture an elementary school gymnasium filled with fathers, sons, grandfathers, uncles, pastors, male district leaders, mentors, older brothers, friends, school board members, and community leaders. Now imagine that all of the men gathered to work toward the same goals—help African American male students identify their long-term goals, teach them strategies to succeed in life, and keep them from becoming victims of underachievement.

Main Street Elementary School began the D.A.D.S. (Dedicated, Active, & Devoted in Schools): College Bound or Left Behind? after hearing startling statistics that fewer than half of black males graduate from high school, few are college ready, and few who enter college graduate within six years. One estimate by author Mychal Wynn is that, overall, only “3 out of every 100 Black males graduate from college.” Teachers and administrators began to think about the African American students in their school and how to help these students take ambitious education paths that will lead to success in college.

The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) developed the event. They sent invitations to a male family member or contact for each boy in grades 3–5. The personalized invitations had pictures of every 3rd–5th grade boy at Main Street Elementary with a caption that asked: will this student go to college, graduate from college, or be left behind? The ATP, teachers, and administrators followed up with phone calls and home visits.

At the April event, the keynote speaker, Mychal Wynn, welcomed the participants. He asked the adults to raise their hands if they would like to go back to elementary school and do things differently. Almost every man raised his hand. At the end of the address, each family received a copy of Wynn’s book, Teaching, Parenting, and Mentoring Successful Black Males.

Then, the fathers and others attended a whole-group session on how to prepare their boys for college. At the end of the presentation, each boy received a bookcase to build with his father or mentor. Teachers challenged the boys to fill it with twice as many books as video games. Dinner and breakout sessions followed. School board members and administrators led several workshops:

» It Takes a Village focused on home, school, church, and community connections led by community leaders and pastors.

» When Discipline Issues Affect Academics focused on strategies that mentors could use to teach boys self-control and self-discipline techniques to use in school.

» Young, Gifted, and Black—Average is Overrated focused on bright students who sometimes perform below their capabilities due to peer pressure to fit in.

The evening ended with the keynote speaker challenging the boys to be successful. The advisor of the school’s Gentlemen’s Club stated, “Many powerful relationships were built here tonight. This was the perfect kickoff for our mentoring program that will challenge our boys to be college bound by providing them with positive role models who believe in them.”

As a result of D.A.D.S., 100 students and 100 male role models better understood the importance of elementary school and education beyond. One teacher noted that the boys’ demeanors changed after attending the conference. One student said that he learned, “Believe in yourself and others will believe in you, too.”

Angelia Scott
Principal
ascott@florence3.k12.sc.us

©2010 National Network of Partnership Schools
Sometimes, it's tough to get dads in on the fun that accompanies goal-linked family involvement activities. Cox Landing Elementary School wanted a low-stress/high-interest way to enable fathers and father figures to help their children learn math. The partnership team cooked up a good activity that was sure to have a desirable result—cookie making.

The school administered surveys to gather ideas on how to improve family and community involvement. The surveys indicated that there was a real need to increase father involvement in student learning activities. Given requirements for Title I funds and services, the school knew it had to organize better involvement activities to help students improve reading and math skills, as well as nutrition and/or 21st century technology skills.

Several years ago, one teacher had great success implementing an activity using cookie-making as a learning opportunity for her students. The partnership team and teachers decided to improve that process. With some changes and additions, the leaders baked over 250 cookies for the event.

Cookies with Dad was open to all male role models—not just dads—including granddads, uncles, and others. Cox Landing relied on multiple sources of communication to publicize Cookies with Dad—weekly newsletters, fliers, e-mail, even the school’s Facebook page. To further encourage attendance, students earned incentives (e.g., time off from class) if they came to the event with their father figures. As a result, over 60 families attended. This was a rather remarkable turnout for the 1:00 PM start time. Many dads took time off from work to attend.

Student-father teams received an activity page and 15 pretend-dollars. There were a number of ingredients children could use to decorate their cookies, but each ingredient and cookie cost money, so students and their dads used math and budgeting skills to plan what they were going to buy. The student-dad teams kept track of their budgets. They clearly were engrossed in real world skills in budgeting their supplies.

Once their planning was completed, kids and their dads went to money, cookie, and drinks stations and placed their orders with community members and parent volunteers. At the cookie stations, children received scoops of four possible ingredients (frosting, sprinkles, chocolate chips, or M&Ms). Then, they headed to tables to assemble, decorate, and eat cookies and to spend some quality (and sweet) time with their partners. Everyone was laughing, chatting, and enjoying the colorful, tasty, and well-planned cookies. Said a student, “I loved spending time with my dad.”

The event concluded with a contest. While families ate, they drew pictures on their tablecloths with crayons. The family with the best table picture received a cookbook for children. The planners initially worried about having enough space for the event given the large turnout. However, it became clear as the day wore on that there was plenty of room for everyone. Cookies with Dad helped students zero in on math skills with money and budgets and ended with everyone sharing a cookie-wonderful afternoon.

Durasha Smith
Parent Partner
durasha.smith@access.k12.wv.us

©2011 National Network of Partnership Schools

16
SUPER TAILGATERS’ REWARDS DAY

BROCK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
SLIDELL, LOUISIANA

Seeing at least 50 male volunteers working on the Super Tailgaters’ Rewards Day delighted the principal of Brock Elementary School. It was the first time in her more than nine years at the school that she had seen that many male volunteers at once.

Was it the chance to grill burgers and hot dogs for a crowd of kids? The opportunity to share an afternoon of games with their youngsters? Or a way to lend a hand to improve student behavior? It may have been all three.

Super Tailgaters’ Reward Day met its two objectives: improving student behavior and encouraging the men in Brock’s families to spend time at school. The tie-in to the Super Bowl and the fact that the home team—New Orleans Saints—just happened to be playing in (and ultimately winning) the Super Bowl also helped to build enthusiasm and attendance.

Brock’s Action Team for Partnerships, known as Partners In Education (P.I.E.), helped plan the party and solicited donations of food and prizes. The day was designed to help the school kick off its second semester by encouraging positive student behavior. All students who had good behavior and no disciplinary reports during January were invited to the tailgating party on the school playground on the Friday before Super Bowl Sunday. The day began with a morning pep rally and students were allowed to wear Saints jerseys and T-shirts.

The dads, granddads, and other father-figures in students’ lives began grilling burgers and hot dogs on a barbecue pit set up on the playground. They served pizza, too. The volunteers also set up a number of imaginative games stations, including:

» Field Goal Kick. Students could try to kick field goals over a goal post made of PVC pipe.
» Put Your Heart in the End Zone. In the style of Pin the Tail on the Donkey, blindfolded players tried to put heart stickers in the end zone of a miniature football field.
» Hike and Catch. Students had to hike the ball and then run to catch it.

After the food and games, Super Tailgaters’ Rewards Day ended with prize drawings. There were door prizes and two grand prizes: one each for the lower grades and upper grades. Two happy students took home genuine NFL Saints footballs, donated by a local souvenir shop.

“The kids really enjoyed the tailgating party. Great job,” said one parent. Brock’s teachers and staff encouraged the students to keep up the good behavior that earned them this good time.

More than 200 students participated, along with several community members and 50 to 60 fathers, grandfathers, and other male family members who did much of the hard work. The turnout of family volunteers well exceeded expectations. Clearly, the tailgating party was a win for Brock.

©2010 National Network of Partnership Schools

Shirrelle Jefferson
Community Liaison
shirrelle.gordon-jefferson@stpsb.org

Johns Hopkins University
DIY DAY: DADS INVOLVED IN YOUTH

HENRY TIMROD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
FLORENCE, SC

“DIY” usually stands for Do It Yourself craft-making—but at Henry Timrod Elementary, when dads and other male relatives came to school with their children on a Saturday morning, it meant Dads Involved in Youth (DIY). Pre-K through sixth-grade students and their dads, uncles, grandfathers, and male community volunteers all worked together to construct their own birdfeeders and learn new math concepts along the way.

One Saturday morning, 56 students and 48 male family members arrived at Henry Timrod and received a math skills sheet, clipboard, and pencil. The families ate a full breakfast, which was sponsored by a local church and restaurant.

After breakfast, everyone proceeded to the construction side of the cafeteria to obtain a birdhouse kit, tape measure, and screwdriver set, which was theirs to keep thanks to a grant from the Francis Marion University (FMU) Center of Excellence. Student-family teams received basic directions for building a birdfeeder and were shown a model. Then, working at long cafeteria tables, they started their projects. Eighteen volunteers—including male community leaders, FMU students, teachers’ spouses, a local male artist, and a carpenter—walked around, assisting as needed.

Once students and their male relatives built their birdhouses, they worked together to complete related math activities. Teachers were on hand to help students recall concepts and skills in measurement, prediction, shape identification, and comparing angles.

Student-father groups took their wooden birdhouses to paint stations in the school breezeway. At the final measurement station, they measured birdseed donated by Lowe’s and completed their math skills sheet. Students handed in a checklist of steps taken to make their birdhouses and their math skills sheet, showing over 80% mastery of math skills.

Each student-father team proudly carried home their birdhouse, birdseed, tape measure and screwdriver set, and a smile. For 29 fathers, uncles, and grandfathers, DIY Day was the first time they had attended a school event all year. One teacher commented, “Five of my students participated today. ...I’d only met the moms before. It was great to see and talk to their dads.”

Community volunteers helped make DIY Day a success. One student, who did not have a male relative, partnered with a male volunteer mentor. The FMU grant covered costs and Lowe’s suggested a more affordable project for next year, as well as other materials it could donate. The volunteer carpenter said, “Please make sure you invite me to this event again next year. I will have four more guys lined up ready to come help...I can’t think of a better way to spend a Saturday morning.”

Choosing a Saturday allowed male relatives to participate outside of the workweek, but transportation to school was difficult. FMU reported that the college may be able to help with transportation in the future. With more than 87% of Henry Timrod students eligible for free and reduced-price lunch, receiving breakfast on a Saturday was also viewed as a benefit.

At DIY Day, students learned math, constructed crafts, and built family-school partnerships. Most importantly, said one teacher, “Students were so proud to have their dads with them—that’s a feeling in the atmosphere that’s not even describable.” Do it yourself crafting has never been so full of do-it-togetherness.

Dawn Walker
Fifth-grade teacher
dawn.walker@fsd1.org

©2012 National Network of Partnership Schools

Johns Hopkins University
SPORTS MATH NIGHT

ROBERT FROST ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
PASCO, WASHINGTON

Connecting mathematics to real life through games, art projects, and number-rich activities was the focus of Sports Math Night, which was intended to increase students' interest in math and build their skills. The playful math event had an even larger goal: To contribute to efforts by teachers to increase the percentage of students meeting the state's math standard from 9.5 percent to 40 percent in 2010.

To attract more male role models, Robert Frost Elementary gave its math night a sporting theme and advertised it by displaying the sports prizes at the school in advance. All of the publicity was published in English, Spanish, and Russian—the three main languages spoken at Robert Frost. The marketing paid off as organizers estimated that attendance doubled from the previous year, with about 300 parents taking part.

After a free hot dog supper, students and parents worked through a series of math stations, playing dice and money games, working problems on calculators, stamping, graphing, and going on a math scavenger hunt. The activities supported specific state mathematics standards and helped students practice skills in adding, subtracting, estimating, finding patterns, and employing logic. The activities were designed so that students could share their knowledge of math with their family members, thus strengthening their own understanding of math concepts and their math skills.

“This is a fun event that makes kids want to do math,” said a father who was attending for the first time.

“This evening has been really successful,” commented the principal. “Our committee did an excellent job of organizing this event.”

That subcommittee of the Action Team for Partnerships had only three members, so it had to be well organized and had to get an early start. The group met on a regular schedule and communicated with each other between meetings. It also called on other members of the ATP when it needed help, and garnered support from community groups. A neighborhood grocery store donated the food; a fast food restaurant provided coupons to give away; teachers contributed the sports equipment that was raffled off. Local hockey team members attended and posed for pictures with students and their families. One school partner, a vision clinic, pitched in to work at the event and the high school Key Club members volunteered their time.

Along with the learning that occurred, everyone had a good time. Teachers said it was exciting to see so many parents involved in the math games. And for one third-grader, it was a night to remember: “This was the best day ever at school!”

Wendee Long
Parent Involvement Coordinator
wendee.long@vbschools.com

©2010 National Network of Partnership Schools
Cooking Up Father Involvement

From what you have heard today what will you do to increase father or other role model involvement in your district, school, or organization?


Did you have an ah-ha moment during this workshop that will help you in your work?


What are 2 actions you can do right away to increase father involvement?


Who can help?