

# The Fatherhood Factor

Engaging Fathers in Children's Learning





"My father didn't tell me how to live; he lived,  
and let me watch him do it." -- Clarence  
Budington Kelland



# Agenda for the Day

- Introductions
  - Defining fatherhood engagement
  - Strategies
  - Engaging Fathers Self-Assessment
  - Overcoming Barriers
  - Case Study Activity
  - Questions?
- 

# Goals for the Day

- Understand why father involvement in children's learning is essential
- Develop an understanding of male involvement barriers and how to overcome them
- View examples of successful workshops and activities schools have conducted with fathers
- Collaborate with other participants about how to increase fatherhood involvement in children's learning



# Introductions

- Name/position
- Why are you interested in learning about engaging fathers?
- Have you participated in or prepared specific programs/events focusing on fathers? If so-what went well? What would you change?

# Definitions

- Engaging: to occupy the attention or efforts of (a person or persons)
- Fathers: The lead adult male in a child's or young person's life.

*Sources: Definition of Engage.* Random House, 2009. Web. 27 July 2009.  
<<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/engage>>.

*Head Start Information and Publication Center.* Head Start Information, 2008. Web. 1 July 2009. <[www.headstartinfo.org/infocenter/guides/father\\_inter.htm](http://www.headstartinfo.org/infocenter/guides/father_inter.htm)>.

# Did you know?!

- Over 25 million children live apart from their biological fathers
- 2 in 3 African American children live in father-absent homes
- 4 in 10 Hispanic children live in father-absent homes
- 3 in 10 white children live in father-absent homes

# Why are Fathers Important?

- Positive father-child relationships enhance children's cognitive skills such as intelligence, reasoning, and language development
- Fathers are essential to the healthy growth and development of their children
- Fathers bring a unique perspective to the family and lives of their children
- 74.9% of U.S. Children live with a father-figure (U.S. Census, 2009)

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. *A Call to Commit: Fathers' Involvement in Children's Learning*. Editorial Publications Center. 2000. Print.

# Through their eyes..

- “When I am stuck with my homework you help me with it if I need it. When I am being bullied you help me in any way you can.” -James
- “Dear dad, I only see you once a week...some small things I ask of you. Please come to my school plays and parent evenings to see how I’m doing”. - Charolette

Sources: *Engaging Fathers: Involving parents, raising achievement*. Department for Education and Skills, Autumn 2004. Web. 15 June 2009.  
<[http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/\\_doc/6726/ACF21C0.pdf](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/_doc/6726/ACF21C0.pdf)>.

*Head Start Information and Publication Center*. Head Start Information, 2008. Web. 1 July 2009.  
<[www.headstartinfo.org/infocenter/guides/father\\_inter.htm](http://www.headstartinfo.org/infocenter/guides/father_inter.htm)>.

“He taught me moral values...basically, you work and be honest...there was six of us kids and we lived in a four bedroom house. And as I look back now I often wonder how he did it, because we never did go hungry.” – Early Head Start father



“Dad, you are my best friend and always will be”. - Ben

“Some people say like father like son. But I think they are wrong. Like father like daughter. I’m exactly like my dad. Not in looks. In personality. We both like fishing and picnics.” -Emma

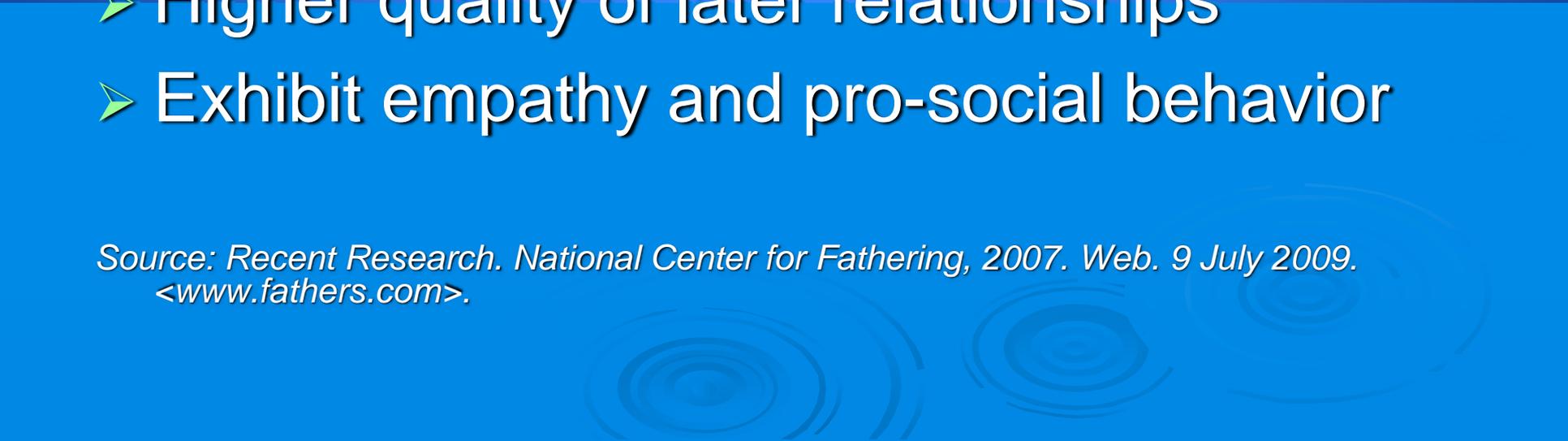




# Children with engaged fathers tend to have...

- Higher exam results
- Better school attendance and behavior
- Less criminality
- Better mental health
- Higher quality of later relationships
- Exhibit empathy and pro-social behavior

*Source: Recent Research. National Center for Fathering, 2007. Web. 9 July 2009.  
<[www.fathers.com](http://www.fathers.com)>.*



# Why are dads overlooked?

- On average, 71% of school staff are women
- Traditional roles of women as primary caretakers
- The assumption that fathers don't want to participate
- Some staff don't know how to involve fathers

# Learning Differences in Males and Females





# Differences in the brain

## Females

- Linguistic & logical
- Holistic thinking
- Emotionally intelligent
- Relate to people
- Emphasis on communication

## Males

- Right brain
  - Visual-spatial & creative
  - Specialized thinking
  - Problem-solvers
  - Relate to things
  - Emphasis on action
- 

# Differences in working style

## Female

- Will plan, edit and re-work
- "Presentation is everything"
- Will solicit help
- Co-operative

## Male

- Will do what's necessary
- "Shopfloor mentality"
- Independent
- Competitive



# Differences in preferred learning activities

## Female

- Listening
- Discussion
- Writing
- Lengthy assignments

## Male

- Brainstorm
  - Role-play
  - Visits
  - Practical investigation
  - Information technology
  - Audio-visual aids
- 



# Developing a strategy for engaging fathers

- Identifying improvements in engaging fathers
- Where are we now?
- Where do we want to be?
- How do we get there?
- Who does what?

Source: *Engaging Fathers: Involving parents, raising achievement*. Department for Education and Skills, Autumn 2004.  
Web. 15 June 2009. <[http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/\\_doc/6726/ACF21C0.pdf](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/_doc/6726/ACF21C0.pdf)>.





- Complete audit individually
- Discuss at tables:
  - What type of framework does your school have in place currently?
  - What strengths does your school provide?
  - What changes do you want to see be made?





# Top 6 ways for working with fathers (Personal Questioning)

- #1: Make working with men a priority
- #2: Know your own biases
- #3: Gain a full appreciation of the importance of fathers
- #4: Learn about how men were raised
- #5: Empathize with fathers from their perspective
- #6: Don't be influenced by stereotypes about men



# Top 6 tips for working with fathers

- #1: Involve the men
- #2: Relate to men with reason and problem solving first
- #3: Help men see their importance in fatherhood
- #4: Be specific
- #5: Make activities goal oriented
- #6: Talk “as if”

# Why do fathers get involved in their children's learning?

- A desire to build stronger relationships with their children
- A desire for their children to do better than they did
- In response to their children's interest, encouragement and direct invitations to get involved
- A belief that helping their children to learn is important for their children's success
- Personal confidence and effectiveness as a parent

Source: *Engaging Fathers in their Children's Learning: tips for practitioners*. Fatherhood Institute, 2006. Web. 15 June 2009.

<http://www.fatherhoodinstitute.org/index.php?id=12&cID=323>.

# Identifying & Overcoming Barriers



# Economic Barriers

- Serving food
- Providing Child Care
- Holding job fairs
- Giving books, library cards, newspapers
- Offering incentives (rewards, gift certificates)
- Providing materials for take-home projects
- Assisting with resumes and job placements
- Offering payment for written articles

# Time Barriers

- Flexible schedules
- Planned time frames
- Multiple choices for program times
- Additional slots for parent conferences/home visits
- Providing ideas for home activities

# Transportation Barriers

- Money for transportation reimbursement
- Sharing transportation
- Legal assistance with license suspension
- Rotation of sites for programs

# Confidence/Self Esteem Barriers

- o Support groups
- o Recognition of father/male contributions
- o Building on father/male talents and suggestions
- o Mentors

# Female Staff and Women as Gatekeepers Barriers

- o Staff trainings
- o Clear mission and goals
- o Support services to mothers/staff
- o Publicizing research on importance of fathers
- o On-going explanation of importance of male role models
- o Networking in community
- o Proactive in encouraging mothers to share information about father/males
- o Information on Child Support; access and visitation; father rights and responsibilities
- o Scheduling home visits when father/males are home

# Funding Barriers

- Solicit funds from various sources
- Utilize free community resources
- Apply for fatherhood initiative grants
- Network for support for specific events
- Incorporate father/male program into budget

# Cultural and Language Barriers

- Fathers and mothers involved in planning
- Multicultural on-going staff training
- Recognition of cultures in on-going programming and scheduling
- Use videos and videotaping
- Face-to-face communication
- Mentors
- Staff trained in ESL
- Bi-lingual staff and support
- Referrals for ESL classes

# Literacy Barriers

- Helping fathers fill out forms
- Personal phone calls
- Referrals for literacy
- Hands-on activities
- Staff trained in Adult Literacy tutoring
- Modeling how to play/read with children
- Instructional guides for children's books

Source: *Engaging Fathers: Involving parents, raising achievement*. Department for Education and Skills, Autumn 2004. Web. 15 June 2009.  
<[http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/\\_doc/6726/ACF21C0.pdf](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/_doc/6726/ACF21C0.pdf)>.

# Common Father-Child Events

- Golf Day: Free family clinic
- Nature Hike
- Grilling Challenge
- Career Day
- Donuts with Dad's



- Dance and Dine with dad
- Lunch Picnic with Pops
- Cookies n' Crafts
- Rockin' and Readin' with Rad Dads!
- Build a Bird House



# Examples of Father Events

- **Bring a Dad to School Day**

An inner city primary school held this event which involved over 100 adult men and 430 children. This event ran all day with sessions such as “Dads at Work”, science workshops, math games with prizes, outdoor physical games, reading and story telling, and lunch with the children. All of the materials used in this event could be brought home for more learning at home.

- **Family Learning Cookery Session**

This session was run for fathers and their children as a preview for a longer course. This session had the goal of communication and shared learning opportunities for fathers and their children. Publicity (fliers & posters) were distributed through local schools and local fathers’ groups. Fathers involved in other father activities were approached personally. The emphasis was to “make sure your dad comes along and brings you with him!” The activity was held at a local school and the fathers and their children cooked a lunch together in a 3-hour session on a Sunday afternoon. A father and two students who enjoyed cooking facilitated the event by teaching cooking skills to the fathers and the children.

# Examples of Father Events Cont.

- o **Men's Breakfast Program:**

At the Fairfax-San Anselmo Children's Center (pre-K and after-school), Fairfax, California, on one Saturday per month, as part of the Men's Breakfast Program, fathers first have breakfast with their children, then have a fathers-only discussion led by the center director, and then rejoin their children to do yard work and other fixing up of the center.

- o **Even Start Program:**

At Cane Run Elementary School (K-5), Louisville, Kentucky, families participate in the Even Start Program, with parents studying for the General Education Diploma while children are in school or the on-site nursery. The school's Family Resource Center links fathers and mothers to many community services, and runs after-school tutoring and recreational programs for children.

- o **Bike Rodeo:**

Bring in dads, the police department, and local bike shops to encourage bike safety, teach rules of the road, give bike tune-ups, and hold riding proficiency competitions.



# Activity: Case Study

Johnny is in 6<sup>th</sup> grade and lately seems to be slipping with his grades. Johnny's dad, Steve feels uncomfortable coming into Johnny's school, and says he doesn't have time since he's working 60 hours a week as a construction worker. Steve says he doesn't feel welcomed into the school and even if he did, he doesn't know how to get involved. Johnny's mom, Sarah volunteers once a week in Johnny's classroom and wishes Steve could get involved somehow too.

Sarah can't get Steve to come support Johnny in any of his school or sports activities. Johnny says he misses his old dad, who used to be his role model. Steve says he had a bad experience with Johnny's teacher a few years back, so he doesn't want to relive that experience again. Steve also has hidden the fact that he's embarrassed of having loss of hearing, and says he has no talents to share with Johnny.



- *How can YOU get Steve engaged back into Johnny's life, at home and at school?? (Remember overcoming the barriers!)*
- *What type of activity would be a good fit for Steve to attend?*
- *What areas of weakness and strengths does Steve seem to acquire?*

# We're all in this Together

- Mothers AND fathers impact development and are both important factors in children's learning
- Combined influence is important
- Including both parents makes a significant and positive difference in child's life

Source: *Engaging Fathers: Involving parents, raising achievement*. Department for Education and Skills, Autumn 2004. Web. 15 June 2009.  
<[http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/\\_doc/6726/ACF21C0.pdf](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/_doc/6726/ACF21C0.pdf)>.

# E.A.R.

- Engagement – a father's experience of direct contact and shared interactions with his child in the form of caretaking, play, or leisure
- Accessibility – a father's presence and availability to the child, irrespective of the nature or extent of interactions between father and child
- Responsibility – a father's understanding and meeting of his child's needs, including the provision of economic resources to the child, and the planning and organizing of children's lives

Source: Sclafani, Joseph. (2004). *The Educated Parent*. Greenwood Publishing Group, 2004. Print

Questions??!

