

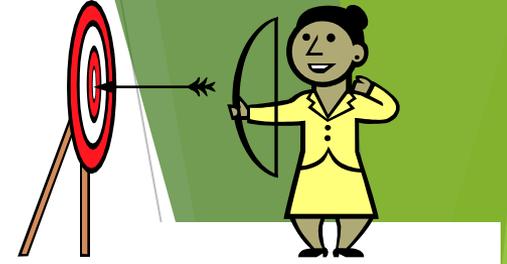
# Listening to What Matters to Fathers: Involving Fathers in Your Learning Community

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LEA Institute III: "It Takes a City: DC Does it Best!"

# Objectives



- ▶ Discuss family structures and culturally diverse conceptions of fatherhood
- ▶ Discuss what research says about father engagement
- ▶ Generate ideas and develop strategies to involve fathers and significant male figures

# Fatherhood in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

## Four developing trends:

- ▶ More women are in the workforce
- ▶ More men are not living in the home with their children
- ▶ More fathers are actively engaged with their children
- ▶ More families can be called blended or culturally diverse

# Why is Father Engagement Important?



# Impact of Father Engagement on Children

- ▶ Students' discussions with nonresident fathers about "other things at school" (i.e., not grades), are 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.

# 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 than mothers (15% vs. 41%)
- ▶ In 2-parent families, fathers are nearly as likely as mothers to attend a school event (sports, play, conference) (53% vs. 67%)
- ▶ Fathers are more likely to be involved in their children's education in households with higher incomes.

# What Influences Father Engagement?

- ▶ Influenced by whether or not they liked school and believed they had teachers that cared.
- ▶ Influenced by whether or not they are asked to be involved by teacher and their child.

# “Benefits” of involved non-resident fathers



## Not just about paying child support

- ▶ Father Involvement (discussions of schoolwork and other school-related topics) associated with greater likelihood that students will graduate from high school (fewer dropouts).
  - ▶ Talking to non-resident fathers about schoolwork lowers students' risk of dropping out by **69%**
  - ▶ Talking to non-resident father about other school topics lowers students' risk of dropping out by **90%**
- ▶ Increasing non-resident father involvement lowers students' risk of dropping out:
  - ▶ Talk about schoolwork lowers risk **65**
  - ▶ Talk about other school-related topics lowers risk **74%**

# “Barriers” = Challenges to Father Involvement

1. Fathers often believe that invitations for engagement are meant for mothers
2. Work hours or policies may not facilitate engagement during school-hours
3. Men like to see other men engaged and doing (Culture)
4. Busy schedules
5. Father say they do not know what to do to assist their children’s learning, school matters
6. Poor relationship with mother or other partner can impede the flow of information between the noncustodial parent and the school
7. OTHER IDEAS?

# Overcoming Barriers (McBride & Rane, 1997)



## 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

## Improve Design and Delivery:

- ▶ Acknowledge resistance to gain support
- ▶ Develop a clear rationale for the initiatives
  - ▶ Focus on the benefits for reaching out to men
  - ▶ Focus on engagement that contributes to student success
- ▶ Extend welcome
  - ▶ Engage biological fathers and other significant male role models

## Summary

- ▶ Issue personalized invitations to fathers and father figures
- ▶ Be inclusive of the many different ways that fathers can be involved
- ▶ Focus of fathers' assets and build upon them for engagement activities

# Reflections and Questions

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Obrigado!

