



SAMPLER

INVOLVING FATHERS IN PARTNERSHIP ACTIVITIES

**Our school welcomes dads and all that they know
To help their children learn and grow.**

Right or wrong, parents often assume that invitations to get involved in school are for mothers only. Yet, studies show that excellent partnership programs engage *all* stakeholders—moms, dads, grandparents, community partners and others important people in children’s lives.

Increasingly, educators are becoming aware that they must design strong, goal-linked activities to engage fathers and father figures in their children’s education at school and at home. This is an important—sometimes complicated—extension of school-based partnership programs due to the diverse family structures in all communities. That is, some dads live at home with their children, whereas others do not. Also, other father figures and male role models may be important influences in children’s lives and learning.

Schools must recognize that:

- not all students live with two parents.
- not all students have fathers who are active in their lives.
- some students have important non-relative males (and females) who are “family partners” in their education.

Despite these complexities, students have families—however structured—that are important in their lives. When families are welcomed as partners in their children’s education, students tend to do better in school at all grade levels.

Research confirms that it is important to engage fathers and father-figures in children’s education. When teachers, mothers, fathers, and other family members work in partnership,

more will students work to meet their full potential.

Studies indicate that dads need to feel welcome at school and want good guidance and information on productive ways to support their children’s learning and development.

The activities in this *Sampler* report different ways that fathers and father figures are playing important roles in their children’s education—at school and at home. Schools designed involvement activities that engaged fathers in supporting students’ math, science, and reading skills; good behavior; and plans for college and careers; and to improve the school climate.

Improve Classroom Teaching

The sample activities were conducted by schools’ Action Teams for Partnerships (ATPs) and involved fathers with students across grade levels. Individual teachers and grade-level teams may adapt these activities to strengthen partnerships with their own students’ fathers.

For example, individual science teachers at any grade level could adapt Discovery with Dad to engage fathers with students on hands-on science activities linked to specific science units. Or, grade level teams of teachers could design a Sports Math Night of games focused on grade-level state standards for math learning.

The ten examples in this *Sampler*, arranged alphabetically, are a few of many excellent activities in NNPS annual collections of *Promising Partnership Practices*. See more at www.partnershipschools.org in the section Success Stories.





Review of Research: Involving Fathers in Partnership Activities

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For the past decade, researchers and practitioners have increased their attention to the role of fathers in their children's education and development. This interest coincided with the on-going evolution of concepts of fatherhood and with increased concerns about the responsibilities of non-custodial fathers for child support (Tamis-LeMonda & Cabrera, 2002). Many studies reported that fathers are important for children's social, emotional, and intellectual development, including interactions with peers, attitudes about gender roles, and school achievement. Other studies confirm that students' success in school is influenced by the support and encouragement they receive at school, at home, and in their community. Researchers agree that children are more likely to earn required credits and graduate from high school, take more advanced math courses, and achieve at higher levels at all grade levels—from preschool on—if their parents are productively engaged in their education. (For an overview of this literature, see Sheldon, 2009.)

Mothers generally get the credit or blame for children's success or failure in school, in part because mothers tend to spend more school time with their children than do fathers (Hofferth, Stueve, Pleck, Bianchi, & Sayer, 2002). A survey by the National Center for Fathering and the National PTA (2009) found that almost 40% of fathers never read to their children, 32% never visited their child's classroom, and 54% never volunteered in their child's classroom. The results of many studies make clear that fathers are underutilized resources in their children's schools and in their learning and development.


Define "Father." One basic issue that arises in research and in practice is to define the term "father." Based on early studies that found no significant differences between biological and stepfathers' positive influences on students' behavior in school (Amato and Rivera, 1999), we favor the broad definition that includes biological fathers, stepfathers, adopted fathers, and major non-relative father-figures in children's lives. If a biological father is not present, students still may benefit from the involvement of another male role model. This suggests that schools' outreach to communicate with and engage fathers should be inclusive, rather than restrictive, by design.

Studies of Father Involvement. In studies of specific kinds of outreach activities to engage fathers at school or at home in children's education, researchers found that children are more likely to improve academic outcomes if their fathers attended workshops for parents (Lundahl, Tollefson, Risser, Lovejoy, 2008) and conducted shared-book reading with their young children (Duursma, et al., 2008). At the secondary school level, when fathers talked with their teenagers about school, the students were more likely to have higher grades and were less likely to drop out of school (Menning, 2006).

Educators know that they should not ignore fathers as important partners in children's education. Data from over 800 schools in NNPS in 2010 indicated that the schools were making "fair progress" in engaging fathers and father figures in activities for the six types of involvement, although most also noted that they must continue to improve. Respondents from over 70% of elementary schools, 60% of middle schools, and 48% of high schools reported that they were working to encourage father involvement with students on academic and behavior outcomes (Sheldon & Hutchins, 2011). Some activities aimed to engage mothers or fathers; other activities were for dads and students only. Fewer schools across levels (about 35%) were trying to communicate with non-resident fathers—an emerging topic that holds promise and poses challenges.

The results of research on father involvement and implications for practice are supported by exemplary practices conducted by school-based Action Teams for Partnerships and teachers in NNPS, included in this *Sampler* and in annual books of *Promising Partnership Practices* at www.partnershipschoools.org in the section Success Stories.

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D.A.D.S.: COLLEGE BOUND OR LEFT BEHIND?

MAIN STREET ELEMENTARY SCHOOL LAKE CITY, SOUTH CAROLINA

Picture an elementary school gymnasium filled with fathers, sons, grandfathers, uncles, pastors, male district leaders, mentors, older brothers, friends, school board members, and community leaders. Now imagine that all of the men gathered to work toward the same goals—help African American male students identify their long-term goals, teach them strategies to succeed in life, and keep them from becoming victims of underachievement.

Main Street Elementary School began the D.A.D.S. (Dedicated, Active, & Devoted in Schools): College Bound or Left Behind? after hearing startling statistics that fewer than half of black males graduate from high school, few are college ready, and few who enter college graduate within six years. One estimate by author Mychal Wynn is that, overall, only “3 out of every 100 Black males graduate from college.” Teachers and administrators began to think about the African American students in their school and how to help these students take ambitious education paths that will lead to success in college.

The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) developed the event. They sent invitations to a male family member or contact for each boy in grades 3–5. The personalized invitations had pictures of every 3rd–5th grade boy at Main Street Elementary with a caption that asked: will this student go to college, graduate from college, or be left behind? The ATP, teachers, and administrators followed up with phone calls and home visits.

At the April event, the keynote speaker, Mychal Wynn, welcomed the participants. He asked the adults to raise their hands if they would like to go back to elementary school and do things differently. Almost every man raised his hand. At the end of the address, each family received a copy of Wynn’s book, *Teaching, Parenting, and Mentoring Successful Black Males*.

Then, the fathers and others attended a

whole-group session on how to prepare their boys for college. At the end of the presentation, each boy received a bookcase to build with his father or mentor. Teachers challenged the boys to fill it with twice as many books as video games. Dinner and breakout sessions followed. School board members and administrators led several workshops:

- » *It Takes a Village* focused on home, school, church, and community connections led by community leaders and pastors.
- » *When Discipline Issues Affect Academics* focused on strategies that mentors could use to teach boys self-control and self-discipline techniques to use in school.
- » *Young, Gifted, and Black—Average is Overrated* focused on bright students who sometimes perform below their capabilities due to peer pressure to fit in.

The evening ended with the keynote speaker challenging the boys to be successful. The advisor of the school’s Gentlemen’s Club stated, “Many powerful relationships were built here tonight. This was the perfect kickoff for our mentoring program that will challenge our boys to be college bound by providing them with positive role models who believe in them.”

As a result of D.A.D.S., 100 students and 100 male role models better understood the importance of elementary school and education beyond. One teacher noted that the boys’ demeanors changed after attending the conference. One student said that he learned, “Believe in yourself and others will believe in you, too.”



DADS: Dads, Art, and Donuts with Students

Parents Plus

Milwaukee, Wisconsin

With the help of Parents Plus, a federally funded Parent Information and Resource Center (PIRC) in Wisconsin, John Muir Middle School put together an event that drew dads to school and left a good taste in their mouths.

Donuts with Dad was more than a breakfast drop-in, however. It included an art project that the men worked on with their children and a speaker who discussed the roles of fathers and other male role models in children's lives. "It was a perfect way to bring a school, a community organization, and parents together for a positive purpose," said the representatives of Parents Plus who organized the event.

The art project was a lively activity. School staff took digital photos of the students with their father or guest and printed them on white T-shirts. The school also provided paint and other materials so that the artistic pairs could further decorate the shirts. "Students were able to see their fathers involved in their school life, which is generally an activity where mothers dominate," said the organizers.

Alfonso Pettis of the Milwaukee Fatherhood Collaboration spoke to the men, addressing the difficulty of maintaining a strong relationship with their children, but stressing the value of overcoming the hurdles and hassles along the way. The 50 men who attended "got a chance to talk about the challenges they all face and hear that they were not alone. The men got a chance to speak passionately about their children," said the organizers.

Pettis gave the fathers information about community resources that can help them with issues such as child support and visitation rights. As an added attraction, the collaboration held a drawing for tickets to Milwaukee Bucks games for fathers and students.

Parents Plus followed the successful "Donuts with Dad" with a "Muffins for Mom" event at the middle school. Events such as these are among many that the resource center sponsors in Milwaukee schools to develop positive parenting skills and to improve student achievement by increasing parent involvement in schools.



DISCOVERY WITH DAD

EARLY CHILDHOOD FAMILY EDUCATION CENTER—HACKMANN ROAD SAINT CHARLES, MO

Rooms filled with launching zones, air velocity measurement instruments, and black lights may seem more like something at NASA than at a preschool. Discovery with Dad was a two-day activity that brought fathers and other male role models to the Early Childhood Family Education Center—Hackmann Road in the Francis Howell School District for scientific exploration and discovery.

About 150 fathers, grandparents, uncles, and special guests came to school with their favorite preschoolers on Discovery with Dad days. They traveled as classes to eight exploratory stations, each with several activities on each scientific theme. Some activities included black lights to explore positional concepts; Gak-making for chemistry fun; eight ways to explore sink/float and measuring concepts; soda pop geysers at the launching zone; paper airplanes to demonstrate air velocity; play dough color mixing for color investigations; levers, pulleys, and wedges to learn about simple machines; and popcorn-popping for experiencing the five senses and to enjoy a snack.

Throughout Discovery with Dad, one classroom teacher or assistant stayed in the classroom to facilitate a particular science station. The other teacher traveled with the class and dads to supervise the activities and to support students who did not have dad-guests. Each station lasted about 18 minutes, with two minutes to travel from one activity to the next.

Because the Early Childhood Family Education Center is a preschool with half-day programming, the 2 hour and 40 minute event was conducted over two days, with activities for students in the morning and afternoon sessions.

The visiting dads and father figures received a flyer that explained the science theme and activities in each room and suggestions for follow-up activities to conduct at home to help students continue learning. These ranged from

instructions for home-made lava lamps, finger paints, parachutes, and marshmallow poppers, to activities gathered from www.brainpopjr.com. One parent said, “I read over the ...ideas for home and was...impressed! We will be trying many of them soon.”

The Hackmann Road Action Team activity fund, raised through the Action Team’s fundraising efforts, supported the \$300 cost for supplies that were not readily available. The Action Team recommends planning at least six months in advance to involve local businesses or community groups in activities like Discover with Dad. The Planning Committee also noted that holding the event after school for all students, rather than on two school days for morning and afternoon sessions might be a good variation on this theme.

Discovery with Dad introduced preschoolers to hands-on science activities with their teachers guidance and with the participation of their special male role models. When her husband and children came home from the event, one parent noted, “As a mom of girls, I love that they have the chance at such a young age to dig into science. It is so important to start their love and interest in a fun field!” One dad described the day as “awesome!” Another impressed (and wiped-out) dad said, “You guys work harder in two hours than I do in an entire day.” Clearly, the teachers were able to bring science learning and science fun to young and old.

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DIY DAY: DADS INVOLVED IN YOUTH

**HENRY TIMROD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
FLORENCE, SC**

“DIY” usually stands for Do It Yourself craft-making—but at Henry Timrod Elementary, when dads and other male relatives came to school with their children on a Saturday morning, it meant Dads Involved in Youth (DIY). Pre-K through sixth-grade students and their dads, uncles, grandfathers, and male community volunteers all worked together to construct their own birdfeeders and learn new math concepts along the way

One Saturday morning, 56 students and 48 male family members arrived at Henry Timrod and received a math skills sheet, clipboard, and pencil. The families ate a full breakfast, which was sponsored by a local church and restaurant.

After breakfast, everyone proceeded to the construction side of the cafeteria to obtain a birdhouse kit, tape measure, and screwdriver set, which was theirs to keep thanks to a grant from the Francis Marion University (FMU) Center of Excellence. Student-family teams received basic directions for building a birdfeeder and were shown a model. Then, working at long cafeteria tables, they started their projects. Eighteen volunteers—including male community leaders, FMU students, teachers’ spouses, a local male artist, and a carpenter—walked around, assisting as needed.

Once students and their male relatives built their birdhouses, they worked together to complete related math activities. Teachers were on hand to help students recall concepts and skills in measurement, prediction, shape identification, and comparing angles.

Student-father groups took their wooden birdhouses to paint stations in the school breezeway. At the final measurement station, they measured birdseed donated by Lowe’s and completed their math skills sheet. Students handed in a checklist of steps taken to make their birdhouses and their math skills sheet, showing over 80% mastery of math skills.

Each student-father team proudly carried home their birdhouse, birdseed, tape measure and screwdriver set, and a smile. For 29 fathers, uncles, and grandfathers, DIY Day was the first time they had attended a school event all year. One teacher commented, “Five of my students participated today. ...I’d only met the moms before. It was great to see and talk to their dads.”

Community volunteers helped make DIY Day a success. One student, who did not have a male relative, partnered with a male volunteer mentor. The FMU grant covered costs and Lowe’s suggested a more affordable project for next year, as well as other materials it could donate. The volunteer carpenter said, “Please make sure you invite me to this event again next year. I will have four more guys lined up ready to come help...I can’t think of a better way to spend a Saturday morning.”

Choosing a Saturday allowed male relatives to participate outside of the workweek, but transportation to school was difficult. FMU reported that the college may be able to help with transportation in the future. With more than 87% of Henry Timrod students eligible for free and reduced-price lunch, receiving breakfast on a Saturday was also viewed as a benefit.

At DIY Day, students learned math, constructed crafts, and built family-school partnerships. Most importantly, said one teacher, “Students were so proud to have their dads with them—that’s a feeling in the atmosphere that’s not even describable.” Do it yourself craft-making has never been so full of do-it-togetherness.



Fathers' Night Out

Community School #53

Buffalo, New York

Community School #53 knew it had to do something when one-third of the teachers recognized that they communicated with parents only to report inappropriate or negative student behavior. To establish more positive interactions, the Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) decided to implement Fathers' Night Out, an event to celebrate the fathers, grandfathers, brothers and other male figures who are involved in students' growth and development. The comprehensive event featured guest speakers, workshops, activities, dinner and a raffle.

The three-hour Fathers' Night Out began with a general welcome and two guest speakers, followed by a dance performance by a group from the African American Cultural Center. During the second hour, participants moved through various activity and workshop stations: a math-related basketball game, grade-specific take-home reading packets, book giveaways, a booth for making photos and picture frames, and a fingerprint station sponsored by the local police department. Other activities included dance lessons and a hairstyling station that helped fathers learn how to style their daughters' hair. The third hour included dinner – hot dogs, hamburgers, salads, cake and punch – and a raffle for gift certificates, lottery tickets, household items and bath products.

Before Fathers' Night Out, the ATP created a thorough task list and delegated duties to parents, staff, community members and administrators. Publicity for the event included advertisements in the school's newsletter, Save the Date postcards sent to all students' homes, fliers and press releases to the local newspaper. An easel board in the school's main hallway also advertised the event to incoming parents and visitors.

Community members played a large role in planning and implementing the night out. They served as guest speakers and dance performers. Additionally, the ATP sent letters to various businesses requesting both in-kind and cash donations. These were used to purchase food and supplies and gift certificates were used as raffle items. Business partner sponsorship of Fathers' Night Out covered most of the event's \$800 price tag.

Thanks to the diligent work of the ATP and community members, participation in Fathers' Night Out was outstanding, with more than 250 parents and caregivers in attendance.

Students saw that their caregivers were interested in both academics and the school environment. Most importantly, Fathers' Night Out was an occasion to celebrate the roles that fathers and families play in the lives of students. It was an excellent way to provide fathers and the important males in students' lives with an opportunity to interact with teachers and administrators in a positive, constructive atmosphere.



Fathers Reading Every Day (FRED)

*Roosevelt Elementary School
St. Paul, Minnesota*

FRED was popular at Roosevelt Elementary this year. FRED is Fathers Reading Every Day, a program of the Minnesota Humanities Commission that encourages men to read at home and to get more involved in their children's education.

At Roosevelt, FRED was a month-long initiative featuring two family reading sessions in December and January, which combined food, storytelling, guest readers, free books and camaraderie. Working with the commission, the school's Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) welcomed FRED and worked hard to make it a successful undertaking. The team even arranged and paid for taxis for families who did not have transportation.

The result was that large groups of men and some single mothers and their school-aged children attended both sessions. Dinner was followed by a storybook reading session. Among the guest readers were the school's custodian, librarian assistant, and a "live" Cat in the Hat.

After the reading period, children went to another area for activities and parents had the opportunity to discuss different types of literature and storytelling. They learned more about the Success for All reading program used at the school and received suggestions about reading with their children from a literacy teacher.

The parents also received *What Daddies Do Best*, a book that, when turned over, reads *What Mommies Do Best*. The families saw a great many parents reading with their children. They clearly understood how important they are to their children's education.

Parents and children also participated in a choral reading. Before leaving, children selected two free books to take home. Through FRED's influence, students saw their parents show more interest in listening to them read at home, and in reading themselves. Some of the children enjoyed the evening so much that they

wanted to know if there would be another "dad thing."

Improving student achievement through reading instruction is one of the school's and the ATP's priorities. Targeting activities to male caregivers was a need that was identified when the school completed the NNPS annual UPDATE evaluation. Although FRED specifies "fathers," the program also welcomed single mothers. Next year, the school will change the name to include both groups. More than 50 parents and 80 children attended the FRED sessions.

The school principal endorsed the program in collaboration with the ATP. The team's facilitator ordered food, arranged for taxis and childcare. School staff members and parents volunteered as readers. Teachers developed and supervised activities for the children.

FRED cost about \$885, including the food, taxi fares, door prizes and interpreters for Hispanic and Hmong families. Title I funding covered these costs, and the humanities council provided the books.

"Because of this program my children remind us to read, even if I'm busy," said one parent. Other participants agreed that the program helped them to become more involved in helping their children read, forging happy memories in the process.



HAVING A BALL WITH MATH

EMERSON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PASCO, WASHINGTON

Having a Ball with Math added up to a success for Emerson Elementary. With more than 400 attendees and a dozen community partners, including professional hockey players, the fall event made a good impression on students and families.

The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) brainstormed ideas that would bring families, especially dads and other father figures to school early in the year. The team also wanted to stress the importance of math and show students and parents that math connects to everyday life, as well as to the state standards that all students are expected to reach.

Soon other players joined the fun and every grade level was involved. Parents took on leadership roles and community members stepped up with important donations and personal involvement.

The math night included a series of athletic games and stations, each connected to specific math functions. In the gym, for instance, students and adults shot hoops and recorded the number of shots made and missed. The hallways were turned into bowling alleys and the school improvised a hockey rink where players added or multiplied the numbers on the pucks. It was during this activity that the students got to meet and work with real hockey players on a local team, who helped with math skills and hockey shots.

The computer lab was open so families could explore math sites and games they might play at home on the internet. In classrooms, families played games with math manipulatives.

The sports theme lured fathers, brothers, uncles and other male role models to the school. Often, the men in children's lives want to be more involved, but need guidance and a friendly invitation. The Emerson ATP provided some ways to start fathers' involvement.

Strong community involvement enhanced the event. Pasco First Christian, a community organization, is the school's partner in Partnerships Empowering All Kids (PEAK). Members lent a hand at the math activity. The Tri-City American Hockey Team sent players, and student athletes from Chiawana and Pasco High Schools also participated with Emerson's students. "I wish we had done fun things like this when I went to elementary school," commented one of the Pasco athletes.

Businesses donated sports-related raffle prizes, such as tickets to sporting events, board games, and autographed sports memorabilia. Other partners sent people to staff game stations and work with the children on math projects. Because of this strong involvement and support, Emerson spent only about \$100 on the event.

"I liked playing hockey and basketball because in hockey we were subtracting and we had to add in basketball," said one second-grader. "I got to come with my uncle and he helped me do the big subtracting."

That's the kind of teamwork Emerson wanted to create. Pairing math and sports resulted in a win-win activity for Emerson's students.



SPORTS MATH NIGHT

ROBERT FROST ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PASCO, WASHINGTON

Connecting mathematics to real life through games, art projects, and number-rich activities was the focus of Sports Math Night, which was intended to increase students' interest in math and build their skills. The playful math event had an even larger goal: To contribute to efforts by teachers to increase the percentage of students meeting the state's math standard from 9.5 percent to 40 percent in 2010.

To attract more male role models, Robert Frost Elementary gave its math night a sporting theme and advertised it by displaying the sports prizes at the school in advance. All of the publicity was published in English, Spanish, and Russian—the three main languages spoken at Robert Frost. The marketing paid off as organizers estimated that attendance doubled from the previous year, with about 300 parents taking part.

After a free hot dog supper, students and parents worked through a series of math stations, playing dice and money games, working problems on calculators, stamping, graphing, and going on a math scavenger hunt. The activities supported specific state mathematics standards and helped students practice skills in adding, subtracting, estimating, finding patterns, and employing logic. The activities were designed so that students could share their knowledge of math with their family members, thus strengthening their own understanding of math concepts and their math skills.

"This is a fun event that makes kids want to do math," said a father who was attending for the first time.

"This evening has been really successful," commented the principal. "Our committee did an excellent job of organizing this event."

That subcommittee of the Action Team for Partnerships had only three members, so it had to be well organized and had to get an early start. The group met on a regular schedule and communicated with each other between

meetings. It also called on other members of the ATP when it needed help, and garnered support from community groups. A neighborhood grocery store donated the food; a fast food restaurant provided coupons to give away; teachers contributed the sports equipment that was raffled off. Local hockey team members attended and posed for pictures with students and their families. One school partner, a vision clinic, pitched in to work at the event and the high school Key Club members volunteered their time.

Along with the learning that occurred, everyone had a good time. Teachers said it was exciting to see so many parents involved in the math games. And for one third-grader, it was a night to remember: "This was the best day ever at school!"



SUPER TAILGATERS' REWARDS DAY

BROCK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL SLIDELL, LOUISIANA

Seeing at least 50 male volunteers working on the Super Tailgaters' Rewards Day delighted the principal of Brock Elementary School. It was the first time in her more than nine years at the school that she had seen that many male volunteers at once.

Was it the chance to grill burgers and hot dogs for a crowd of kids? The opportunity to share an afternoon of games with their youngsters? Or a way to lend a hand to improve student behavior? It may have been all three.

Super Tailgaters' Reward Day met its two objectives: improving student behavior and encouraging the men in Brock's families to spend time at school. The tie-in to the Super Bowl and the fact that the home team—New Orleans Saints—just happened to be playing in (and ultimately winning) the Super Bowl also helped to build enthusiasm and attendance.

Brock's Action Team for Partnerships, known as Partners In Education (P.I.E.), helped plan the party and solicited donations of food and prizes. The day was designed to help the school kick off its second semester by encouraging positive student behavior. All students who had good behavior and no disciplinary reports during January were invited to the tailgating party on the school playground on the Friday before Super Bowl Sunday. The day began with a morning pep rally and students were allowed to wear Saints jerseys and T-shirts.

The dads, granddads, and other father-figures in students' lives began grilling burgers and hot dogs on a barbecue pit set up on the playground. They served pizza, too. The volunteers also set up a number of imaginative games stations, including:

- » *Field Goal Kick. Students could try to kick field goals over a goal post made of PVC pipe.*
- » *Put Your Heart in the End Zone. In the style of Pin the Tail on the Donkey,*

blindfolded players tried to put heart stickers in the end zone of a miniature football field.

- » *Hike and Catch. Students had to hike the ball and then run to catch it.*

After the food and games, Super Tailgaters' Rewards Day ended with prize drawings. There were door prizes and two grand prizes: one each for the lower grades and upper grades. Two happy students took home genuine NFL Saints footballs, donated by a local souvenir shop.

"The kids really enjoyed the tailgating party. Great job," said one parent. Brock's teachers and staff encouraged the students to keep up the good behavior that earned them this good time.

More than 200 students participated, along with several community members and 50 to 60 fathers, grandfathers, and other male family members who did much of the hard work. The turnout of family volunteers well exceeded expectations. Clearly, the tailgating party was a win for Brock.



YOU CAN TEACH AN OLD DOG NEW TRICKS

CALEY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL KING OF PRUSSIA, PA

You could be barking up the wrong tree if you try to get dads involved in the same way as moms. Caley Elementary School wanted to increase the number of fathers and father figures who were engaged in ways that would increase student achievement and decrease problem behavior in school. Along with the national WATCH D.O.G.S. (Dads of Great Students), Caley developed *You Can Teach an Old Dog New Tricks* to bring male role models into students' classrooms. The school's Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) knew that this would require creative outreach to invite dads in.

The school invited dads, grandfathers, uncles, and other father figures to sign up—one at a time—to spend a well-structured day in the classroom, lunchroom, playground, hallways, and to help dismissal. The day's assigned Dad arrived at school to park in a designated WATCH D.O.G.S. parking space. He reported to the main office, where he was greeted by a representative—the building secretary, principal, or school counselor.

The day's Dad received the WATCH D.O.G.S. Handbook, reviewed tasks with the representative, and helped with arrival traffic. When Dad was announced on the P. A. system, his child or children came to the main office to have their picture taken with Dad. Photos were displayed on a prominent bulletin board in the front lobby.

Starting at 9 a.m., each Dad followed a well-planned schedule. The school counselor, in conjunction with teachers, carefully coordinated activities to meet student and teacher needs. Dad's activities included reading in class, playing math games, tutoring specific students on sight vocabulary and fluency, talking about his work/career, supervising lunch and recess, helping the Parent-Teacher Co-op, working with special subjects (i.e., physical education, music, art), and overseeing dismissal. Each Dad had lunch and recess with his own child.

Caley implemented WATCH D.O.G.S. and *You Can Teach an Old Dog New Tricks* after school-wide data showed that male students had a higher incidence of disciplinary referrals and lower math and reading scores than did female students. In response, the Counselor/Principal/Parent Book Club read *Raising Cain* to learn more about the social and emotional development of boys. With this information, Caley implemented a Boys Night Out event, where boys and male role models participated in collaborative games and activities. The new program met the observed need to increase paternal involvement at school during the school day.

Over 130 fathers or father figures volunteered for WATCH D.O.G.S. this year. To organize their schedules and activities, Caley created a handbook for staff and fathers specifying roles and responsibilities. The school also posts a volunteer calendar, handbook, and daily orientation form on its website. The program leaders use an electronic form to determine daily slots for dads to tutor targeted students. Each day's volunteer Dad calls the next day's scheduled Dad to keep the program running smoothly.

The program has shown noteworthy results. Literacy assessment scores increased for students tutored by Dads. Lunch and recess behavior referrals decreased. Children of volunteer Dads increased their homework completion. The best responses came from the Dads: "It makes me feel like I am part of the school getting to know the kids and teachers," said one. Another noted, "...in the supermarket some kid [will] say, 'Hey Mom, there's the watchdog dad.' Then, I get to meet the parents and...really connect with people." That kind of school and family connection is a new trick that volunteer dads can learn.