

DADvocacy Consulting Group

Dads and Kids Movie/Story Time A Special Event for Fathers and Their Young Children

Dads and Kids Movie/Story Time

Dads and Kids Movie/Story Time is a special occasion that a Head Start center or an elementary school offers to fathers and father figures to spend relaxed, enjoyable time with their children and with other fathers in the school community. The event is publicized and promoted to fathers, grandfathers and father figures in the spirit of honoring and celebrating fathers and their fundamental importance to their children, families and their children's education.

Every program is tailored in collaboration with each individual setting. The program begins with the fathers (grandfathers, uncles, brothers) and children enjoying popcorn as they watch an age-appropriate video (bilingual as required) or hear a story. For the dads, the video/story carries metaphorical meaning. Each video has an accompanying book. The children either read the book or watch the video in advance of the event, supporting the children's literacy.

Following the screening, each dad and his child do a simple art project together – a colored drawing, clay sculpture, musical activity...inspired by the story they've just watched. When the art projects are complete, Head Start or school staff engage the children in games and stories in a separate location. The dads then have a facilitated dialogue – the heart of the program.

The dialogue begins with the men identifying themes in the children's story that touch on real-life issues they contend with in their own families. Dads share insights about the rewards and challenges of being a father, exchange strategies, and offer encouragement to each other.

In Session 1 the facilitator calls attention to the reflective quality of their communication and the men acknowledge its rewards. In subsequent sessions the facilitator breaks down this reflective way of communicating into its component parts: active listening and thoughtful inquiry. Dads practice these communication skills in small groups of two or three; observations are shared with the larger group. At the end of each session each man is often asked to set a goal for himself as a father for the intervening weeks. At the beginning of the following session, men have an opportunity to share about how they did with their goal, with special attention to what's been better.

The program either begins with a light breakfast or concludes with a simple buffet supper that dads, kids and staff enjoy together. The meal is a significant draw and provides a nurturing way for dads to continue spending time with their children and building community among themselves.

Program Goal and Outcomes

The goal of the *Dads and Kids Movie/Story Time* program is to support men in building closer, more caring relationships with their children – and in doing so, to be more fulfilled within themselves. In working toward this goal, programs conducted over the past seven years, with the basic methodology developed by REEL FATHERS and evolved in NM/MD/DC, have generated the following outcomes, documented through both anecdotal and evidence-based evaluation procedures:

1. *Fathers are inspired and empowered.* They gain a renewed appreciation for the key role they play in the well-being of their children and families and in the success of their children in school. Dads become welcome, respected participants in their child's school – the foundation for them to become lifelong stakeholders in their children's education.

2. *Men develop positive new images and aspirations for being an involved dad.* They experience the joy of spending dedicated time and doing simple activities with their young children, establishing new patterns of creative involvement with their family. Dads experience how media – print, video and television – can be an enjoyable catalyst to start meaningful conversations with their children.

3. *Fathers become more skillful parents.* They gain insight into key parenting issues raised by each story/video. They learn thoughtful, effective new ways of communicating with their children and partners.

4. *Center and/or school staff gain increased appreciation for dad participation and input and become more welcoming.*

For more information contact:

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