Road to Action Guide and Toolkit for Fathers in Education Day
Thursday, May 12, 2016
Fathers in Action & Advocacy Week
May 9-15, 2016

A partnership between
Miami-Dade County Public Schools
Office of Community Engagement
and
The Fatherhood Task Force of South Florida
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The Fatherhood Task Force of South Florida (FTFSF) is a 501(c) (3) registered nonprofit organization in the state of Florida led by CEO and President Holly Zwerling, LMFT, LCSW, an internationally recognized family therapist, clinical social worker and community organizer for over 35 years. Ms. Zwerling in her leadership role as Florida State Adviser for the National Fathers in Education Network has developed multiple programs to increase the presence of positive male role models in schools to support children’s education. One example is the Involved Fathers Award in partnership with the University of Miami, School of Education & Human Development that recognized Neighborhood Dads engaged in their children’s education.

The mission of the FTFSF is to facilitate the involvement of fathers in the lives of children. Research shows that in many cases, fathers are not as involved as they could be in their children’s education. Often, mothers have been expected or delegated to take the lead. Coupled with the fact that many children are reaching 3rd grade not reading or comprehending material on grade level which contributes to their losing interest in learning and sometimes acting out in school. Emerging research clearly shows that children whose fathers supported their education did better in school academically, socially and emotionally regardless of whether the father lived at home with their children or lived elsewhere (Addendum A). However, fathers who were present in children’s lives and wanted to become more involved often expressed a need to find out ways to do so.

Fathers in Education Day, a statewide initiative, was built on experiences and feedback from fathers participating in the Fatherhood Reading Squad: Leaders for Readers© program in local Miami-Dade County schools organized and run by the Fatherhood Task Force with major support from The Children’s Trust of Miami-Dade County. Partnering with local schools, the Fatherhood Reading Squad program encouraged local schools to increase fathers’ presence and networking by inviting Neighborhood Dads to read, tell stories and share their support of reading and learning.

With evidence that the program increased father participation and awareness of children’s educational needs, findings were shared with Senator Dwight Bullard, representing Miami-Dade County, who thought the effort to increase father participation would benefit from a State Resolution that designated a specific action-oriented week highlighted by Fathers in Education Day. A State Resolution was written and was publicly presented on the full Senate floor on March 26, 2014, signed as Resolution 1432 and implemented as a statewide program May 12-16, 2014.
In May 2014 and December 2014, the School Board of Miami-Dade County recognized the efforts of the Fatherhood Task Force with proclamations acknowledging the efforts to increase their involvement in all schools and in December 14, approved implementation of Fathers in Education Day and Fathers in Action & Advocacy Week. In 2015, House Representative Erik Fresen joined Senator Dwight Bullard supporting the Resolution in the House making it a Congressional Resolution. Both Senator Bullard and Representative Fresen will reintroduce the Resolution this year designating Fathers in Education Day, May 12, 2016.
The Initiative is also supported by the following organizations: Albizu University, Alphabet Kids; Books & Books; City of Miami-Dade County; Early Childhood Initiative Foundation; Early Learning Coalition Miami-Dade Monroe; Etan Thomas Foundation; Family Counseling Services of Greater Miami; Generational Cure; Miami Herald; Florida International University -Department of Psychology; Home Depot; Hope for Miami; Leesfield Family Foundation; Miami Dade College - Center for Literature and Theatre; Miami-Dade Community Action and Human Resources Head Start/Early Head Start Division; Miami Dade County Public Schools; New Horizons; North Dade Youth & Family Coalition; Myofilms; Overtown Youth Center; Parent Academy of Miami-Dade County Public Schools, PTA/PTSA of Miami-Dade County; Rotary Club, Southwest Airlines; The Children's Movement of Florida, The Children's Trust of Miami-Dade County; United Teachers of Dade; United Way of Miami-Dade County; University of Miami School of Education & Human Development.

Special thanks to West Lab Elementary School, Dr. William A. Chapman Elementary School, Kinloch Park Middle School and Nathan B. Young Elementary School and many other local supporters who participated in the media launch of the first and second Fathers in Education Day and Fathers in Action & Advocacy Week.

Schools participating on Fathers in Education Day demonstrate to fathers, mothers and the community that they believe in the importance of fathers and male role models being involved in their child's education and supporting all children's right to have a valuable education. This is a way to increase communication with fathers and between fathers and children and fathers and mothers to support their children as they grow and to welcome additional parental participation.

Boys' and girls' enthusiasm for learning begins at home in a loving, engaging environment and is reinforced in schools by those who teach and respect them, their culture, their gender and their abilities to learn. Positive role modeling from fathers and father figures serves all children and can contribute to changing educational philosophy and policy within schools. Fathers and mothers who agree on the value of education help their children to stay focused.
This Road to Action Guide and Toolkit gives schools an opportunity to increase father involvement in support of children’s education, and to increase the awareness of staff and all family members about the importance of father engagement in school activities. The initiative is designed to increase father involvement in schools throughout Miami-Dade County by giving fathers more opportunities to influence children’s learning. Neighborhood Dads who are already involved in the schools are encouraged to invite other fathers to participate. It should be noted that findings have shown that father involvement in schools has increased father involvement at home, as well. Fathers in Education Day was meant to reinforce summer reading too. Father’s in Education Day also encourages summer reading.

This document is a step-by-step guide designed to assist school administrators, teachers and parent leaders. It will assist you in identifying fathers and male role models to participate, and provides suggested classroom activities and tools to make sure that your planning leads to a successful day and week.

Fathers and families can also have an opportunity to attend parenting and advocacy-oriented workshops throughout the community as part of Fathers in Action & Advocacy Week. They will be offered throughout Miami-Dade County on various days of the week by The Parent Academy and other participating agencies. Fathers will have the opportunity to build their skills related to Parent Preparation, Educational Transitions, General Child Rearing, Raising Boys, Raising Girls, Leadership, Literacy Advancement and Job Preparedness. Fathers will also learn about neighborhood resources and the legislative process so they can begin to effect needed changes to benefit their children. Fathers of children with special needs will be able to attend workshops on how to use community resources to assure the well-being and education of their children. Fathers who have time sharing challenges with their partners will have opportunities to meet with experts to become better informed of steps to take to assure their continuous involvement in their children’s lives in consideration of the best interest of their children.

The Fatherhood Task Force and the Parent Academy will post the workshop details on their websites beginning in April at:

- Fatherhood Task Force: www.ftfsf.org
- Parent Academy: The Parent Academy@MDCPSParentAcademy

Since one out of every three children is growing up without a biological father present we are urging all schools to reach out to fathers and father figures in the community (Neighborhood Dads) to consider ways they can be positive role models for all children. Fathers who volunteer encourage other fathers to volunteer in schools in support of children’s education. Both men and women can work alongside each other to meet the educational needs of children. For more information contact The Fatherhood Task Force of South Florida, Holly Zwerling, LMFT, LCSW – holly@fatherhoodtfsf.org, 305-812-4000
HOW TO IDENTIFY FATHERS AND MALE ROLE MODELS IN YOUR SCHOOL

One of the purposes of Fathers in Education Day is to recognize and value the importance of a father’s role, which can affect all aspects of their children’s lives. It is important to acknowledge that fathers and male role models do not replace a mothers’ role and that stepfathers do not replace fathers but provide a needed parental resource to enable children to maximize their educational and social potential. Fathers who are separated from their child’s mother should work with the mother or her representative and the school to have the ability to be notified about school activities if both parents have legal access to their children. Fathers in Education Day honors fathers and father figures and provide them with opportunities to demonstrate their value to children as the statistics demonstrated (Addendum B).

We encourage you to emphasize that Fathers in Education Day is personal time well spent for fathers and father figures to demonstrate to all children they care about them as future citizens.

Suggested Fathers and Father Figures You Can Invite to Participate:

• Biological Father

• Father Figures, Expectant Fathers, Stepfathers, and Foster Fathers

• Grandfathers: Grandfathers sometimes have more time to give and can volunteer more often to read or tell stories to the children.

• Uncles, Brothers and Other Male Significant Role Models: Since some children’s fathers are absent for various reasons, these role models can play a significant role in children’s lives

• Mentors, Community Leaders in Business, Civic Engagement, Medicine, Law and the Arts and Sciences: Interested members in the community, mentors and business leaders are welcome to participate and add to the number of males who care about children’s learning

• High School students interested in volunteering community service hours to experience teaching and role modeling positive male interaction with elementary age children

Each one has the potential of being a positive influence on children’s interest in learning and their achievement in school and in life. Fathers and father figures of different ages, cultural backgrounds and language proficiencies should be welcomed.
SAMPLE SCHOOL/CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

Below are some of the activities that are applicable to elementary, middle school and high school. These activities reflect fathers’ interest in learning and reading, and are designed to establish a positive pattern of father engagement.

Sample Elementary Classroom or Assembly Activities

1. Read to children inviting their participation
2. Tell a favorite story
3. Share a hobby or interest. Bring in materials to illustrate
4. Discuss your profession or job

Sample Middle School Classroom or Assembly Activities

1. Share an interest or hobby like technology or sports
2. Invite students to be involved in an activity to beautify the classroom or your school such as planting or artwork while learning new words and ideas
3. Present hands-on experiences related to their profession or job

Sample High School Classroom or Assembly Activities

1. Share an interest and hobby
2. Work with students to beautify their classroom or school, such as planting or artwork while sharing new words and ideas
3. Present hands-on experiences related to their profession or job
4. Talk about community involvement or your time in the military service
The classroom teacher should introduce the Father to the class and his activity. The teachers are requested to remain in the classroom to oversee the activity.

Fathers who will be reading can find books in the school’s media center and local libraries. The media specialist or librarian can assist them in finding age-appropriate books to read. Fathers can go to the Fatherhood Task Force website (www.ftfsf.org) and (Addendum C). In this toolkit to find guidelines for recommended books, reading tips, activities related to literacy development. Fathers may have favorite children’s books at home that they read to their children and that may be their choice. Fathers would be familiar with the book they are reading before coming to the class on Fathers in Education Day. If fathers want to participate but do not speak English, they can read or tell a story in their native language, and invite someone to come with them to provide the English translation.

Younger children want fathers to come to their classrooms “to help them learn and connect with them.” Older children enjoy books that reflect their current activities and interests. Sharing favorite passages from books can demonstrate a father’s interest in reading and learning and can be referred to when sharing a hobby, interest or work.

Fathers who will be sharing a hobby, interest or their work can show them examples of what they do and what kind of training or education they have received. The idea is to motivate and stimulate their learning and teach them new words and ideas. Fathers can reinforce their children’s learning by making use of community resources and finding ways to communicate at a distance (Addendum D).

Civic and community-based organizations are encouraged to give fathers time off to participate on Fathers in Education Day. Under the guidelines of the School Volunteer Program, fathers participating in the Fathers in Education Day activities are considered one-day guest presenters in the schools and, therefore, no background clearance is needed for this one time. Fathers who recently reunited with their children have an opportunity to support their children’s local school by inquiring how they can participate on Fathers in Education Day. Every father who is eligible and cleared to volunteer is welcomed to do so. Schools are encouraged to have fathers register through the online portal at dadeschools.net. Fathers should come to the front office to sign in and be welcomed to the school. The Father should be escorted to the participating classroom.
Executive Summary

January 2016
- Save the Date flyer sent out to all schools

February 2016
- Fathers in Action Tool Kit link sent out to all schools to encourage schools to register to participate on Fathers in Education Day, May 12, 2016 and to Include the date on their calendars and website

March 2016
- Team leader should recruit fathers to participate in Fathers in Education Day by providing sign in sheets in front office and make announcements during PTA, ESAC and Teachers’ meetings. Engage teachers

April 2016
- Finalize your scheduling for Fathers in Education Day. Designate which teachers and classrooms will be involved and let fathers know where to go on Fathers in Education Day.
- Work with Media Specialist to prepare lots of books, age appropriate for the fathers who are planning on reading to children.

May 2016
- Contact the participating fathers by May 1 to remind them about the time to come to the school and possibly give the fathers another reminder two days before Fathers in Education Day. With permission from your principal, possibly enlist support from other school staff to assist. All fathers should be welcomed to participate when they sign up. Arrange for a Father Networking Breakfast for fathers to meet prior to classroom visit.
- Confirm with teachers to expect the fathers during certain times and have them sign in and out after their classroom visit. Note: A father may need to get permission from his employer to take the time off to come to your school. There is an example of a letter to give to an employer asking for permission to be excused to participate in Fathers in Education Day (Addendum E).
- Following Fathers in Education Day the schools will be asked to fill out a three question survey to be retuned to MDCPS, Office of Community Engagement by Friday, May 13, 2015. As schools register they will receive the link to the three questions.

For more information contact
The Fatherhood Task Force of South Florida, Holly Zwerling, LMFT, LCSW
holly@fatherhoodtfsf.org, 305-812-4000
What Fathers Can Do to Encourage Other Fathers to Be Involved in Fathers in Education Day and Fathers in Action & Advocacy Week

• Contact fathers you know and encourage them to participate in a local school on Fathers in Education Day

• Using Social Media, here are suggested ways to Post information about Fathers in Education Day encouraging fathers to participate

  1. “Like” the Fatherhood Task Force of South Florida on Facebook and stay connected to our planned Fathers in Education Day and Fathers in Action & Advocacy Week activities. These daily postings will begin in March.
  2. In your status update let others know what you are doing to support Fathers in Education Day and Fathers in Action & Advocacy Week.

• Write an editorial in a newspaper reflecting on the role of fathers in education and in schools. Share your experiences and how schools can increase father participation.

• Tell stories of children raised by their fathers and what value they placed on education. Refer to statistics or research that shows the positive impact on children when fathers are involved in their education.

• Communicate with your local Congressperson or Commissioner. Let them know what you are doing to support children’s education and ask them to support your efforts. Find out what they are doing and how you can help. Go to http://www.house.gov/representatives/find/ to get the names of your congressperson.
Reference Sources – Father Factor Involvement in Children’s Education

There is A “Father Factor” in Our Nation’s Worst Social Problems
According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 24 million children in America – one out of every three – live in biological father-absent homes. Nine in ten American parents agree this is a “crisis.” Consequently, there is a “father factor” in nearly all of the social issues facing America today. But the hope lies in the fact that children with involved fathers do better across every measure of child well-being than their peers in father-absent homes


The Positive Impact of Father Involvement
In a study examining father involvement with 134 children of adolescent mothers over the first 10 years of life, researchers found that father-child contact was associated with better socio-emotional and academic functioning. The results indicated that children with more involved fathers experienced fewer behavioral problems and scored higher on reading achievement. This study showed the significance of the role of fathers in the lives of at-risk children, even in case of nonresident fathers.


Preschoolers with actively involved fathers have stronger verbal skills

Children with actively involved fathers display less behavior problems in school

Girls with strong relationships with their fathers do better in mathematics

Boys with involved fathers tend to get better grades and perform better on achievement tests

Research shows that very young children who have experienced high father involvement show an increase in curiosity and in problem solving capacity. Fathers’ involvement seems to encourage children’s exploration of the world around them and confidence in their ability to solve problems.


Highly involved fathers also contribute to increased mental dexterity in children, increased empathy, less stereotyped sex role beliefs and greater self-control
When non-custodial fathers are highly involved with their children’s learning, the children are more likely to get A’s at all grade levels

Nonresident father contact with children and involvement in their schools within the past year are associated with the same three factors: fathers paying child support; custodial mothers being more educated; and custodial homes not experiencing financial difficulties

High involvement at the early childhood level - frequency with which parents interact with their young children, such as how often they read, tell stories and sign and play with their children. These experiences contribute to children's language and literacy development and transmit information and knowledge about people, places and things

Father involvement in schools is associated with the higher likelihood of a student getting mostly A’s. This was true for fathers in biological parent families, for stepfathers, and for fathers heading single-parent families.

The National Center for Fathering (NCF) and the National Parent Teacher Association (PTA) have partnered to assess the degree of involvement and support that fathers provide to their school-age children. Over a period of ten years there has been an increase in all areas of father involvement in the home, in school and in the community.
Age-appropriate book guidelines and literacy activities

Show an understanding of children’s reading capabilities by learning about what books are appropriate for children to read given their level and interests. Books sometimes have the recommended reading age on the cover or the back. There are different types of books, which interest children including mysteries, humor, sports and human interest stories so explore with your children what they enjoy. Pictures often help children understand what they are reading. Ask questions about the book to see how much they understood and challenge them to think about issues they had not thought about.

Check with The Children’s Trust website www.TheChildrensTrust.org re: Read to Learn Initiatives. Sign up to receive free books with instructions for children younger than three.

Examples of Age-Appropriate Children’s Books: (Elementary Level – Kindergarten through 3rd grade). Your older children will want to choose books with you and on their own.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Daddy Calls Me Man by Angela Johnson</th>
<th>Library Mouse by Daniel Kirk</th>
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<tr>
<td>Five Little Monkeys Jumping on the Bed by Eileen Christelow</td>
<td>I want to be President by Michaela Muntean</td>
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<tr>
<td>Full, Full, Full of Love by Trish Cooke</td>
<td>I’ll Teach My Dog 100 Words by Michael Frith</td>
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<td>Lola Loves Stories by Anna McQuinn</td>
<td>Daddy Is a Cozy Hug by Rhonda Gowler Greene</td>
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<td>Froggy’s Day With Dad by Jonathan London</td>
<td>So Much by Trish Cooke</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quiero a mi papa porque (I love my daddy because...) by Laurel Porter-Gaylord</td>
<td>Curios George Goes Camping by Margret &amp; H.A. Rey’s</td>
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<tr>
<td>Las Aventuras de SuperKat by Katherine Magnoli Jorge el Curioso (Curious George) by H.A. Reys</td>
<td>Boys of Steel, The Creators of Superman by Marc Nobelmann</td>
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<tr>
<td>Umar’s Magic Oven by Abed Awad and Patrice Samara</td>
<td>Tales of Bunjitsu Bunny by John Himmelman</td>
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<tr>
<td>How Rocket Learned to Read by Tad Hills</td>
<td>Emma &amp; The Blue Genie by Kerstin Meyer</td>
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<td></td>
<td>More of Money &amp; Robot by Peter Catalnotto</td>
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General Reading Tips

• Choose books that children like. They can learn words and gather an understanding of people and places by reading books that they enjoy.

• Let children know what you liked about a book you are reading.

• For younger children get them involved in the reading to encourage thinking and talking about the book. Ask questions like, “What do you think will happen next or do you like the ending and why?”

• Make the book come alive with sounds or emphasis put on words or emotions.

• Follow words so they can see what you are reading and talk about the magic of words and how they help us to talk to one another.

• For older children share reading time and talking about it together. Make it an activity like any other activity and relate the reading to expanding one’s experiences beyond their own.
Activities contributing to literacy development and social adjustment to school:

- **Communicate with your children** (without phone interruptions) when you take them to school, when you come home from work or take them to an activity. Let them hear your voice and hear the way you think.

- **Use your skills or hobbies and relate them to your children’s studies.** Sports are about math and science - music relates to math also. Fixing things is about science (how things move, how things get built). Teach new words related to activities.

- **Listen to your children’s day and express empathy.** They, like you, put in a whole day of work and experience stress and issues at school. Encourage them to come to you to share their concerns. This is a good opportunity for connection and trust building. It will also maximize their learning as they will learn how to deal with issues themselves.

- **Give examples of empathy and tolerance** as they are important topics and are needed to expand learning experiences. Share your thoughts about personal experiences or experiences of others to help your children to expand their understanding and appreciation of others.

- **Encourage children to think and analyze information they learn.** Thinking is an important skill and necessary for learning. Don’t rely on think tanks that do the thinking.

- **Set goals for learning with your children** and learn what is possible for them. Check that they understand what they have read to determine their level of comprehension.

- **Teach your children that both boys and girls are capable of developing skills** in all areas, which will expand their thinking about what they read.

- **Teach children how to speak up** and let the teacher know when they don’t understand something or to tell you when they are confused about their schoolwork. Arrange for a friendly visit with your child and teacher to let them know who you are, to express your interest in their studies and to show support for their profession. Let them know this behavior will help them to get what they need from school. Notice and compliment progress by using words that are kind and understanding.

- **Communicate with the child’s mother to share parenting techniques** and agree on issues of learning relative to your child’s education.

- **Use a video to tell a story** and talk about it in your language. All fathers can teach children using the skills they have. English translation can be found with some videos that come with books.

- **Continue to read to your child in middle and high school** by sharing passages in books or newspapers that interest or concern you or relate to their studies. Children still want to be read to beyond their elementary years as it gives them another way to connect with you.
Activities to Do with Your Child in the Community

- Take your children to have fun times at the library during which time you can read books together. Give them opportunities to choose books they like to take out with a library card. Check with your library about special reading classes or storytelling time for children.
- Visit educational resources with your child like local museums and look at the exhibit through the eyes of a growing child and as an adult who continues to learn.
- Go to a movie together and talk about the meaning of the movie and whether they liked the ending and why. Could there have been another ending.
- Make a video together about your reading and learning experiences related to topics of choice.
- Take a walk around your neighborhood taking pictures of the things you saw along the way and comment on what they look like, sound like, etc.
- Look at maps together and discover places of interest and what you can learn from them.
- Choose books at the library that will teach more about something you both discovered.
- Volunteer with your child at a local community center – read to children or tell stories.
- Share the resources of your local park with your child. Bring a book to read under a tree or try a new activity you read about.
- Meet with other fathers and families to broaden children’s experiences about people. You are being a role model on how to interact and share with others.

Ways that Fathers Can Connect “Across the Miles”

- You can share a book on Facetime, Skype or on the phone. Discuss a time to call and make that a special time. Be prepared to talk about yourself too so your child can learn how to share experiences.
- Send books to your children to read and share. Write a note to let them know why you choose the books and ask them to write back about what they think of the book.
- Play “all of a sudden” games as you tell stories over the phone. You start a story and then the child continues it and so on until the story ends.
- Ask to have homework sent to you so you can see what your child is reading and learning. Be a support to the child’s other parent.
- Read the newspaper stories or the news online and share appropriate stories with your children.
- Teach tolerance and empathy to your children as many books emphasize their importance in understanding people and animals. Talk about cultural diversity and different lifestyles lived by both women and men so they understand gender differences and what is acceptable behavior to others.
Letter to Employer regarding participation in Fathers in Education Day

Dear Employer,

Miami-Dade County Public Schools, Office of Community Engagement, MDCPS School Board and the Fatherhood Task Force of South Florida are inviting fathers to participate in Fathers in Education Day, Thursday, May 12, 2016 during which time they can read or tell stories to the children or share a personal hobby, interest or work with the students. The Congressional Resolution established in 2014 designated this date as an opportunity for fathers and father figures to volunteer in the schools to support children’s education and their community. The participation of fathers is beneficial to children to see a positive male role model interested in sharing their time to come to their schools. The Miami-Dade County School Board approved Fathers in Education Day as an activity for the schools which is also supported by The MDCPS Office of Community Engagement. The Children’s Trust and other community partners support this Initiative as it benefits children, families and communities.

We recognize your business as a provider of resources to families in our community and therefore welcome your support of this Initiative. We look to your business to provide time off to those fathers who would want to participate in their child’s local school on May 12, 2016 and help advance children’s interest in reading and learning. Please join us in being a leader in promoting father involvement in their children’s lives.

Sincerely,

Holly Zwerling, LMFT, LCSW CEO/President
Fatherhood Task Force of South Florida