

## **Encouraging Fathers/Male Role Models' Involvement in Literacy**

Often mothers seem to be more prevalent in initiatives to prepare young children to read and write and are sometimes even referred to as the primary caregivers (Ortiz, 2004). However, this is an incorrect stereotype for fathers play a substantial role in children's literacy development (Saracho, 2010). To combat this stereotype, we must also expand our definition of father to include any male family member who may serve as a reading role model (grandpa, uncle, older brother, etc.). Follow these tips to ensure your classroom is welcoming to fathers:

### **1. Use inclusive language.**

Avoid reinforcing stereotypes through your choice of language. For example, instead of saying "Get your mom to sign this" to a child say, "Have an adult in your family sign this." When communicating with families, be sure to include all the child's primary caregivers in phone calls or emails. Do not just invite mom to school functions, include the whole family.

### **2. See themselves in the literature.**

Build a classroom library collection that represents all different types of families. Children need to see storybooks that are representative of their own family as well as different kinds of families. Be sure to include books that have fathers or other male role models as a main character, try *Fly Away Home* Written by Eve Bunting and Illustrated by Ronald Himler (preK-3<sup>rd</sup>) or *One Crazy Summer* Written by Rita Williams Garcia (4<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup>).

### **3. Use inclusive imagery.**

Display pictures and photographs throughout the facility depicting both men and women with children. Include pictures and photographs of all types of family members on newsletters and school websites.

### **4. Meet fathers' or other male role models needs.**

Ask fathers when they are available and host events at a time that works for them. Provide opportunities for fathers to meet to support and learn from each other through support groups and/or mentoring programs. Leave the agenda open so participants can run their own meetings. Conduct surveys to identify what special skills/talents they may contribute.

### **5. Make fathers feel included by utilizing their skills and talents.**



Sponsor activities that help show fathers that they are important to the program or school and an integral part of their children's lives. Use results from your survey to ask fathers to participate in a specific way such as teaching a musical instrument or sport to the children.

**Source:** Written for Reading Is Fundamental by Erin Bailey, MA using the following references:

Ortiz, R. W. (2004). Hispanic/Latino fathers and children's literacy development: Examining involvement practices from a sociocultural context. *Journal of Latinos and Education*, 3(3), 165-180.

Saracho, O. N. (2010). A culturally responsive literacy program for Hispanic fathers and their children. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, 9(4), 281-293.

**Last Modified:** April 2019