

### III EXAMPLES OF PROGRAMS THAT ENGAGE FATHERS IN CHILDREN'S LEARNING

*The following father involvement programs are examples of how communities across the country are meeting the need to support fathers' involvement in children's learning. These examples are by no means exhaustive; they are intended to illustrate the kinds of fathers' involvement programs that are working in schools, childcare centers and communities.*

- The **Buhrer Elementary School** (Pre-K-5), Cleveland, Ohio, provides family math courses for mothers and fathers and all home-school communications are in at least two languages. The school has organized block parent meetings that are held at locations other than school so that those parents who cannot come to the school for meetings can address issues nearer to home with school staff who attend. *Results:* 18-20 parents attend a typical block meeting with an annually increasing number of block parents attending school functions.
- 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. *Results:* PTA membership and the number of mothers **and** fathers visiting the school building daily have both been multiplied by a factor of 10. During the last two years, discipline referrals have declined 30 percent each year while attendance has maintained a steady 94 percent.
- **R.E.A.D. to Kids--Reconnecting Education and Dads**, Kansas City, Missouri, is a project of the Urban Fathering Project. This activity helps dads develop a reading program for their children. *Results:* Over 450 dads in 12 schools participated in the program in its first year.
- **Kindering Center** (Pre-K and elementary), Bellevue, Washington, has established a weekly support group for fathers of children with special needs, run by the National Fathering Network. It now has affiliates in 35 states. *Results:* Enrollment has grown from 25 to 100 participating fathers, all of whom are better able to manage the stresses of having a child with special needs.
- **Avance Child and Family Development Program**, (Pre-K) San Antonio, Texas, offers a 33-week fatherhood curriculum, covering topics such as child growth and development, handling stress, learning to live without violence, and childhood illnesses. The program also offers a General Education Diploma and English as a Second Language classes. *Results:* The program teaches parenting and personal skills to more than 60 men per year, encourages fathers' involvement with their children, and strengthens relationships with their children's mothers.

- The **Mary Hooker Elementary School Family Resource Center** in Hartford, Connecticut, primarily serves Puerto Rican low-income families who are either bilingual in Spanish and English or speak Spanish as their primary language. Program activities with fathers, conducted in both English and Spanish, are often held evenings or on Saturdays. Activities include parenting classes, picnics, field trips and early education classes. Babysitting is provided as needed. *Results:* Many of the 250 parents who attended the program's parental involvement meeting also attended the meeting's fatherhood workshop.
- The **Pinellas County Head Start's Accepting the Leadership Challenge** in Florida, a male involvement initiative, began by taking 30 men away for the weekend and leading them through a bonding exercise which helped them to form a group. The program offers fathers training in parenting, nutrition, literacy and computers; educational travel; and opportunities for successful family time. *Results:* Now in its ninth year, the number of male involvement groups has expanded.
- 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. *Results:* Before the program, very few fathers participated in parent-teacher meetings or other aspects of center life; now, virtually all fathers participate.
- The **Florence S. Brown Pre-K Program**, Rochester, New York, holds one lunchtime meeting per month and one evening meeting per month. Both of these meetings bring fathers to the center to spend time in the classroom with their children and to do handiwork and yardwork (for example, fixing broken toys, repairing the playground). *Results:* Fathers took a lead role in a successful lobbying effort to prevent cutbacks in state funding for the entire Pre-K program.
- At the **Sunbelt Human Advancement Resources, Inc. Head Start (SHARE)** in Greenville, South Carolina, male volunteers visit men at the Perry Correctional Center to provide inmate fathers with information on Head Start and its services to children and families, as well as mentoring and life-skills training. *Results:* visits to the correctional center provide male involvement volunteers with ideas for their mentoring program with youth in group homes to prevent these young boys from becoming a part of the justice system.
- **Parents as Teachers (Pre-K)**, St. Louis, Missouri, is a statewide program, widely recognized as a national model, that advocates that parents are children's first teachers. The Ferguson-Florissant High School has adapted this program for teen parents and parents-to-be, offering both "Dads Only" and "Moms Only" classes. The school also runs a preschool-based "Messy Activities" night to encourage fathers to play with their children. *Results:* There has been increasing involvement by fathers in families who participate in the program.

- At **Hueco Elementary School** (Pre-K-6), El Paso, Texas, all parents participate in the “Super Readers” program, which provides incentives for parents to read with their children. About 20-30 parents attend monthly Parent Communication Council meetings and teachers receive release time to conduct home visits. *Results:* Parents involved in at least one activity at school increased from 30 percent to 80 percent per year. Parent participation has increased to include school decision-making, classroom instruction, furthering their own educational goals, and helping children more at home.
- At **Roosevelt High School** (9-12), Dallas, Texas, teams of faculty, parents and other community leaders walk door-to-door during their “Walk for Success.” These teams talk with parents about their needs, interests and school improvement. Parents of sophomores attend classes about state tests and a parent liaison makes 30-60 calls to parents per day to reinforce communication between home and school. *Results:* Attendance at PTA meetings increased by a factor of 20. Student achievement on state tests rose from the 40<sup>th</sup> percentile to the 81<sup>st</sup> percentile in reading, and from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 70<sup>th</sup> percentile in math.
- **The Illinois Fatherhood Initiative (IFI)** is the country’s first statewide non-profit volunteer fatherhood organization. Founded in 1997, IFI connects children and fathers by promoting responsible fathering and helping equip men to become better fathers and father figures. *Results:* Through its volunteer board of directors and board of advisors, IFI creates strategic partnerships with private and non-profit organizations. Its activities include the Illinois Father-of-the-Year Essay Contest (over 140,000 school-age children have submitted essays during the past three years) on the theme, “What My Father Means to Me;” a *Me & My Dad* essay booklet that includes essays, artwork and a six-part curriculum focused on child-father issues; a Faces of Fatherhood Calendar; an Illinois Fathers’ Resource Guide; a quarterly newsletter; and a Boot Camp for New Dads, a hospital-based program which brings together first-time dads with soon to be first-time dads to help them make the transition to fathering.