

## **Dads & Kids Book Club: Bonding through Shared Book Reading with Young Children**

### **Introduction**

The Dads and Kids Book Club was developed as a way to strengthen father-child relationships and assist fathers in learning new ways to support emerging literacy skills in young children. The format for the Dads and Kids Book Club is built around the research and practice literature about fathers and early literacy development. Refer to Table A at the end of the document for a summary of the research findings and parallel applications to the book club design.

The Dads & Kids Book Club was field-tested in St. Cloud in collaboration with the Dad's Project and the ECFE program between 2003-2006. The Dads & Kids Book club core outcomes, format and tips for successful replication are outlined below. The specific lesson plans that are provided are samples to be selected and adapted based on the populations of fathers and children that you are trying to reach. The basic format can also be adapted with other children's picture books.

### **Book Club Core Outcomes**

A list of core outcomes for children and fathers are included in every lesson plan and reflect the primary goals of the book club regardless of the book and specific activities that are used.

#### *Core Outcomes for Children*

- Children will develop a love of reading with their dad and strengthen their relationship with their dad.
- Children will develop and expand their early literacy skills: letter recognition, story comprehension, phonemic awareness, and vocabulary through reading and related activities with their dad.

#### *Core Outcomes for Dads*

- Dads will understand and appreciate the importance of their role in supporting early literacy development.
- Dads will develop skills for reading with children by observing different strategies and practicing reading tips.
- Dads will increase the frequency, variety, and quality of early literacy activities with their child.
- Dads will strengthen their emotional bond with their child through reading and early literacy activities.

## Program Design/Format

### *Meeting Times*

This program is designed to be conducted over a 4-6 week span with session taking place once a week. Each session can last between 1 ½ -2 hours depending upon the time of day. Offering a combination of a weekday evening and a Saturday morning class provides more options for fathers who might be working at different times.

### *Session Outline*

**Warm-in Time:** This is a time to make nametags and engage in other activities. A scavenger hunt can be used to engage dads and kids in exploring the room for different objects. This “hands-on” activity helps both dads and kids become familiar and more comfortable with the environment.

**Circle Time/Story Reading:** This is a time for the book of the week to be introduced. The circle of dads and kids might start with introductions and a song or finger play related to the book theme. The book is then read by an early childhood educator who is able to model different methods for engaging children and promoting different literacy skills through book reading.

**Father-Child Activity Time:** This is a time for dads and kids to engage in a number of different activities from crafts to cooking that are connected to the book theme and that promote early literacy and learning in a variety of different ways that are “father-friendly.”

**Discussion with Dads:** This is a time for dads to get together with the parent facilitator to talk about the story themes and father child relationships. This provides a time to debrief the reading strategies that were modeled and to review tips to engage children and make reading more fun, and at the same time promote new literacy learning. The children spend this time with the early childhood educator finishing individual projects or participating in large group singing or story reading.

## Curriculum Materials

The curriculum materials include a session outline for each book that includes specific outcomes for fathers and children, a list of materials needed for the father-child activity time, an outline of dads’ discussion time that includes specific discussion questions, and a list of reading tips. The sequence of sessions should be considered when designing the book club and the first session should provide a welcoming tone and simple activities to quickly engage fathers and their young children. The final session should bring some sense of closure to the group.

The materials list provides the details for the father-child activities. These are suggested activities that were designed to complement themes from the story and give dads and kids a variety of different ideas that support literacy including dramatic play, cooking, art, crafts,

reading and writing activities. The activities should be adapted to the ages of the children in your group and the space that is available.

Reading tip sheets are designed for each book and focus on three different ways that dads can support literacy: ideas for making the story interactive and fun for the child, ideas for helping the child to understand the story and ideas for helping the child to learn new words in the book or related to the book topic.

## **Tips for Implementing the Dads & Kids Book Club**

### *Selecting a Target Population*

Select a target population of children. Since the early childhood years are a critical time for dads to read to their child, the curriculum materials were designed for 4-6 year olds. The book club concept could be used with 3 year olds. The types of books and some of the activities would have to be adjusted to match attention spans and cognitive capabilities.

### *Group Size and Staffing*

The ideal size for a Dads & Kids Book Club is 8-10 families. With this number of families you will need three staff members that include a licensed early childhood educator, a parent facilitator, and an early childhood assistant to help during the separation time.

### *Selecting a Site for Book Club Meetings*

Selecting a place for a Dads and Kids Book Club is an important decision. Ideally an early childhood classroom is the best place to conduct a book club but it is possible to use a kindergarten classroom or to use a room at a library or a church nursery. A classroom or space that has four tables and an open space for a reading circle is necessary. It helps to have a space that already has some or most of the materials that you will be using for various projects.

### *Active Recruitment*

Initial recruitment of fathers of young children to participate in a book club can be challenging. Some suggestions for recruitment include:

- Children can help with recruiting by making an invitation card for their dads.
- Mothers can be enlisted to encourage dads to come to the book club.
- Use a variety of advertisement methods such as newspaper announcements or articles, e-mail lists, and flyers sent home with children.

### *Book Selection*

The following books were selected for the Dads and Kids book club because they depict fathers in a positive manner and include different types and styles of books.

Asch, Frank. *Just Like Daddy*. New York: Aladdin Paperbacks, 1981.

Coy, John. *Night Driving*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1996.

Coy, John. *Two Old Potatoes and Me*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003.

Dane Bauer, Marion. *The Very Best Daddy of All*. New York: Simon and Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2004.

Degen, Bruce. *Daddy is a Doodlebug*. HarperCollins, 2000.

Kraus, Robert. *Leo the Late Bloomer*. New York: Scholastic, 1971.

Kupchella, Rick. *Tell Me What We Did Today*. Minneapolis: Tristan Publishing, 2003.

Martin, Bill and John Archambault. *Chicka Chicka Boom Boom*. New York: Scholastic, 1989.

Pringle, Laurence. *Octopus Hug*. Honesdale: Caroline House, 1993.

Seeger, Pete. *Abiyoyo*. New York: Scholastic, 1986.

Stoll Walsh, Ellen. *Mouse Count*. New York: Scholastic, 1991.

Yolen, Jane. *Owl Moon*. New York: Scholastic, 1987.

### *Father-Child Activities*

Father-child activities should be fun, interactive and provide the child with a feeling of accomplishment. When designing activities consider the types of interaction that you want to encourage. Activities that support fathers' participation with children are most effective. When dads and kids are working together to complete a project, both are having a "hands on" experience. Some of these activities include craft projects, science projects, and dramatic play themes.

### *Facilitating Discussions with Dads*

Facilitating discussion among a group of fathers can be both rewarding and challenging. Below are some practical tips for approaching the group discussion time.

- Be clear about the purpose of the discussion section.
- Use humor to relax the group and create a sense of fun and camaraderie.
- Dismiss the myth of the perfect father-so men don't have to project an image and can share common concerns and solutions.
- During the beginning weeks start with easy questions and safe topics.
- Stress common issues such as the ages of children or typical male concerns.
- Invite participation but accept quiet listening.
- Invite ideas from dads and affirm their contribution.
- Accept problem solving or solutions as signs of support between fathers.

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### Program Evaluation

It has become essential for early childhood and parent programs to address the issue of accountability through program evaluation. This should include three basic tasks. First, document the population you are serving by asking about basic demographics, (e.g., age, ethnicity, education level and marital status). Second, ask questions about program satisfaction relating to the time, format, books used, etc. The third area to focus on is program outcomes for both dads and kids. Did your program meet the outcomes that you identified? Ask dads to report on changes in

### Research and Practice Review References

**Table A**

Research/Evidence Base	Book Club Applications
<p><b>Roles of Parent in Promoting Early Literacy</b></p> <p>1. Parents model interest in literacy and reading behavior.<sup>1,2</sup></p>	<p>a. Attendance at the book club demonstrates father's interest in literacy.</p> <p>b. Fathers model reading behavior by taking home books and reading them to child at home.</p>
<p>2. Fathers communicate expectations for children to achieve literacy skills.<sup>2</sup></p>	<p>a. Attendance at the book club demonstrates an investment in child learning to develop literacy skills and learning to love reading.</p>
<p>3. Fathers provide literacy experiences and materials in the home.<sup>2,3</sup></p>	<p>a. Fathers bring new books home to read to child.</p> <p>b. Fathers bring new ideas for supporting early literacy at home based on ideas tried during father-child activities.</p> <p>c. Fathers bring new interactive ways of engaging children in book reading.</p>
<p>4. Fathers read to children.<sup>3,4,5,6,7</sup></p>	<p>a. Children ask dads to read new books to them.</p> <p>b. Fathers learn to improve the quality of their book reading and make it more fun.</p> <p>c. Fathers read more to children when they become more confident and comfortable in reading to their children.</p>
<p>5. Fathers provide opportunities for verbal interaction.<sup>2,3</sup></p>	<p>a. Fathers learn how to expand book reading through questions.</p> <p>b. Fathers learn how to introduce and talk about new words.</p> <p>c. Fathers learn about the importance of story-telling and singing as literacy experiences.</p>
<p><b>Practice Literature</b></p> <p>6. Books should be father friendly and provide familiar themes.<sup>8,9</sup></p>	<p>a. Books from the book club feature fathers as positive role models.</p> <p>b. Fathers in the books are engaged in activities that are familiar to dads.</p>

7. Fathers prefer hands-on activities when interacting with their young children. <sup>5,8</sup>	a. Father-child activities include crafts, literacy games, cooking and science activities for dads and kids to do together.
8. The Preschool Years from 3-6 are a critical period for fathers to engage in reading and other literacy activities with their children. <sup>10,11</sup>	a. The book clubs focused on picture books and activities for children ages 3-6. b. Fathers develop skills and comfort for reading to their child while child is still dependent upon adult reading.

<sup>1</sup>Adriana Bus, Marinus Van IJzendoorn, and Anthony Pelligrini. 1995. Joint Book Reading Makes for Success in Learning to Read: A Meta-Analysis on Intergenerational Transmission of Literacy. *Review of Educational Research*, 65, 1-21.

<sup>2</sup> Hess and S. Holloway. 1984. Family and school Educational Institutions (p179-222) In R.D. Parke (Ed). *Review of Child Development Research*, 7: The Family. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

<sup>3</sup>Robert Ortiz, S. Stile, and C. Brown. 1999. Early Literacy Activities of Fathers: Reading and Writing with Young Children. *Young Children* 55(5), 16-18.

<sup>4</sup>Stephen Green. 2002. Involving Fathers in Children's Literacy Development: an Introduction to the Fathers Reading Every Day (FRED) Program. *Journal of Extension* 40 (5) [www.joe.org](http://www.joe.org).

<sup>5</sup>Adam Rosen. June, 2004. Using Children's Books with Dads. *Head Start Bulletin*, 53-54.

<sup>6</sup>Adriana Bus, Jay Belsky, Marinus Van IJzendoorn, Keith Crnic. 1997. Attachment and Bookreading Patterns: A study of Mother, Fathers and Their Toddlers. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 12, 81-98.

<sup>7</sup>E. Flouri & A. Bachanan 2003. What Predicts Fathers' Involvement with Their Children: A Prospective Study of Intact Families. *British Journal of Developmental Psychology*, 21 81-91.

<sup>8</sup>Richard Fletcher & Kerry Dally. November, 2002. Fathers' Involvement in their Children's Literacy Development. Paper published by The Family Action Centre, The University of Newcastle Australia.

<sup>9</sup>D. Karther 2002. Fathers with Low Literacy and Their Young Children. *The Reading Teacher* 56(2) 184-193.

<sup>10</sup>Rebecca Goldman. 2005. *Fathers' Involvement in their Children's Education*. National Family and Parenting Institute: London.

<sup>11</sup> Minnesota Fathers & Families Network (2007). *Do We Count Fathers: Searching for Key Indicators of Well-Being of Fathers and Families*. St. Paul, MN: MFFN.