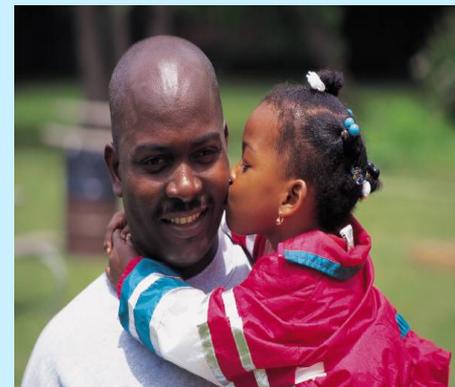


# Engaging Father in Their Children's Education

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Facilitator

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# Session Purpose

- This session will explore the importance of engaging Fathers and Significant Men in the educational sector of their children's lives.
- The session will also explore methods of making schools and early childhood programs more father friendly



# Why We Want Fathers Involved





## Stewart (2003)

- Talking to nonresident fathers about “other things at school” (i.e., not grades), is associated with:
  - lower levels of emotional distress,
  - lower levels of delinquency, and
  - higher grades.
- Children whose fathers are more involved in parenting are more likely to experience
  - higher academic achievement,
  - greater life satisfaction,
  - less emotional distress,
  - fewer behavior problems, and
  - less delinquency and drug use.

# Dimensions of Father Involvement

- **Accessibility:** A father's presence is available to the child, regardless of the actual interactions between father and child
- **Engagement:** A father's experiences of direct contact, care giving, and shared interactions with the child
- **Responsibility:** A father's active and/or proactive participation in the childrearing and care of his son or daughter



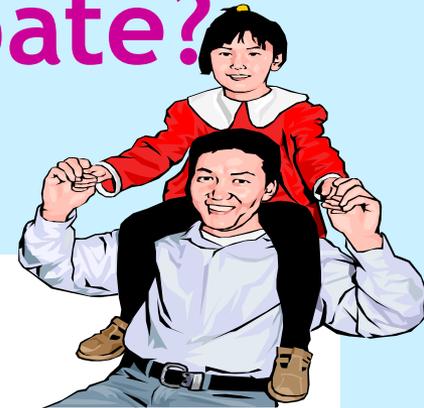
# How Do Fathers Participate?



## Quick facts from NHES:96 report:

- In 2-parent families, fathers are less likely to attend a general school meeting (e.g., back-to-school night) than mothers (55% vs. 77%)
- In 2-parent families fathers are less likely to volunteer at the school (15% vs. 41%)
- In 2-parent families, fathers are nearly as likely as mothers to attend a school event (sports, play, etc.) (53% vs. 67%)
- Fathers are more likely to be involved in their children's education in households with higher incomes

# How Do Fathers Participate?



## Grolnick and Slowiaczek (1994):

- Mothers are consistently more involved than fathers
- Children with involved mothers tended to have involved fathers

## 1999 National Center for Fathering:

- Over 40% of fathers have never read to their school-aged children



# Barriers 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. Don't know what to do to assist children with education
4. Disconnect with community-based organization results in missed opportunities to interact and attract fathers
5. Low education
6. Lack of time
7. Language and Culture
8. Acrimonious divorce or separation



# U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan

- “When fathers step up, students don’t drop out... When fathers step up, young folks have greater dreams for themselves.”



# Involving Fathers AND Significant Male Figures

## 1. What do you want?

- ❖ Accessibility
- ❖ Engagement
- ❖ Responsibility

## 2. Who are you expecting?

## 3. Are you being reasonable?



# Think about - What hinders father involvement?

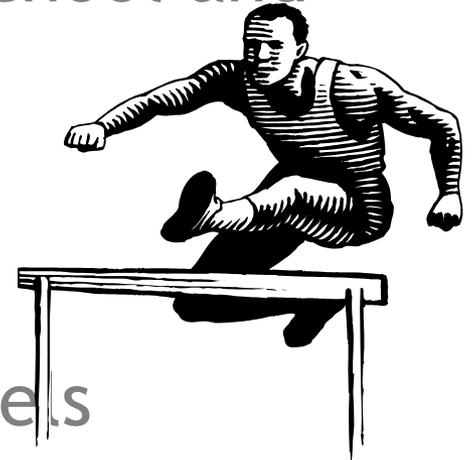
- Father's fear of exposing inadequacies
- Gate keeping by mother
- Father not being able to meet the traditional role of a father in Western culture
- Variation of traditional family structure
- Inappropriate program design
- Lack of emotional maturity
- Children with special needs



# Overcoming Barriers (McBride & Rane, 1997)

## Address Inappropriate Design and Delivery:

- Acknowledge resistance to gain support
  - The truths and limitations of this perspective
- Develop a clear rationale for the initiatives
  - Focus on the benefits for reaching out to men
  - How is this most helpful to your school and students
- Specify Targets
  - More than just biological fathers, look for significant male role models



# Overcoming Barriers (McBride & Rane, 1997)

## Address Staff Ambivalence about Father Involvement

- Training needed
- Find a Champion

## Mothers as Gatekeepers

- Elicit support of mothers
- Continue to meet mothers' needs

## Address Fathers' Fears

- Create a father-friendly environment (explicitly invite fathers)
- Go slowly and build on successes

# Promising Practices

Fathers Walk (aka Million Father March)

Father Daughter Dance

Fathers Reading Every Day (FRED)

Real Men Count

Dads, Art, And Donuts with Students (DADS)

Father Child Fun Run

Daddy's Night Out

Father Support Groups



# “Benefits” of non-resident fathers who are “involved”



- Father Involvement (discussions of schoolwork and discussions about other school-related topics) associated with lower likelihood of dropping out.
  - Talking to non-resident fathers about schoolwork lowers risk of dropping out by 69%
  - Talking to non-resident father about other school topics lowers risk of dropping out by 90%
- Increasing non-resident father involvement lowers risk of dropping out:
  - Talk about schoolwork lowers risk 65%
  - Talk about other school-related topics lowers risk 74%



# 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

