The Parents as Teachers Promoting Responsible Fatherhood Project:
Evaluation of “Dads in the Mix,” an Exemplary Site

February 25, 2011

Report prepared for Parents as Teachers national office by:

Tomoko Wakabayashi, Ed.D
Karen A. Guskin, Ph.D
Jan Watson, M.A.T.
Kate McGilly, Ph.D.
Larry L. Klinger, Jr., M.Ed.
The Parents as Teachers Promoting Responsible Fatherhood Project:
“Dads in the Mix,” an Exemplary Site

Table of Contents

I. Executive Summary

II. About Parents as Teachers

III. Project Overview

IV. Project Design

V. Allegheny Intermediate Unit’s “Dads in the Mix”

VI. Program Implementation
   a. Expansion of Location Services
   b. Recruitment and Retention
      i. Fatherhood Group Meeting
      ii. Parents as Teachers Home Visits

VII. Program Outcome
   a. Father Outcomes

VIII. Summary and Discussion

IX. Future work

X. Appendix

XI. References
Executive Summary

The Parents as Teachers Promoting Responsible Fatherhood project was designed to demonstrate the feasibility and effectiveness of an adaptation of the Parents as Teachers model with low-income fathers as the primary target population. The project goal is to increase father involvement in Parents as Teachers services. Fathers who live with their children (residential fathers) who meet the income criteria (under 200% federal poverty level) were recruited to participate in a 12-week group meeting cycle lasting 3 months. During these 3 months, fathers also participated in home visits by Parents as Teachers certified home visitors.¹

This report focuses on one successful program, “Dads in the Mix” provided through Parents and Teachers partnership with the Allegheny Intermediate Unit (AIU3) in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. “Dads in the Mix” uses the Parents as Teachers group meeting curriculum called Young Moms, Young Dads to deliver peer-facilitated fatherhood group meetings, and the Parents as Teachers home visiting curriculum for their home visits. Their implementation goals are: 1) to expand services to as many fathers in the AIU3 service areas as possible; 2) to recruit at least 8-10 fathers per session and engage and retain 80% of the enrolled fathers so that they receive at least 8 hours of skill-based parenting education during their 12-week group meeting cycle;² and 3) to complete a monthly home visit (3 times during the group meeting cycle) with 80% of the enrolled fathers. The program outcome goal was to have fathers become more involved in the lives of their children.

¹ The Parents as Teachers Promoting Responsible Fatherhood Project was funded by the OFA Responsible Fatherhood Grant #90FR0080 to the National Center for Parents as Teachers, Inc. The current design of the project was initiated in Year 2 (2007-2008) of the Promoting Responsible Fatherhood grant with 7 partner sites. Due to challenges involving recruitment and retention, as well as loss of local funding, there are currently 5 sites collaborating on the project. The sites are located in California, Illinois, Missouri (2), and Pennsylvania.

² To count a father as being served by a program, he needs to receive at least 8 hours of skill-based parenting education according to the definition in the Promoting Responsible Fatherhood Grant.
The analysis of AIU3’s “Dads in the Mix” program indicates that the program met its implementation goals of expanding the service areas, recruiting 8-10 fathers per group meeting cycle and engaging 80% of them, and providing monthly home visits to 80% of the fathers enrolled in the fatherhood groups. The recruitment and retention strategies that yielded this success were identified based on observations and review of materials, surveys, and feedback from participants and staff. Key strategies focused on staffing; coordination of services; provision of incentives; flexibility of scheduling; organizational partnership and collaboration; and communication and outreach.

In addition to a high level of fidelity to the implementation design, “Dads in the Mix” also showed preliminary evidence for reaching their goal of promoting involved fathers. Fathers reported being more involved in their children’s lives, and improving communications and relationships with children and/or spouse. In addition to being involved, more fathers reported being patient with their children and others. Fathers’ increase in patience was often connected to how they disciplined their children. Fathers’ increase in communication as well as patience was also often reported in connection with how they facilitated their children’s learning.

As Parents as Teachers continues to improve the evaluation design and evaluate its Responsible Fatherhood project, we will learn more about the successful strategies used by exemplary implementing sites, and disseminate the information for use by other PAT model sites to better involve low-income fathers in skill-based parenting education services, and in the lives of their children.
About Parents as Teachers

All children will learn, grow and develop to realize their full potential.

~ Parents as Teachers Vision

The concept for Parents as Teachers was developed in the 1970s when Missouri educators noted that children were beginning kindergarten with varying levels of school readiness. Research showed that greater parent involvement is a critical link in the child's development of learning skills, including reading and writing.

Early childhood professionals suggested that a program to provide early detection of developmental delays and health issues, and parent education to help parents understand their role in encouraging their child's development from the beginning, could help improve school readiness and parent involvement.

With funding from the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and The Danforth Foundation, Parents as Teachers began in 1981 in Missouri as a pilot project for first-time parents of newborns. Recognizing the program's benefits and cost effectiveness, the Missouri legislature provided state funding in 1985 to implement Parents as Teachers programs in all Missouri school districts. Since 1985, Parents as Teachers has expanded to all 50 states and seven other countries. Parents as Teachers is one of the approved evidence-based models for the Federal Home Visitation Initiative mandated by the Affordable Care Act of 2010.

The model serves families throughout pregnancy until their child enters kindergarten with personal visits typically in their homes from certified parent educators; group meetings; developmental, health, hearing and vision screenings; and linkages with community resources.

3 http://www.parentsasteachers.org/about/what-we-do/visionmission-history
The model has four goals: to increase parent knowledge of early childhood development and improve parenting practices; provide early detection of developmental delays and health issues; prevent child abuse and neglect; and increase children's school readiness and school success. It is adaptable to the needs of diverse families, cultures and special populations.
Project Overview

It is now well-supported and documented that fathers interact with their children in ways different from mothers, contributing equally and importantly to children’s healthy and optimal development (Turner, 2009). Father involvement, for example, has been found to positively correlate with children’s secure attachment, social and emotional development, cognitive development, and quality of life, including health and poverty (NFI, 2009; Raikes, Summers, & Roggman, 2005). Fathers’ positive influences in their children’s early years also improve children’s odds against later incarceration, crime, teen pregnancy, low educational attainment, and substance abuse (NFI, 2009).

According to the U.S Census Bureau report (Kreider, 2008), the percentage of father-absent homes continues to rise nationally, with 1 out of every 3 of America’s children (34.5%) living apart from their biological fathers. Nevertheless, research shows that as long as fathers stay involved in their children’s lives, whether they live with their children or not, the potential for their children’s success in life remains comparatively high (Doherty, Kouneski, & Erickson, 2006). Research also shows that establishing a healthy start in the father-child relationship at the very beginning of the child’s life facilitates later development in their relationship. Resident fathers, or fathers who live with their children, have been found to be more involved and engaged than non-resident fathers, or fathers who do not live with their children. For example, they more regularly eat meals with their children and talk to their children on a daily basis. Nevertheless, the degree of father involvement remains not only qualitatively, but also quantitatively different from that of mothers (NRFC, 2009). There are cultural and societal barriers which associate taking care of children to female roles. Fathers consequently have
been found to show less interest in participating in parent education programs and other efforts which support parents to become the first and the best teachers of their children (Doherty, Kouneski, & Erickson, 2006). Home visiting programs like Parents as Teachers are no exception. While many of these programs have names which suggest that they focus on serving “parents” and/or “families,” the participants are overwhelmingly mothers.

In 2005, the Marriage and Fatherhood Provisions of the Deficit Reduction Act was passed. The provisions designated funding for activities promoting healthy marriages and activities promoting responsible fatherhood, disbursed as competitive grants. Parents as Teachers national office was awarded $1,250,000 over 5 years to provide skill-based parenting education to low-income fathers through this Promoting Responsible Fatherhood Initiative delivered through the Office of Family Affairs (OFA) at the Administration of Children and Families (ACF).

Funded by the Promoting Responsible Fatherhood Federal Grant, the current project was therefore initiated at multiple sites across the country to directly inform fathers about crucial information surrounding child development with the goal of enhancing their parenting skills, increasing their confidence as fathers, and becoming more influential in their children’s everyday lives. The project was designed to demonstrate the feasibility and effectiveness of an adaptation of the Parents as Teachers model with fathers as the primary target population. Research indicates that for low-income families, parent group meetings can be an effective avenue for recruiting them into parent support home visiting programs, such as Parents as Teachers services (Constantino, Hashemi, Solis, Alon, Haley, McClure, Nordlicht, Constantino, Elmen, & Carlson, 2001). This project sought to recruit fathers of families already enrolled in
Parents as Teachers into fatherhood group meetings, and through these group meetings, further enrich and encourage fathers to become the best that they can be. A preliminary result shows that the Parents as Teachers Responsible Fatherhood Project has successfully impacted low-income fathers through a combination of Parents as Teachers home visits and weekly fatherhood group meetings (Wakabayashi, Guskin, & Watson, 2010). While each site has stepped up to the challenges of this project in their own diverse ways, this report focuses on one program, “Dads in the Mix” provided through partnership with the Allegheny Intermediate Unit (AIU3) in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Through this case study, we hope to describe and identify strategies that made AIU3 “Dads in the Mix” especially successful in recruiting, retaining, and engaging low-income fathers. We also examine what positive differences the fathers report as a result of participating in “Dads in the Mix.”
Project Design

The Parents as Teachers Promoting Responsible Fatherhood project was designed to demonstrate the feasibility and effectiveness of an adaptation of the Parents as Teachers model with fathers as the primary target population. The project goal is to increase father involvement in low-income families who receive Parents as Teachers services. Fathers who live with their children (residential fathers) who meet the income criteria (under 200% federal poverty level) were recruited to participate in a 12-week group meeting session (hereafter, group meeting cycle) lasting 3 months. During these 3 months, fathers also participated in a monthly home visits by Parents as Teachers certified home visitors.

The current design of the project was initiated in Year 2 (2007-2008) of the Promoting Responsible Fatherhood grant with 7 partner sites. Due to challenges involving recruitment and retention, as well as loss of local funding, there are currently 5 sites collaborating on the project. The sites are located in California, Illinois, Missouri (2), and Pennsylvania.

The partner sites were given the choice of using the 24/7 Dads and/or the Parents as Teachers/MELD Young Moms, Young Dads curriculum for their group meetings. At the AIU3 “Dads in the Mix,” Young Moms, Young Dads curriculum has been used because of its greater flexibility and options when working with fathers. “Dads in the Mix” offers three types of group meetings: 1) father-specific meetings; 2) father-child meetings which implement parent-child activities; and 3) family-oriented meetings which cover issues pertinent to the entire family, such as punishment vs discipline or quality child care. Through different types of group meetings, the “Dads in the Mix” program attempts to bring all family members onto the same
page in regards to child development and parenting. The newly initiated Latino fatherhood
group uses the 24/7 Dad curriculum, however, because there is currently no Spanish version for
Young Moms, Young Dads. The evaluation data for the Latino fatherhood group is currently
being collected, and will not be included in this report.

**Technical Assistance.** Every partner site receives technical assistance from the Parents
as Teachers national office that includes an annual on-site visit, quarterly cross-site conference
calls, and twice yearly site-specific Action Plan Review meetings typically conducted by phone.
Additional communication via phone and conference call occur as needed. The annual on-site
visit is performed to verify that programs are implementing their services with high quality, and
as intended. For example, we make sure that skill-based parent education is included in all
group meetings. This opportunity also allows the Parents as Teachers technical assistance
manager to directly interact with father participants and inquire about their experiences in the
fatherhood groups. Additional time is spent highlighting strengths as well as identifying
roadblocks/barriers and brainstorming strategies to reduce or overcome these issues. Quarterly
conference calls with all partner sites are offered as an opportunity to inform sites about grant
updates as well as for programs to share with each other information about successful
implementation strategies. The twice yearly Action Plan Review meetings focus on current
implementation, continuous quality improvement strategies, and a review of the site’s Action
Plan. In addition to these technical assistance visits and calls, Parents as Teachers supports
partner sites by distributing information about fatherhood-related webinars and conference
calls (such as those sponsored by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Office
of Family Affairs (OFA), National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse (NRFC) and National Fatherhood Initiative (NFI)). Parents as Teachers also invites staff from partner sites to participate in an annual training/workshop at the national office in St. Louis, Missouri.

**Evaluation.** At the start of each 12-week group meeting cycle, fathers complete the enrollment packet that includes 1) a consent form (for evaluation), 2) a demographic survey with an open-ended question about why they enrolled and what they intend to get out of the group, and 3) a pre-test of the Protective Factors Survey (FRIENDS National Resource Center, 2008). At the end of each group meeting cycle, fathers complete the end-of-the-cycle packet which includes 1) a follow-up open-ended question about what they got out of the group, 2) a satisfaction survey about the group meetings and personal visits, and 3) a post-test of the Protective Factors Survey. These evaluation data are de-identified and forwarded on to the evaluation team at the Parents as Teachers national office. The enrollment and the end-of-the cycle packets were revised in the middle of the 2008-2009 (Year 3) grant year to better capture the impact of the project.

In addition to evaluation completed by fathers, each site completes and submits the following documents to the Parents as Teachers national office: 1) sign-in sheets; 2) an Excel file which records the dates and topics of the group meetings and father participation; 2) an online group meeting report for each group meeting; and 3) Personal Visit Record form which reports on the number, length, and content of father-participated home visits. The Personal Visit Record form was added in the middle of the 2008-2009 (Year 3) grant year to better track fathers’ home visit participation.
Allegheny Intermediate Unit ‘s “Dads in the Mix”

The Allegheny Intermediate Unit (AIU3) joined the Parents as Teachers Promoting Responsible Fatherhood Project in the 2007-2008 grant year (Year 2) to provide fatherhood group meetings to enrolled families receiving Parents as Teachers home visits. Since then, the PAT-AIU3 partnership, “Dads in the Mix,” has served close to 100 low-income fathers through fatherhood group meetings and home visits.

AIU3 is one of the 29 Pennsylvania educational service agencies that assist public school districts and nonpublic schools, and the largest in the Commonwealth. It serves over 130,000 students, 9,000 professional staff, and 42 school districts, with the goal of improving the state system of education, cultivating school/community relations, and enriching the lives of the individuals and families in Allegheny County and the Western Pennsylvania region. Programs and services for early childhood and families are offered through the Division of Early Childhood and Family Community Services (ECFCS). ECFCS oversees the Family Support Centers, Fatherhood Initiative, Lincoln Park and McKeesport After-School Programs, First Steps Parenting Program, Project ELECT (Education Leading to Employment and Career Training), and Early Head Start. The home-based component of the ECFCS programs is delivered by Parents as Teachers trained family development specialists using the Parents as Teachers curriculum. With experience in fatherhood programs as well as Parents as Teachers, AIU3 thus has knowledgeable staff as well as the organizational capacity to effectively implement the Parents as Teachers Promoting Responsible Fatherhood project.
The present paper reports on AIU3’s strategies for meeting their program implementation goals, as well as their outcomes. The outcomes are mainly from the first three years of partnership (2007-2010).

The implementation goals were: 1) to expand services to as many fathers in the AIU3 service areas as possible; 2) to recruit at least 8-10 fathers per session and engage and retain 80% of the enrolled fathers so that they receive at least 8 hours of skill-based parenting education during their 12-week group meeting cycle, and 3) to complete a monthly home visit (3 times during the group meeting cycle) with 80% of the enrolled fathers. The program outcome goal was to have fathers become more involved in the lives of their children.

---

4 To count a father as being served by a program, he needs to receive at least 8 hours of skill-based parenting education according to the definition in the Promoting Responsible Fatherhood Grant.
Program Implementation

Expansion of service location

A total of ten group meeting cycles of “Dads in the Mix” have been offered to multiple communities. Figure 1 shows the locations where “Dads in the Mix” group meetings have been offered in the past, as well as are currently being offered.

Figure 1: Dads in the Mix locations

The ten cycles of the “Dads in the Mix” have been offered at: 1) Sto Rox Family Center (2 cycles) serving families in the Sto Rox, Propel, Car.yton, and Chartiers Valley; 2) Highland Family Center (2 cycles) serving families in Highlands and Valley school district; 3) Coraopolis (2 cycles) serving families in Quaker Valley and Cornell; 4) Lincoln Park Family Center (1 cycle) serving families in Penn Hills, Woodland Hills, Gateway, City of Pittsburgh; 5) Wilkinsburg Family
Center (1 cycle) serving families in Wilkinsburg; 6) Clairton Family Center (1 cycle) serving families in Clairton school district and South Park; 7) East Allegheny Family Center (1 cycle) serving families in East Allegheny and West Mifflin; 8) Carnegie Early Head Start Program (in progress) serving families in Chartiers, Valley, Bethel Park, Carlyton, and Key Stone Oaks; and 9) Latino Family Center (in progress) serving families in the City of Pittsburgh, Avalon, Coraopolis and others.

AIU3 has not only expanded the fatherhood service areas through “Dads in the Mix,” but so far, has been able to sustain father involvement in those areas. Around the 4th week of the 12-week sessions, fathers who participate in “Dads in the Mix” almost always ask what happens to the fatherhood group after the session ends. AIU3 has been able to provide space and food at the Family Support Center so that fathers can organize their own group meetings. In those meetings, alumni as well as fathers from the communities are welcomed. The focus of these follow-up father-organized meetings often includes hands-on activities enhancing father-child interactions. For example, a father who works at Home Depot was able to bring in some building materials to present to the group, and used them for building activities with their children. The meetings always have some type of educational component associated with them, with the goal of promoting fathers’ leadership skills.
Recruitment and Retention

“The challenge is [to] persuade men that the center is not just for women & children. I find that offering men their own place to come for service-- this seemed to work well in recruitment and retention for the [programs]. ~ Arthur, fatherhood facilitator at AIU3

Fatherhood Group Meetings. Recruitment and retention are consistently the biggest challenges mentioned across Parents as Teachers Promoting Responsible Fatherhood sites. AIU3’s “Dads in the Mix,” is not an exception. Nevertheless, the program successfully recruited at least 10 fathers at every group meeting cycle, and retained the majority of the enrolled fathers to complete at least 8 hours of skill-based parenting education. Because of their initial performance in the project, Parents as Teachers annually increased funding allocated to AIU3’s “Dads in the Mix,” allowing the program to serve more fathers with added fatherhood group meeting cycles each year. The program not only successfully recruited fathers at each group meeting cycle, but except for the initial year, also met the program goal of serving more than 80% of the fathers (see Table 1).

Parents as Teachers home visits. AIU3 “Dads in the Mix” has also been successful in providing monthly home visits to fathers in tandem with the fatherhood group meetings. Offering home visits when fathers are present, or when fathers are willing and motivated to attend is a consistent challenge for any home visiting program. In the 2008-2009 program year, only 30% of the families served by Parents as Teachers, nationally, had fathers participate in at least one home visit (Parents as Teachers national office, 2010). During the 2009-2010 (Year 4) grant year, “Dads in the Mix” provided an average of 3.7 home visits (average of 3.6 hours) to 53 (96%) of the enrolled 55 fathers. Extra personal visits were provided to fathers who did not complete at least 8 hours of skill-based parent education through fatherhood group meetings.
Table 1: “Dad’s in the Mix” Father Recruitment and Retention.

What strategies did AIU3 use to successfully recruit and retain father participants?

First, “Dads in the Mix” hired experienced and dedicated staff who are knowledgeable about the community, have experience serving fathers, and are certified in the Parents as Teachers model. Arthur, who has been the “Dads in the Mix” group facilitator since the first year of the PAT-AIU3 partnership, used to work for the fatherhood program at Lincoln Park center. Even after the program lost funding, the fatherhood program continued to meet unofficially on a shoe-string budget. Arthur continued to volunteer for the fathers while working as the van driver for the family center. When Parents as Teachers and AIU3’s partnership came about, Arthur, at the age of 61, went through Parents as Teachers training to
become a certified parent educator/home visitor. With his dual background as an experienced fatherhood group facilitator and certified Parents as Teachers parent educator/home visitor, and with his thorough knowledge of the communities, he became a perfect fit for the role as “Dads in the Mix” fatherhood group facilitator.

Mike, who joined the Parents as Teachers Promoting Responsible Fatherhood project in the 2009-2010 grant year, is a Senior Family Development Specialist with AIU3 and an 11-year veteran in working with fathers and families. As a Senior Family Development Specialist, he is also a certified Parents as Teachers parent educator/home visitor. Mike was hired when Parents as Teachers allocated additional portion of the funding to AIU3 so that AIU3 can further expand its geographical outreach to Coraopolis. Mike is well-grounded in the community not only as a Senior Family Development Specialist, but also as a coach for local sports teams.

Lastly, Roberto, the newest member of the project, now leads the Latino fatherhood group meetings at the Latino Family Center for AIU3. The Latino fatherhood group was just established, and no complete data of program or family outcomes is available as yet; hence as noted earlier, results from the Latino fatherhood group will not be reported in this paper. Roberto was actively involved in establishing the Latino Family Center, and is strongly engaged with the goal of the project, as well as deeply connected with the local Latino communities.

**Second, “Dads in the Mix” effectively coordinated Parents as Teachers home visits and fatherhood group meetings to recruit, engage, and retain fathers.** As one of the strategies and action steps to enhance recruitment, Family Development Specialists were given flyers to give out during home visits that explained the program (AIU3, 2009). Besides flyers, Arthur and Mike also used home visits to actively recruit fathers into “Dads in the Mix.” For example,
Arthur talked to home-based Family Development Specialists about families they currently serve and accompanied them on scheduled Parents as Teachers home visits when fathers would be at home. Arthur then built relationships with the fathers, and recruited them into “Dads in the Mix.”

As one of the strategies and action steps to enhance father participation and retention, Family Development Specialists worked to reinforce topics covered at weekly fatherhood group meetings (AIU3, 2009). For example, Mike would often schedule home visits directly with fathers. Below, Mike talks about how his small group activities and home visits engaged as well as enriched the fathers:

“The group of fathers was dads that thought they already knew all about fatherhood. The fathers said as the meetings went on, that they learned new ideas and concepts of working with kids and family. The small group activities and home visits was the key to dads learning how to work with the kids.” ~Mike, Senior Family Development Specialist and fatherhood facilitator at AIU3

Third, “Dads in the Mix” used incentives to engage and retain fathers. One of the incentives was their desire to help children succeed. First, fatherhood group meetings were scheduled on evenings, and snacks and dinner were served at each session. Second, monetary incentives were used. Fathers were compensated ($25 gift cards) after completion of 3, 6, 9 and 12 sessions, and after completion of all evaluation forms. The program also offered an initial family-oriented kick off meeting and other AIU3 sponsored activities such as dinner and trips, as well as a drawing for an end of the cycle incentive related to one of the professional sports teams (e.g, a Pittsburgh Penguins hockey jersey or Pittsburgh Steelers photo). To be eligible for the final prize, fathers had to complete at least 8 hours of skill-based parent education, 3 home visits, and complete the final evaluation. Third, upon completion of the
program, fathers were provided with a completion certificate. Lastly, providing fathers with information to best support their goals with their children became the hook to engage fathers. As Mike puts it:

“Men don’t like meetings, so you have to get them excited, ask them what they want most for their kid’s life and most will tell you for their kids to do well in school. I tell the fathers they would help put their kids on the path to do well in school, by attending this class. Learning with other fathers how to better help their kids. I also tell the dads about the home visits, field trips and gift card incentives.” ~ Mike, Senior Family Development Specialist and fatherhood facilitator at AIU3

Fourth, fatherhood group meetings, like home visits, were scheduled at a time that best meets the participants’ schedules. On one occasion, Art recruited a number of fathers associated with the Head Start Program. They were the main caregiver and dropped the children off at the classroom. Arthur held the session right after the fathers dropped off their children and was able to get the fathers to go into the classrooms to do parent-child activities. It was a great benefit for their children and all the children in the classroom to have fathers associated with the classroom.

As Arthur notes,

“Another challenge is availability of the fathers related to work schedules. The program is conducted at different times to meet the needs of the participants.” ~ Arthur, fatherhood facilitator at AIU3

Fifth, the AIU3 was able to partner and collaborate with community efforts. In addition, with the existing capacity and infrastructure of AIU3, fathers were provided with resources beyond what “Dads in the Mix” provided on its own. The AIU3 promotes responsible fatherhood across Allegheny County through the Father’s Collaborative Council, a networking group of fatherhood programs that meet monthly. Council participants include: Hill
District Center for Nurturing Families; Pittsburgh Public Schools Early Childhood Education Programs; Coalition for Fathers and Families; Allegheny County Head Start Fatherhood Initiative, and the Allegheny Family Network. The Council provides a yearly Calendar of Events offered through the participating agencies with the purpose of sharing information and access to programming.

Because of the partnership with other community agencies, “Dads in the Mix” fathers were given access to other opportunities such as, Tickets for Kids® Charities (TFK) which creates opportunities for underprivileged children to experience arts, cultural, educational, sporting, and family entertainment events and activities, or TWOgether Pittsburgh, where couples can go for a weekend retreat. In addition, once a father or family gets involved in the “Dads in the Mix” program, they were provided with access to everything at the AIU, specifically all services offered through the Early Childhood and Family Community Services Division. These services included, theGED program, English as a second language (ESL), Adult Education, Head Start and Early Head Start.

**Sixth, “Dads in the Mix” used variety of other creative communication methods to advertise its program.** Methods used by AIU3 include: 1) putting the Information about the fatherhood program into the monthly Family Support Center newsletter; 2) identifying fathers from the Family Support Center database and sending a personalized letter of invitation; 3) staff presenting at related meetings (parent council, Head Start, local businesses and fraternal organizations), as well as during the Family Center Family Fun Nights; 4) sponsoring an “Each One Bring One” campaign where existing fathers bring a new friend to sign up for “Dads in the Mix;” 5) using a fatherhood recruiter, a “gate keeper” in the community that would help
identify eligible fathers in the area where fatherhood group meeting cycles were hosted; 6) kid’s flyer—having children draw a picture on an invitation/flyer inviting their father to attend the fatherhood meetings; 7) organizing “Coffee and donut with Art (fatherhood facilitator)” outside of the Head Start/Early Head Start classrooms; 8) organizing kick off in the park—a special event for the entire family; and 9) working with other AIU3 programs to sponsor a breakfast with Dad to discuss the program.
Program Outcome

Methods

**Participants.** A total of 89 fathers completed the enrollment forms. Of the 89, 79 fathers (89%) completed at least 8 hours of skill-based education, hence were considered served by the program, based on the Promoting Responsible Fatherhood Grant definition.

Table 2 summarizes the demographic backgrounds of all fathers enrolled in “Dads in the Mix” in the first three years.

**Table 2: “Dads in the Mix” ENROLLED Father Demographic Information**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Children’s Data</strong></th>
<th><strong>Average</strong></th>
<th><strong>Range</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age of the Youngest Child:</td>
<td>2.66</td>
<td>Prenatal to 6.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age of the Oldest Child</td>
<td>5.96</td>
<td>Prenatal to 18.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Children per father</td>
<td>1.93</td>
<td>1 to 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Marital Status</strong></th>
<th><strong>Frequency</strong></th>
<th><strong>%</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partnered</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Ethnicity/Race</strong></th>
<th><strong>Frequency</strong></th>
<th><strong>%</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black/African American</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American/Alaska Native</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian/or Other Pacific Islander</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Education</strong></th>
<th><strong>Frequency</strong></th>
<th><strong>%</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elementary or MS</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some high school</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school or GED</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some Post-secondary education</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College or beyond</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A series of One-way Analysis of Variance was performed on key demographic data (father’s age, marital status, education, ethnicity/race, children’s ages) to examine if differences existed between fathers who enrolled but were not served and those who were served with 8 hours of skill-based parenting education. No significant difference was found, although trend was found with children’s age. The youngest child of the fathers who were enrolled, but did NOT complete at least 8 hours of skill-based education tended to be younger than those of the fathers who completed at least 8 hours of skill-based education (see Table 3).

Table 3: Mean age of children of fathers served vs not served

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fathers enrolled and:</th>
<th>Mean age of the youngest child</th>
<th>Mean age of the oldest child</th>
<th>Number of children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Served</td>
<td>1.67</td>
<td>5.61</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not served</td>
<td>2.79</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.91</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p=0.54

Analysis. Analysis was performed to examine whether “Dads in the Mix” is making a difference in fathers’ personal and/or family lives. The following data were collected and analyzed: 1) Protective Factors Survey results and 2) Father responses to open-ended questions about the changes fathers made as a result of participating in the program. The Protective Factors Survey is a valid and reliable outcomes tool developed by the FRIENDS National Center in collaboration with University of Kansas. The tool measures changes in five protective factors of family and child well-being: family functioning/resiliency, concrete
support, social support, nurturing and attachment, and child development/knowledge of parenting. Fathers were asked to complete the Protective Factors Survey at the start and end of their 12-week group meeting sessions. The responses were analyzed using paired t-tests.

Fathers were also asked to complete optional open-ended questions which ask about their expectations for the group meetings (at the start) and the impact of the group meetings (at the end). These responses were coded into 8 categories: general (be a better dad); improve parenting skills/gain knowledge; improve communication/relationship with child or spouse; social support; patience; self care/self-development; assist in child’s learning; and other.

Child outcomes were not collected for this project and are left for future work.

Results

Protective Factors Survey. From mid-year of the second year of “Dads in the Mix” implementation, fathers were asked to complete the Protective Factors Survey at the beginning and the end of a 12-session group meeting series (pre-test and post-test). Of the 79 fathers who completed at least 8 hours of skill-based education, 50 fathers provided valid responses in each of the protective factor areas assessed. Positive changes were detected in three areas: Family Functioning/Resiliency ($t(49)=-3.02, p=.004$), Nurturing and Attachment ($t(49)=-3.52, p=.001$), and one of the Child Development/Knowledge of Parenting items (“I know how to help my child learn #13,” $t(49)=-2.72, p=.009$). Trends were found in three more Child Development/Knowledge of Parenting items--“My child misbehaves just to upset me #14,”($t(49)=-1.88, p=0.067$), “I praise my child when he/she behaves well #15,” ($t(49)=-1.90,$
p=.063), and “When I discipline my child, I lose control #16,” (t(49)=-1.90, p=0.063)—and Concrete Support (t(49)=-1.79, p=.08).

**Open-ended Responses.** Fathers were asked two questions: 1) What would you like to achieve from this group?; and 2) What changes have you made in your personal life or family life as a result of this group? The former question was added at mid-year of the second year of “Dads in the Mix” implementation. Hence a total of 60 fathers responded to one or both questions. 36 fathers responded to the first question at the beginning of the 12-week group meeting cycle, and 41 fathers responded to the latter question. Fathers’ open-ended responses were analyzed and coded into 8 categories: general (be a better dad); improve parenting skills/gain knowledge; improve communication/relationship with child or spouse; social support (make friends, interact with other fathers, share thoughts); patience; self care/self-development; assist in child’s learning; and other. Number of fathers who referenced each topic was then divided by the total number of fathers who responded to each open-ended question to obtain proportions. The results are reported in Table 4.

**Table 4: Father’s Open-ended responses**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Be a better dad</th>
<th>Improve parenting skills/Gain knowledge</th>
<th>Improve communication/relationship with child or spouse</th>
<th>Make friends/interact with other fathers/share thoughts</th>
<th>Patience with children/others</th>
<th>Self-care/Self development/Deal with stress</th>
<th>Learning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Start</td>
<td>30.56%</td>
<td>33.33%</td>
<td>16.67%</td>
<td>22.22%</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>11.11%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Start</td>
<td>What would you like to achieve from attending this group?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End</td>
<td>7.32%</td>
<td>46.34%</td>
<td>75.61%</td>
<td>4.88%</td>
<td>14.63%</td>
<td>12.20%</td>
<td>21.95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End</td>
<td>What changes have you made in your personal life or family life as a result of attending fatherhood group meetings?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It is worth noting changes in five of the fathers’ responses (as highlighted in Table 4): 1) a decrease in the proportion of fathers who mention the broad goals of becoming “better fathers; 2) a decrease in the proportion of fathers who mention making friends, interacting with other fathers, and sharing thoughts; 3) an increase in the proportion of fathers who report improvement in communication and/or relationship with their child or spouse; 4) an increase in the proportion of fathers who report on improved patience; and 5) an increase in the proportion of fathers who mention helping their children learn. The results suggest that at the beginning of the fatherhood group meeting sessions, fathers did not know the specifics of what to expect. They therefore referenced being a better father and meeting other fathers. By the end of the group meeting sessions, however, more fathers were able to concretely identify what characteristics make a good father, and were able to verbalize the positive changes that the group had on them.

Further analysis was performed just on fathers who responded at both time points—the beginning and the end of the group meeting sessions. Twenty-two fathers responded at both the beginning and the end of the 12-week group meeting sessions. Probabilities of the father referencing or not referencing each of the 5 topics discussed above (better father, improve communication/relationship, make friends, patience, and learning) were examined. Series of binomial tests indicated that significantly more fathers referenced “Improve communication/relationship with child or spouse” at the end of the group meetings (59%) than would be expected from fathers’ responses at the beginning of the group meetings at p<.0001. Similarly, significantly fewer fathers referenced “Make friends/interact with other fathers” at the end of the group meetings (5%) than would be expected from the responses at the beginning of the
group meeting at p<.01. Binomial tests were not conducted on two topics—patience and learning—because none of the fathers referenced those topics at the beginning of the group meetings, and because of the small sample size. The broader comment about wanting or learning to become a better dad was not significant when examined with this reduced sample of fathers. Ensuring that more fathers respond to these open-ended responses so more reliable analysis can be performed is a goal of future work. Additional written feedback from fathers about “Dads in the Mix” program impact collected by group facilitators can be found in Appendix 1.
Summary and Discussion

“The group of fathers was dads that thought they already knew all about fatherhood. The fathers said as the meetings went on, that they learned new ideas and concepts of working with kids and family. The small group activities and home visits was the key to dads learning how to work with the kids.” ~Mike, Senior Family Development Specialist and fatherhood facilitator at AIU3

(When asked what impact the group meeting had on the father) Spending time with my son, and teaching him more and showing his mother what I learned so we can teach my son to be respectful and be good whenever me and his mother aren’t around. This program is good it should go on every year and it should have its own building. I rate it 100%. ~“Dads in the Mix” father participant

The analysis of AIU3’s “Dads in the Mix” program indicates that the program met its implementation goals of expanding the service areas, recruiting 8-10 fathers per group meeting cycle and engaging 80% of them, and providing monthly home visits to 80% of the fathers enrolled in the fatherhood groups. With a high level of fidelity to the implementation design, the program showed preliminary evidence for reaching the goal of promoting fathers who are more involved in their children’s lives. Fathers’ outcomes are summarized along with quotes from father facilitators and father participants.

Fathers improve communication and relationships with their children and spouse.

Fathers reported being more involved in their children’s lives, and improving communications and relationships with children and/or spouse. These results may relate to significant increases in the areas of family functioning/resiliency and nurturing and attachment as measured using the protective factors survey.

“The moms said that the dads are more active in their roles of helping out around the house and helping the kids writing their names or helping with homework that allow moms to take a break sometimes.” ~Mike, Senior Family Development Specialist and fatherhood facilitator at AIU3.
They understand the importance of being in their child’s life is more than being a protector and provider. They now embrace the role of being a role model. ~Art, fatherhood facilitator at AIU3

I learn to adjust my schueld [sic] and to help out more with the kids. ~“Dads in the Mix” father participant

To volunteer [sic] more in my children’s class rooms. ~“Dads in the Mix” father participant

One mother also reported:

My husband has been able to open up and talk to me about everyday things.”

In addition to being involved, more fathers reported being patient with their children and others as the result of the group meetings. Fathers’ increase in patience was often connected to how they discipline their children. The result may relate to fathers’ significant increases in the areas of nurturing and attachment, as measured using the Protective Factors Survey.

“Most noticeable change that I have seen is their discipline technique. They tend not holler as much. This is due to the knowledge received at the program, but their response to the child’s behavior effects child’s development.” ~Art, fatherhood facilitator at AIU3

I have been more understanding of my children’s behavior. I don’t get so upset and mad when they don’t listen & my wife and I talk more about the children. ~“Dads in the Mix” father participant

I have been thinking before I react to things and explain things to my kids so they understand. ~“Dads in the Mix” father participant

Fathers help their children learn

Fathers’ increase in communication as well as patience was also often reported in connection to how they facilitate their children’s learning. The result may relate to fathers’
significant increases in the areas of nurturing and attachment and child development/knowledge of parenting, as measured using the Protective Factors Survey. The child development/knowledge of parenting item showed significant improvement in the area of promoting children’s learning, and trends in parenting practices related to praise and discipline.

Seeing the fathers in the community with their kid’s teaching them how to ride bikes. The fathers are being more patient with their kids. The fathers are more hands on now. “Mike, Senior Family Development Specialist and fatherhood facilitator at AIU3

They just don’t play. They play with intent of teaching. “Art, fatherhood facilitator of AIU “Dads in the Mix”

Teaching through play. Setting a routine with my child makes it a lot easier. “Dads in the Mix” father participant

I’ve become better at learning how to play with my child and teach her how to play and learn at the same time. Being in this meeting gave me alot of knolege [sic]. ~ Dads in the Mix father participant.

I learned to spend more quality time with my kid’s, and learn their likes and dislikes. The home visits taught me how to do learning activities with the kids. ~ “Dads in the Mix” father participant
Future work

The Parents as Teachers Promoting Responsible Fatherhood project was designed to demonstrate the feasibility and effectiveness of an adaptation of the Parents as Teachers model with low-income fathers as the target population. One successful partnership through this project was with Allegheny Intermediate Unit (AIU3) in Pittsburgh, PA. This report shows promising results that fathers who have participated in AIU3’s “Dads in the Mix” reported positive changes in their lives and in their involvement with their children. In the spirit of continuous improvement, we suggest the following future work in evaluation.

First, despite the attempt to collect father reports through open-ended questions at the beginning and the end of the group meeting cycles, very few of those were actually collected. There were even fewer fathers who responded at both time points. Program staff collected additional written feedback from fathers in a different format; however, for evaluation purposes, either the program staff need to ensure that more fathers respond to the open-ended questions or the evaluation design needs to be revised. Second, currently, the evaluation design does not include child or spouse outcomes. Hence, although we hope that changes in fathers’ knowledge, behavior, and attitudes have impacted families, we do not yet have a systematic way to confirm this. Third, many father participants remain involved even after “graduation” through open fatherhood groups sponsored at AIU Family Support Centers. The evaluation currently is not able to track the long-term outcomes of all father participants, however. Understanding their involvement in home visits, fatherhood groups, and family lives post-“Dads in the Mix” is left for future work.
Other than evaluation, we believe that our future work is to share the strategies leading to success of “Dads in the Mix” with other fatherhood programs, and to learn from others as well. When asked what advice they would give to programs just starting up, AIU3 “Dads in the Mix” facilitators responded as follows:

*All fathers want to be a positive part in their child’s life. And I find that if fathers know better they do better. So it’s important to deliver the knowledge of child development to fathers.* ~Art, fatherhood facilitator at AIU3

*That you can always learn more about child development, even if you think you know it all.* ~Mike, Senior Family Development Specialist and fatherhood facilitator at AIU

As Parents as Teachers continues to improve the evaluation design and evaluate its Responsible Fatherhood project, we will learn more about the successful strategies that “Dads in the Mix” utilized and developed as well as other successful strategies used by exemplary implementing sites, and disseminate the information for use by other Parents as Teachers model sites to better involve low-income fathers in skill-based parenting education. Although strategies that worked in this project may not apply to everyone, Parents as Teachers and AIU3 believe that we share similar goals of serving fathers, and promoting their involvement in their children’s lives.
References


visitation with a series of group meetings for parents and infants: Results of a “real-
world” randomized, controlled trial. *Child Abuse and Neglect, 25,* 1571-1581

Conceptual Framework.* Downloaded 6/30/2009 from

http://www.friendsnrc.org/protective-factors-survey

Census Bureau.

NFI. *The Father Factor: Facts of Fatherhood.* Downloaded 6/30/2009 from
http://www.fatherhood.org/father_factor.asp.


Appendix

Information from fathers about what they got out of the program:

There were several that touched me from the beginning day. I really enjoyed our meetings and found myself looking forward to each session coming Tuesday. The cookout was great. My children really enjoyed themselves, as well as I did. We've been involved with several parenting groups, and to me, that has been one of the best.

I enjoyed spending time with my daughter. With the Father Child activities and sharing life experiences for these 12 weeks.

I liked the healthy way of living and eating and made me aware of healthy eating and fitness goes a long way to stay well. I follow these new ways of living and eating sometimes.

I think I got a lot out of this program. If I had to pick the most it would involve the first aid session of program. I learned a lot about parenting in a child cold and when it is time to push my son is most important thing in my life, and anything to keep him safe helps me.
I really enjoyed attending the Dad in Mix Training. We learned hands-on activities that showed us how to get down on a kids' level and work with our kids with small motor skill, fine motor, and lots of hand-eye coordination skills.

One remarkable moment starts at The Boyz. Just to see there's so many people that really make a effort out of their own life's to help others that are less fortunate in parenting skills. So, thank you for the support. And everything you guys have done for the program.
Author Information

Karen A. Guskin, Ph.D  
Director of Research & Evaluation  
Parents as Teachers national office  
2228 Ball Drive  
Saint Louis, MO 63146  
Karen.Guskin@parentsasteachers.org

Larry L. Klinger, Jr. M.Ed  
Program Manager, Family and Community Education Services  
Allegheny Intermediate Unit  
475 East Waterfront Drive  
Homestead, PA 15120  
Larry.klinger@AIU3.net

Kate McGilly, Ph.D  
Senior Manager of Special Projects  
Parents as Teachers national office  
2228 Ball Drive  
Saint Louis, MO 63146  
Kate.McGilly@parentsasteachers.org

Tomoko Wakabayashi, Ed.D  
Research Manager, Research & Evaluation  
Parents as Teachers national office  
2228 Ball Drive  
Saint Louis, MO 63146  
Tomoko.Wakabayashi@parentsasteachers.org

Jan Watson, M.A.T.  
Technical Assistance Manager &  
Promoting Responsible Fatherhood Project Manager  
2228 Ball Drive  
Saint Louis, MO 63146  
Jan.Watson@parentsasteachers.org