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# Fathers as readers : A program for African American fathers and their children

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# Fathers as readers : A program for African American fathers and their children

## **Abstract**

The achievement of African American literacy learners has become a significant topic in education. How to best meet the needs of these learners through the study of the African American family will be the focus of this project. This project will consider, specifically, the father's momentous role in the literacy learning of the African American child. Trends in research will be identified in this paper, an overview of significant literature published on the subject of African American family literacy will be discussed, and findings that support the father's significant impact on learning in the African American family will be presented. This literature review will provide the basis for the development of Fathers as Readers (FAR). FAR, modeled after Fathers Read Every Day (FRED), begins by sharing key information with fathers, about the importance of their role in their child's literacy development. African American fathers will learn, how, their involvement is vital to their child's successful learning experience. FAR will implement key elements from the community that impact literacy learning.

**FATHERS AS READERS: A program for African American Fathers and their Children**

**A Graduate Project**

**Submitted to the**

**Division of Literacy Education**

**Department of Curriculum and Instruction**

**In Partial Fulfillment**

**Of the Requirements for the Degree**

**Master of Arts in Education**

**UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA**

**by**

**Amber Nicole Boyd**

**September 2007**



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### Abstract

The achievement of African American literacy learners has become a significant topic in education. How to best meet the needs of these learners through the study of the African American family will be the focus of this project. This project will consider, specifically, the father's momentous role in the literacy learning of the African American child. Trends in research will be identified in this paper, an overview of significant literature published on the subject of African American family literacy will be discussed, and findings that support the father's significant impact on learning in the African American family will be presented. This literature review will provide the basis for the development of Fathers as Readers (FAR). FAR, modeled after Fathers Read Every Day (FRED), begins by sharing key information with fathers about the importance of their role in their child's literacy development. African American fathers will learn how their involvement is vital to their child's successful learning experience. FAR will implement key elements from the community that impact literacy learning.

## Introduction

Literacy extends beyond the simple acquisition of reading and writing. It includes the ability to use these skills in a socially appropriate context. It is from this thought that ethnographic research has shed light on a variety of culturally specific literacy practices among different communities, and the idea of the family is considered in this context (Casper, 2003).

The study of family, in relation to literacy, supports the idea that families constitute a fundamental and vital social system that promotes, disrupts, or mediates the learning and literacy experiences of its participants. In this social system there are exchanges of knowledge, resources, and services (Gadsden, 2004).

Family literacy encompasses a variety of disciplines. These include psychology, emergent literacy, early childhood development, anthropology, sociology, and many more. Although the confines of family literacy are far reaching, a wide range of studies in the above mentioned fields agree on one essential fact: children's success in school can be affected by adult-child interaction around literacy at home (Debruin-Parecki & Krol-Sinclair, 2003).

The term "family literacy" can be used in describing a number of ideas). It has been used to describe the study of literacy in the family; various sets of interventions related to the literacy development of young children that have been applied and studied, or a set of "intergenerational" programs aimed at developing the skills of more than one family member (Casper, 2003).

Through the research for this paper, I have sought to identify trends in research, provide an overview of significant literature published on the subject of African American family literacy, and discuss effective programming. Finally, based on the literature that I reviewed, I

have developed a project, *Fathers as Readers*, a family literacy program highlighting the role of fathers in the development of literacy in young learners.

### *Rationale*

I chose this particular topic for a number of reasons. The most pertinent, however, is how relevant it is to me, professionally. I currently teach in a building in which the African American population is approximately 90 percent (Waterloo School and Community Relations, 2005). I believe that being aware of best methods in which to teach these learners, in both the home and school environment, will allow me to become more competent and proficient as an educator.

### *Purpose*

The purpose of this project is to examine effective practices in which to bridge the connection between home and school in the African American community by considering the importance of family and, specifically, the father. In the African American home, families are a vital social and support system that encourage the learning and literacy experiences of its children. The research in this project will provide the support for the development of a program that considers the African American family by inviting the African American father to become a partner in the literacy education of his child.

### *Importance*

The study of African American family literacy seeks to answer a very pertinent question: how do we best educate African American learners? Nationally, too few African Americans read at proficient levels. For example, according to the Education Trust (2003), only 12 percent of

African American 4<sup>th</sup> graders reach proficient or above proficient reading levels, while 61 percent have not learned to read at grade level. Underachievement of African Americans in education is a paramount problem. The development of a program that invites fathers to become involved is an attempt to change this social dynamic.

### *Terminology*

In this project there are three key terms that need to be defined: *socioeconomic status*, *socio cultural theory*, and *father*. Socioeconomic status (SES) typically analyzes economic impacts of social activity within a society. A family's socioeconomic status is based on family income, parental education level, parental occupation, and social status in the community (North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, 2007). In this context, it will be used as an indicator in relation to literacy for the African American learner.

Socio cultural theory examines the nature of interdependence between an individual and social processes in the construction of knowledge. Socio cultural is based on the concept that human activities, such as literacy learning, take place in cultural contexts and are mediated by language and other symbol systems (Valenzuela, 2002).

In this project, father will be used to describe the male figure in the home. In many families, grandfathers or uncles may play a similar role to the traditional father ("The Journal of Blacks", 1994).

### *Research Questions Driving the Project*

This project was guided by the following primary question: What research-based strategies are best to enhance literacy learning in the home of African American readers? This primary

question is further defined by the following secondary questions: a) How can we best utilize fathers as resources for literacy learning? b) How do effective family literacy practices affect reading success for African Americans in the classroom? c) How can discussions on fathering be integrated into the conceptual frameworks of African American family literacy?

### *Methodology*

The purpose of this chapter is to explain my methodology for locating and selecting sources for my project. A two-step approach to identify articles for research was used. Computerized bibliographic searches from abstracts and citations were searched and articles were selected. The following index sources were searched to locate articles in both educational literature and social science journals: PsycInfo (which allowed me to limit my search to only peer-reviewed journal articles), ERIC, Academic Search Premier (EBSCO Host). The search terms that I chose to use included *African American family literacy*, *African American family and literacy*, *Black family and literacy*, *African American father*, and *literacy*.

In the search, all data articles, both qualitative and quantitative research was included. The student participants in the articles had to be under the age of 10. Demographic data collected and considered included age and ethnicity. Articles were then sorted into various themes that emerged from the texts, including socioeconomic, sociocultural, and family culture.

In developing the program entitled Fathers as Readers, feedback from African American fathers on the feasibility of the program structure was used as a guide. Feedback was collected from planned, informal meetings. The randomly selected fathers tended to be lower to middle aged, with children at the lower elementary age level. The informal meetings were usually three to five minute conversations that stemmed from their expressed interest in helping their children with reading outside of school. Although they were not official interviews, the constructive input from the fathers provided a wealth of information on implementing this program in the African American community.

## Literature Review

The following review of literature is organized into three sections. The first section will discuss the literature and current research trends in the study of African American family literacy. The second section, and purpose for the literature review, is to examine existing effective literacy programs. The third and final section highlights the development of a program that considers the vital role of the African American father.

Views of literacy, in the African American community, have evolved out of a multigenerational legacy of hope that values cultural uplift through education (Anderson, 1995). Throughout history, African Americans have sought literacy and made tremendous sacrifices for the literacy education of their children. Because of slavery, segregation, and other social injustices, literacy has always been seen as empowering and liberating in the Black community. Inconsistently, however, African Americans are among those most disadvantaged by low literacy achievement in the United States today (Harris, Kamhi, & Pollock, 2001).

In examining the literature on African American family literacy, four major themes emerge: the socioeconomic standpoint, the socio cultural standpoint, the family culture standpoint, and the social responsibility standpoint. Each of these themes is presented with key literature that provides significant findings related to the study of African Americans and family literacy, a discussion of the research, and recommendations for future study.

### *Socio Economic*

Socioeconomics typically analyzes economic impacts of social activity. The goal of socioeconomic study, in this context, is to examine socioeconomic status as an indicator in literacy for the African American learner. The following studies highlight specific socioeconomic issues that arose in the data.

Baker's (1994) research on socio economic issues examined the variety and scope of literacy experiences in the homes of 41 pre-kindergarten families from diverse socio cultural backgrounds. The psychological variables that influence reading development were observed in detail. Participants were children enrolled in a public pre-kindergarten program during the 1992-93 school year from African American and European American families. There were a number of key components in this study: (a) a focus on socialization resources and activities, based on observations, diaries, and interviews in the home and school; (b) structured interviews about beliefs, values, and practices of parents; (c) an account of processes where children acquire cultural resources of literacy based on observations of siblings, parents, etc., and (d) an assessment of individual children's emergent literacy competencies. These skills assessed were orientation toward print, phonological awareness, and narrative competence. In general, children scored significantly higher on tasks that were more sensitive to home experiences. Qualitative analyses of the diaries kept by parents determined that literacy was seen as a source of entertainment, a skill to be cultivated, and an integral part of everyday life. Middle-income families tended to show greater support for literacy as entertainment while lower income families tended to view literacy as a skill to be cultivated.

Scher and Baker (1997) observed the relationship between home literacy environments and children's motivations for reading. The participants were 65 first graders and parents from various socio cultural backgrounds. Each child completed a Motivation for Reading interview which assessed four components of reading motivation: interest in reading, self-concept as a reader, sense of value of reading, and enjoyment of library related activities. The results of the study suggested that children of this age group generally have positive feelings about reading regardless of cultural background. Across the groups of children in this study, there were large

disparities in socio economic income levels. However, these socio economic differences did not impact this age group of children's self-reported motivation for reading, despite the fact that lower socio economic groups had less exposure to print. This decrease in exposure to print was supported by a study conducted in 2001 that compared two distinct populations in the United States, African American and Hispanic (Feagans-Vernon, Hammer, Miccio, & Manlove, 2001). The researchers examined the book reading experiences of African American and Hispanic children and concluded that children from low-income homes and multicultural families are read to less frequently than white, middle class children.

In a study conducted by Hammer (2001), the researcher observed African American children's early literacy experiences and compared and contrasted the interaction styles of low and middle SES mothers and children. The aim was to also determine how African American mothers and infants of low and middle SES structured their book reading interactions. The participants of this study included twelve mothers and their infants that ranged from 13 to 18 months. Six of the mothers and infants were of low SES, with incomes that fell below the poverty line, and six were considered middle SES, with incomes that ranged from \$30,000 to \$40,000. The participants engaged in two to three 15-minute play sessions with cause and effect toys, symbolic play toys, and books. In addition, mothers completed a questionnaire about how often they and their children engaged in a variety of behaviors including looking at books. Results of this study revealed more similarities than differences. Both low and middle SES groups spent equal amounts of time engaged in book reading during play sessions, both groups of mothers directed the same amount of speech toward their children, and both produced a similar percentage of statements, questions, and responses to children's vocalizations. Mothers of the middle SES reported reading more frequently to their children on a daily basis and reportedly

used more modifiers. Mothers of the low SES used more directives than did the mothers of the middle SES.

### *Socio Cultural*

Socio cultural theory examines the nature of interdependence between an individual and social processes in the construction of knowledge (Valenzuela, 2002). Within this context, the notion of family emerges. Thematically, the literature examines African American family literacy through this lens.

As stated by author and researcher Vivian Gadsden (2004), family literacy and culture are naturally linked. Current research trends are a result of a focus on the cognitive abilities of African American children, specifically in the debate over intellectual inferiority to white children. Gadsden suggests that family literacy programs need to understand issues of culture and of families' interpretation of their own culture. This will result in exposure to sources of information for teaching, learning, and helping learners use literacy to challenge the barriers that inhibit access to opportunities. Suggestions for future research in this area included making issues of culture and diversity a priority, building upon existing knowledge, and confronting difficult issues that influence the cultural histories of learners.

According to the Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics (Feagans-Vernon, L., Hammer, C.S., Miccio, A., & Manlove, E. 2001), 39 percent of African Americans read daily to their preschoolers as compared to 64 percent of white families. Like white middle class mothers, African American mothers provide a general interaction structure when looking at books with their children; however, different styles were observed with African American mothers. Text tended to be read out loud and the meaning of texts was then constructed as

mother and child discussed what was read. In some instances when children had no books to read, adults exposed children to oral narratives that were fictionalized truths. Also, African American mothers tended to exhibit a modeling style by labeling the pictures in the book that served as a model for their children to imitate.

Authors McMillon and McMillon (2004) addressed the importance of looking beyond the classroom to institutions that have a direct effect on the learning of the African American child. They took a socio cultural stance by considering the African American church as a context for processing, interpreting, decoding, and overall learning for African American children in an environment that they are considered successful. The study was conducted at a specific Protestant African American church in an urban neighborhood. Through an examination of the history of the church, it was determined that many values and beliefs are based on black theological perspectives, which include fighting racial discrimination, building black resources, and faith in freedom. Children are taught to process and interpret their world according to this internalized value system. Closeness of the members within the church community was a reoccurring theme. Literacy skills taught in the church included an emphasis on oral development for prayer, repetition and memorization for songs and scriptures, and read alouds.

Oral storytelling is yet another way in which literacy learning can take place within cultural contexts outside of the traditional classroom. The main function of storytelling among any group of people regardless of their race is to entertain, record the history of the people or group the story belongs to, teach principles of life and morality, and give a sense of identity to its people (Carter-Black, 2007).

Since ancient times, storytelling in African culture has been a way of passing on the traditions and beliefs of one generation to the next (Carter-Black, 2007). During slavery, slaves

established important points of continuity with their African past in their stories. The way in which stories occupied the lives of the slaves, the meaning slaves derived from the stories, and the ways in which slaves used them culturally were points in which the clearest resemblances with their African past could be found (Leslie, 1998). Storytelling was used as a means of passing on traditions, providing patterns for problem solving, as well as maintaining social order. The stories also passed on the history, philosophy, morals, and laws of its people.

Historians have long identified the critical role of storytelling in the African and African American experience (Smile, 2004). Storytelling can transcend diverse cultural context by providing a means for increasing cultural knowledge and understanding (Carter-Black, 2007). In the African American tradition, stories can also be used as a means to socialize children and provide historical insight into the culture. Most of the stories take the form of animal tales. For example Br'er Rabbit, created by enslaved Africans, has been suggested to be the incarnation of the American slave. Br'er Rabbit, who is a skilled musician, dancer, singer, and trickster, uses his wits to outsmart the seemingly more powerful character or circumstance, representing the white slave owner (Leslie, 1998). Although not always successful, his efforts made him a cultural hero.

A recent study, conducted by Leslie (1998), observed how thirty African American mothers socialized their children using African American Br'er Rabbit storytelling. Using a qualitative, in-depth interview process, the findings suggested that the women taught that the tricks used by Br'er Rabbit were undesirable, but there was a lot to be learned from them. These lessons included traits such as thinking ahead, thinking well, using your head instead of your fist, and protecting the physically small and defenseless against the physically big and powerful (Leslie, 1998).

Stories not only help children understand how language works, it helps to make sense of the world (Bishop, 2005). Parents can utilize stories as a vehicle to convey cultural values to their children, and communicate personal experiences, dreams, hopes, and aspirations (Leslie, 1998). Through this form of literacy, children will be able to define themselves by realizing that the stories have value and are meaningful to them individually.

### *Family Culture.*

Parental emphasis and attitudes towards the value of reading have a direct impact on a child's reading competence. Culture and socio economic status appear to be indirect, while the intimate culture in the home of a child has a direct impact on the reading success of a child (Baker, Sonnenschein & Serpell, 1999).

Roberts, Jurgens & Burchinal (2005) examined the extent to which specific home literacy practices were predictors of children's language and emergent literacy skills, including shared book reading frequency, maternal book reading strategies, child's enjoyment of reading, maternal sensitivity and a global measure of the quality and responsiveness of the home environment during the preschool years. Participants were 72 African American children (between the ages of 3 and 5 years) from low-income homes and their primary guardian (usually the mother). The young participants' receptive and expressive language and vocabulary were assessed annually between age 3 and entry to kindergarten. The global measure of overall responsiveness and support of the home environment was the strongest predictor of children's language and early literacy skills (Roberts, Jurgens & Burchinal, 2005).

Gadsden has researched the role of the father in the African American home and his impact on literacy learning (Gadsden & Ray, 2003). A significant amount of attention has been

given to the study of paternal involvement, particularly in the African American home. This increased interest may be attributed to a number of possible reasons. According to Gadsden (2003), these can be attributed to the increased awareness of father absence, decline of marriage and increased divorce rates, and vulnerability of communities, particularly in minority communities. Because father involvement is increasingly becoming a very critical and vital area of research in the study of family literacy, particularly in African American families, researchers consider ways in which fathering can be integrated into conceptual frameworks of family literacy. Gadsden contends that fathers are, whether absent or present, a critical subset of adults in the African American community whose uses of literacy help to frame expectations and goals within the home. Gadsden found that the earlier a father becomes involved with the child's socialization and learning, the better. In relation to early literacy development, her research concludes that three variables affect a child's preparedness for school: the fathers' participation in literacy activities, the barriers that parents face as a result of low literacy, and fathers' perceptions of the role that they play in their child's literacy development. The study revealed that fathers who were challenged by expectations attached to parenting (i.e., involvement in school, participation in literacy activities, etc.) had low literacy abilities themselves (Gadsden & Ray, 2003). Fathers that had limited schooling had difficulty participating in school related activities; however, these same fathers had high hopes for their children. Gadsden offers suggestions to fathers that include ensuring that they participate at home and in early childhood education settings. Specific examples included story telling, reading, and selecting books with children. By doing so, fathers can foster the most favorable early childhood experiences that develop cognitive abilities.

### *Social Responsibility*

Another theme that emerges out of the literature is literacy learning as a social responsibility. The belief of African society that it takes a village to raise a child becomes the basis for Bishop's (2005) work. He states that it is the responsibility of all to bring a child to literacy - including families, teachers, librarians, and the government – particularly for the children that the system has given up on” (Bishop, 2005). These children tend to be minorities labeled as future failures that have neglected to be invited into the notion of a literacy club. The research supports that an overwhelming percentage of these students are labeled and placed into special education classes. By being improperly placed, the opportunity to reach their full potential is thwarted. Gadsden (1990) agrees that the attainment of literacy is not only a social responsibility, but also a human right. However, differences do occur in society's goals and expectations for various minority groups. American institutions are infused with underlying racism that inhibits possibilities. This transforms the view of social responsibility into the idea of an “ethical endeavor” (Denny, 1992).

### *Conclusion*

In this review of literature, various themes were examined: the socioeconomic standpoint, the socio cultural standpoint, the family culture standpoint, and the social responsibility standpoint. Each of these themes was represented by key literature that provided significant findings related to the study of African Americans and family literacy. These themes will serve as important variables to look for in creating and talking about effective family literacy programming.

In studies that took a socioeconomic theme point of view, researchers examined socioeconomic status as an indicator in literacy for the African American learner. Researchers examined the book reading experiences of African American and concluded that children from low-income homes and multicultural families are read to less frequently than white, middle class children ((Feagans-Vernon, Hammer, Miccio & Manlove, 2001). In addition, other research supports that middle-income families tended to show greater support for literacy as entertainment while lower income families tend to view literacy as a skill to be cultivated.(Baker, 1994).When Hammer (2001) observed interaction styles between low SES and middle SES African American mothers and children, mothers of the middle SES reported reading more frequently to their children on a daily basis.

In studies with a sociocultural theme, researchers considered the importance of looking beyond the classroom to institutions that have a direct effect on the learning of the African American child. These institutions included the African American church and oral storytelling. Authors McMillon and McMillon (2004) considered the African American church as a context for processing, interpreting, decoding, and overall learning for African American children in an environment that they are considered successful. Literacy skills taught in the church included an emphasis on oral development for prayer, repetition and memorization for songs and scriptures, and read aloud. Oral storytelling is considered in a sociocultural context because stories not only help children understand how language works; it helps to make sense of the world (Bishop, 2005). Through this form of literacy, children are able to define themselves by realizing that the stories have value and are meaningful to them individually (Leslie, 1998).

In studies that took a family culture point of view, the research supports the impact of the value of reading on a child's reading competence (Baker, Sonnenschein & Serpell,1999). The

focus of this project considers the African American father and his impact on literacy learning in the home. Fathers, whether absent or present, are a critical subset of adults in the African American community whose uses of literacy help to foster expectations within the home. Studies have found that fathers who had limited schooling had difficulty participating in school related activities (Gadsden & Ray, 2003). This project will focus on inviting and welcoming fathers to be a partner in the literacy education of their children.

The final theme that has been discussed in this literature review is social responsibility. Researchers bestow the responsibility of literacy learning to society. Society in this sense refers to families, teachers, librarians, the government, and all others. This shared responsibility will aid in inviting African American children to comfortably join the literacy world (Bishop, 2005). This theme also recognizes that American institutions are infused with underlying racism that inhibits some possibilities and opportunities for young African American learners, transforming this view into a moral issue.

For future research, Gadsden (2004) suggests making issues of culture and diversity a priority. More importantly, researchers must confront the difficult issues that influence the cultural histories of African American learners. Gadsden (2004) proposes that longitudinal studies have proven to be the most informative in understanding the nature of outcomes. Research, as suggested, should focus on symptoms, as opposed to problems, by identifying known barriers to learning literacy in African American homes. Two very pertinent questions should be considered when studying family literacy: Who are these families and how is literacy described in their own family context (Gadsden, 2004)? These questions should serve as a guide for those conducting studies that examine what happens to students at school as well as in the home.

Those who study African American family literacy should strive to understand the literacy strengths of the parents and students by reinforcing their knowledge and skills. Researchers should also recognize literacy history of parents, view parents as resources, and respond to the interest of all whom are involved (Caspe, 2003). The need to identify and build first upon the strengths that African Americans already possess from their cultural backgrounds is essential (Morrow & Young, 1996). For example, respect cultures where no books exist, but storytelling is a vital part of the family tradition. By recognizing and respecting the literacy history of the parents and adults, programming and practices can respond to the interest of everyone involved (Caspe, 2003).

#### The Project: Fathers as Readers

##### *Family literacy programs*

The themes that were previously mentioned serve as variables in considering effective family literacy programs. Effective family literacy programs contribute to children's success in school and can provide opportunities for educational success for both parents and children (Holloway, 2004). Family literacy programs must recognize the personal, cultural, and social needs of the participants (Denny, 1992). When program creators understand issues of culture and of families' interpretation of their own culture, programs will equip learners with the tools to challenge the obstacles that hinder opportunities (Gadsden, 2004). In considering the cultural background of the family, program creators should make all attempts to incorporate all literacy activities that occur in the home, and involve the family's adults as well as children (Holloway, 2004).

Gadsden (2004) suggests that family literacy programs need to understand issues of culture and of families' interpretation of their own culture. This will result in exposure to sources of information for teaching, learning, and helping learners use literacy to challenge the barriers that inhibit access to opportunities. Programs should strive to make issues of culture and diversity a priority, build upon existing knowledge, and confront difficult issues that influence the cultural histories of learners.

There are a number of examples of effective programs that incorporate family literacy. MOTHEREAD (<http://www.motheread.org/>) is a program that focuses on creating connections between parents and children around books. This program combines the teaching of literacy skills with child development and family empowerment issues. Parents and children learn to use the power of language to discover more about themselves, their families, and their communities. MOTHEREAD is a program that targets both children and adults. Adult participants learn to be story readers and tellers in an environment that celebrates and utilizes them as a resource. By teaching the "why" of reading rather than just emphasizing the "how," classes encourage parents to be reading role models for their children.

The goal of another program entitled Parent Readers (Edwards, 1992) is to create families of readers. Children's literature was used to teach parents how to read and discuss books with their children at home (Edwards, 1992). Another program, Parents as Partners in Reading (Edwards, 1992), focused on low-income parents and children, introducing shared book reading experiences. This program's focus was a result of research on this particular group that tends to highlight the inability of these parents and children to participate successfully in book reading (Edwards, 1992).

One program, Fathers Read Every Day (FRED) ([http://fcs.tamu.edu/families/parenting/fathering/fred/fred\\_results\\_summary.php](http://fcs.tamu.edu/families/parenting/fathering/fred/fred_results_summary.php)) encouraged fathers, grandfathers, and other positive male figures to read everyday to their children. Fathers Read Every Day (FRED), which served as a model for Fathers as Readers (the title for this project), encourages fathers, grandfathers, and other positive male figures to read every day to their children. This four-week program is designed to encourage fathers to read to their children on a daily basis. Fathers read to their children a minimum of 15 minutes a day for the first two weeks and a minimum of 30 minutes a day for the last two weeks. Fathers are given a packet that contains an introduction to the program, reading logs, tips for reading aloud to their children, and recommended book lists.

During FRED, fathers recorded the number of books and the amount of time they spent reading to their children on the reading log each day. At the end of the program, fathers totaled up the number of books and the amount of time spent reading to their children over the course of the program. This information was also recorded on the reading log. Upon completing the program, fathers and their children were invited to attend a party to celebrate their participation and completion of the program.

The outcomes of the FRED program tended to be very positive. Participants who completed the program averaged approximately 9 hours of reading time with their children and read approximately 40 books each over the four-week period. Results from a recent evaluation of a follow up survey with the participants showed major improvements including: the amount of time fathers spent reading to their children, number of books read during the week, level of involvement in their children's education, amount of quality time spent with their children, and level of satisfaction in the father-child relationship

([http://fcs.tamu.edu/families/parenting/fathering/fred/fred\\_results\\_summary.php](http://fcs.tamu.edu/families/parenting/fathering/fred/fred_results_summary.php)).

FRED appears to be excellent program that encourages fathers to participate in their child's literacy education. However, in taking a look at the demographics of the adult participants of this program, African Americans only account for 3.2%, while Caucasians accounted for 88.7%. The educational level of the participants included 44.9% with college degrees, 31.8% with some vocational training or college, 28.1% with a high school diploma or an equivalent, and 5.2% with some high school. Household incomes included 13.9% under \$25,000, 38.9% at the \$25,000 to \$50,000 range, 24.5% at the \$50,000 to \$75,000 range, and 22.7% over \$75,000 ([http://fcs.tamu.edu/families/parenting/fathering/fred/fred\\_results\\_summary.php](http://fcs.tamu.edu/families/parenting/fathering/fred/fred_results_summary.php)).

The minority populations in the low to middle level incomes were highly underrepresented in the FRED program. However, the overall program design seemed useful as a framework in developing a similar program for a target population of African American lower to middle income families. Inspired by FRED, the program that I will develop will focus on low to middle income African American parents and children. African American fathers can include any male in the home to such as an uncle, a grandfather, or a stepfather.

### *Fathers as Readers*

The decision to develop a program that targets African American fathers and their children is in response to a recent study conducted by the Center for Demography and Ecology at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. The study revealed the following startling information: in married couple families, approximately 31 percent of all white fathers of children under the age

of five years read to their children almost every day compared to only 5 percent of African American fathers (CH Publishers, 1994). In addition, black married families living together make up only 41 percent of all black families in the United States. This particular study suggests that there are very few African American homes where fathers are reading to their children.

In accordance with this information and the wealth of other research that highlights the absence of the African American father, a program designed to target African American fathers and their children is a necessity. It is no secret that parents are a child's first teacher, and the father, in particular, whether absent or present, is a critical member of the African American community. His uses of literacy help to frame expectations and goals within the home (Gadsden & Ray, 2003).

Fathers as Readers (FAR) is a program that begins by sharing key information with fathers about the importance of their role in their child's literacy development. African American fathers will learn how their involvement is essential to their child's success. FAR will implement key elements from the community that impact literacy learning, such as social and literacy-based interactions within the church experiences. The design and goals of this project were shaped from both the existing literature on effective parent programs and feedback from the African American community through planned informal meetings. Although the literature served as a guideline, the input of the Black community was held in very high regard. These cultural insiders helped to shape the following program goals of FAR: a) to increase the amount of time fathers spend reading with their children; b) to increase the level of involvement fathers have in their children's education; and c) to increase the quality of time spent with their children. This program will involve a 4-week time period that includes two communal meetings. Four weeks will provide an adequate amount of time for the fathers to learn and practice strategies. The first

communal meeting includes an opening welcome night with books and refreshments that highlights the fun and importance of storytelling and reading with children. The second communal meeting will conclude with a closing celebration and certificates for both the fathers and the children. The four weeks between the opening and closing meetings, fathers will be engaged in a one to one reading with their child. The goal of the program is to encourage a new habit for fathers of reading and sharing stories with children as often as possible.

### *Recruiting participants*

Recruiting participants for F.A.R. will begin in local African American churches. A letter that details the program and its purpose will be sent to area churches to be placed in their announcement bulletins read during Sunday morning service (Appendix A). Historically, African Americans have viewed literacy as a source of power and a source of hope. Because the Black church continues to be a source of support for members of the African American community, the church will be used as a vehicle to reach a significant number of African American families (Bishop, 2005). Additional recruitment will take place in the schools. Teachers will contact the fathers of African American students in the home by phone to determine interest. After the initial phone call, informational letters will then go out to interested families. Teachers will be a great resource in connecting the home and school environment.

### *Location*

The ideal location for the first and second communal night is a school library. School libraries have been long regarded as the cornerstone of the school community. They are learning environments that provide equal learning opportunities to all students, regardless of the socio-economic or education levels of the community. School libraries have a huge impact on student

achievement and are a powerful force in the lives of all children especially when learners have the opportunity to read stories and explore information is relevant to them (Todd, Kuhlthau, & OELMA, 2004). The library should display African Americans in a positive manner should be set up around the room during the meetings (see Appendix B for book list).

### First Communal Night (see Table 1)

The goal of the first communal night will be to welcome fathers to the program, inform them of their vital role in their child's literacy education, and encourage them to take an active role. As families arrive, they will sign in to keep track of attendance and get additional contact information (Appendix C). Nametags for both the father and the student will be distributed (Appendix D). Refreshments will be served at this time and families will have an opportunity to sit and share a meal.

After the evening meal, the principal of the building will give a welcome thanking the families for wanting to become partners in their child's education. At this time, provide them with an agenda and an approximate timeline (Appendix ). This may aid in relaxing everyone.

The storytelling session will take place next and will run approximately 15 to 20 minutes. The purpose of this session is to not only entertain the families, but to educate them on the importance of this rich tradition. The goal is that fathers will be encouraged to make storytelling a part of reading time at home. An experienced storyteller will begin by giving a brief introduction to African American folktales and stories. The storyteller should explain that folktales are a literary form that reveals the "soul" of African American culture. It expresses beliefs and values about the world in which we live. Folktales involve fictitious characters and

situations and most were oral traditions before they were written down. Africans brought a rich and diverse folklore tradition with them when they came during slavery. One type of folktale explains why animals look or behave the way they do. These kinds of tales are popular in every culture and often give amusing or outrageous reasons to explain common animal behaviors human beings cannot understand. The Owl Never Sleeps At Night is a folktale that speaks to good behavior for both animals and humans (Beaver, 2006). Following the story, the presenter will ask fathers and children questions about the story (see Appendix F).

After the storytelling sessions, the breakout sessions will begin. Fathers will be separated from the children, so that their undivided attention can be given to the presentation. Volunteers will be needed at this time to aid in transition. Children will be led in a structured reading activity that will consist of a read aloud and a follow up activity (see Appendix G).

For the fathers, an interactive presentation will be made with an overview of the program (Appendix H). This presentation will also consist of the importance of father involvement, the importance of read aloud and sharing stories with their children, and tips on what and how to engage kids in active reading. Fathers will receive a reading log that will be responsible for completing within the 4-week period after the first communal meeting (Appendix I). Fathers will read or tell stories to their children and keep track of how long they are engaged in a literacy related activity on the reading log. The reading log will include the following information: the time and date, the book that was read/or story that was shared, approximate time spent engaged in reading activity, and was child able to retell (yes/no).

During the 4-week period, fathers are to engage in a one-to-one reading activity with their child. This can include one-to-one reading or one-to-one storytelling. Fathers will be encouraged to do this everyday at a designated time for at least 15 minutes. The session will end

with asking the fathers to make a commitment to read/share stories with their kids daily. For fathers who do not live with their child, alternative options will be discussed. These options will include, reading during free time at school or the church as an alternative site.

Fathers and children will reconvene with their children to select 2 books from the titles provided (see Appendix B). Each father is encouraged to take the book home and read it with his kids as part of the reading log. Everyone is thanked for coming to FAR. Details for the final FAR event will take place exactly 4 weeks after the first communal meeting. Additional time at the end of the meeting is planned for fathers who wish to discuss their concerns.

During the period of time between the first communal meeting and the final event, the organizers of the program will keep in touch with the families via phone. The phone call will be made during the second week and will have a twofold purpose: the first is to just give a friendly reminder of the final event and the second is to check on the progress of the literacy logs and activities. This time will also be designated for questions and concerns that the fathers may have.

Table 1

Activity	Time Period	
Arrival of Families/Meal	15 -30 min.	As families arrive, have them register and get nametags. Families can sit and share a meal (food is preferable as it helps with recruiting, however, if not available, families can engage in father/child book reading time).
Welcome	5 min.	Someone (staff member, principal of building) should cheerfully welcome the families to this event.
Storytelling	15 min.	Someone should be chosen to tell the story that has experience in storytelling (see Appendix _____ for example).
Separating Time	30 - 45 min	The adults will separate from the children at this time and they will go to their individual sessions.
Community Time	15 min.	As the fathers and children get back together, children and father are allowed to select 2 books from selected titles provided. Each father is encouraged to take the book home and read it with his kids. Everyone is thanked for coming to FAR and the dads are given the details of the 2 <sup>nd</sup> and final FAR event (4 weeks after this event).
Closing	Open	If possible, allow some time for the dads/kids time to remain if they want to talk informally about the event.

## Second Communal Meetings

The purpose of the second meeting (see Table 2) is to discuss the experiences that fathers had with their children. Also, fathers will be commended for the completion of the program and encouraged to continue to make this a part of their daily lives. The format will follow that of the first communal meeting. Nametags for both the father and the student will be distributed (Appendix D). Refreshments will be made available and families will sit and share a meal.

After the evening meal, there will be a welcome will be given to welcome families to the final event. The building principal will congratulate the families for officially becoming partners in their child's education and completing the program. At this time, provide them with an agenda and an approximate timeline of the evening events (Appendix I).

The storytelling session will take place next and will run approximately 20 minutes. The same person may be used as the first communal meeting. The purpose of this session again is to not only entertain the families, but to educate them on the importance of this rich tradition. Fathers should again be encouraged to make storytelling a part of reading time at home:

After the storytelling sessions, the breakout sessions will begin. Volunteers will be needed at this time to aid in transition. Children will be given the opportunity to create their own book (materials will be provided). Allow time for sharing within the breakout session.

This part of the program is one of the most important. Fathers will engage in a discussion about their experiences reading and sharing stories with their children. This dialogue is necessary in order for fathers to reflect and evaluate the program's impact. This discussion will also provide an opportunity for them to commit to making this an integral part of their lives and the lives of their children. Fathers will be encouraged to share all aspects of their experiences and

offer suggestions to others. The facilitator may wish to compare and contrast experiences of the men. The facilitator will facilitate a discussion to answer any questions they might have and offer support and encouragement. To conclude this session, the facilitator should encourage fathers to offer their honest feedback to make changes or adjustments to the program.

After the breakout session, fathers and children will come back together for an awards ceremony. Certificates will be awarded to each family for participation and completion of the program (Appendix J). As a closing, fathers will be encouraged to keep reading and sharing stories with their children.

Table 2

Activity	Time Period	
Arrival of Families/Meal	15 -30 min.	As families arrive, have them register and get nametags Families can sit and share a meal (food is preferable as it helps with recruiting, however, if not available, families can engage in father/child book reading time).
Welcome	5 min.	Someone (staff member, principal of building) should cheerfully welcome the families to this event. Discuss evening agenda.
Storytelling	15 min.	Someone should be chosen to tell the story that has experience in storytelling (see Appendix _____ for example).
Separating Time	30 - 45 min	The adults will separate from the children at this time and they will go to their individual sessions.
Awards Ceremony /Closing	15 min.	Certificates should be awarded to each family for participation and completion of the program (Appendix 2). Encourage fathers to keep reading and sharing. Thank everyone again for participating.

## Volunteers

Volunteers will be recruited for the implementation of this program. Volunteers can be teachers, parents, or community members. Volunteers will be needed for the first and second communal meeting and as hosts for support meetings. For the first communal meeting, volunteers will be needed to register and hand out nametags to participants upon arrival. Volunteers will also be needed to be in charge of refreshments and supervise the children during the break out sessions.

## Sponsors

Local businesses, bookstores, and publishers will be sent information about the purpose and goals of the F.A.R. program. The sponsors for this event will support funding for refreshments, free book giveaway, and other items. In return for sponsoring this event, their business will be advertised in our school district's newsletters and in the advertisement for the event.

## Checklist

The following is a timeline checklist that will be used for planning (McGahey, 2005).

### 8 weeks before First Communal Meeting

- ✓ Determine interest in local schools within staff and school administration
- ✓ Set up an informational meeting for those interested in volunteering and planning to discuss date and time of the event. Brainstorm ideas for guest storyteller such as other teachers, college professors, pastors, grandparents of students, etc. and a back up just in case the first option is not available
- ✓ Select a team and assign duties. Divide tasks among the teams.
- ✓ Decide on location on each phase of the program (1<sup>st</sup> meeting, support meetings, and final meeting) and required equipment.

## 7 weeks before First Communal Meeting

- ✓ Decide on a guest storyteller and assign someone make contact. Prepare an invitational mailing school board and other prominent community members. Send informational letter to local churches (Appendix \_\_).
- ✓ Create a list of the names of contact people for sponsorship and send out correspondences promising to advertise their name in return.
- ✓ Contact teachers via email to determine interest in the classrooms. Encourage them to call families that they know would benefit from the program

## 6 weeks before First Communal Meeting

- ✓ Hold a planning meeting to finalize format and schedule of the event
- ✓ Discuss audio – visual equipment needed
- ✓ Discuss lesson plan for children’s breakout session
- ✓ Discuss and finalize menu of refreshments or meal

## 5 weeks before First Communal Meeting

- ✓ Prepare news releases, posters for advertising, and newsletter articles to advertise the event
- ✓ Finalize lesson plan for children’s breakout session
- ✓ Follow up with sponsors by phoning, e-mailing, or visiting to determine interest in sponsoring

## 4 weeks before First Communal Meeting

- ✓ Discuss invitations with volunteers and teachers involved with parents and children
- ✓ Prepare invitations and get them to teachers
- ✓ Identify people that would assist with refreshments, furniture arrangement, student helpers, decorations, etc.
- ✓ Provide volunteers and school janitors with written instructions

### 2 weeks before First Communal Meeting

- ✓ Send out news releases and follow up with a phone call
- ✓ Pick up donated items from sponsors.
- ✓ Purchase materials needed for activities and presentations
- ✓ Send out invitation to parents, requesting a RSVP

### 1 week before First Communal Meeting

- ✓ Meet with all volunteers to discuss details of the evening and finalize schedule. Assist with presentations or ordering additional resources
- ✓ Tally RSVPs and inform volunteers of expected numbers
- ✓ Confirm attendance of storyteller and discuss special accommodations
- ✓ Decide who will welcome and thank guests
- ✓ Check that all equipment is in working order

### Day of the First Communal Meeting

- ✓ Pick up required equipment and refreshments
- ✓ Make sure that custodial staff has instructions for the evening
- ✓ Encourage everyone to assist in set up after school
- ✓ Attend the First Communal Meeting

### After the First Communal Meeting

- ✓ On a day decided by committee, have volunteers make follow up calls to fathers to see how reading is going and encourage them to attend support meetings or talk to teachers if help is needed
- ✓ Discuss any concerns with the reading log

1 week before Second Communal Meeting

- ✓ Meet with all volunteers to discuss details of the evening and finalize schedule. Assist with presentations or ordering additional resources
- ✓ Confirm attendance of storyteller and discuss special accommodations
- ✓ Decide who will welcome and thank guests
- ✓ Check that all equipment is in working order

Day of the final meeting

- ✓ Pick up required equipment and refreshments
- ✓ Make sure that custodial staff has instructions for the evening
- ✓ Encourage everyone to assist in set up after school
- ✓ Attend the final meeting

1 week after the program

- ✓ Distribute thank you notes to all who assisted with the F.A.R. program
- ✓ Prepare a news article and send to media
- ✓ Compile contact and information for future reference

## Appendix A

Dear Church,

This letter is to inform you a wonderful program entitled Fathers as Readers. The focus of this program is to encourage African American fathers to get involved in their child's education. Fathers as Readers (FAR) is a program that begins by sharing information about the importance of their role in their child's learning. Fathers will learn how their involvement is important to their child's success.

The program goals of FAR are the following: a) to increase the amount of time fathers spend reading with their children; b) to increase the level of involvement in their children's education; and c) to increase the quality of time spent with their children. This program will involve a 4-week time period that includes two communal meetings. The first communal meeting includes an opening welcome night with books and refreshments that highlights the fun and importance of storytelling and reading with children. The second communal meeting will conclude with a closing celebration and certificates for both the fathers and the children. The four weeks between the opening and closing meetings, fathers will be engaged in a one to one reading with the child. The goal of the program is to encourage a new habit for fathers of reading and sharing stories with children as often as possible.

Fathers, you need to understand how important you truly are. Your community needs you and more importantly, your child needs you. Please join us on \_\_\_\_\_ to take the first step. For more information, please contact \_\_\_\_\_. Thank you in advance for your commitment.

God Bless.

## Appendix B

*F.A.R.* Recommended Book List

(Hefflin &amp; Barksdale-Ladd, 2001).



Barnwell, Ysaye M. (1998). *No mirrors in my Nana's house*. (S. Saint James, Illus.). Harcourt Brace.

There were no mirrors in Nana's house for her granddaughter to look into and judge herself against another culture's definition of beauty. This story about inner beauty teaches how to love yourself just the way you are, and not to compare yourself with other forms of beauty.

Curtis, Gavin. (1998). *The bat boy and his violin*. Ill. E.B. Lewis. Simon & Schuster.

A young boy loves to play the violin, but his father needs a bat boy for his baseball team, not a violin player. The boy decides to play his violin in the dugout, and he manages to inspire the players.

English, Karen. (1996). *Big wind coming!*. Ill. Cedric Lucas. Albert Whitman.

Sarah Ann's family prepares for a hurricane by boarding up windows and storing water for the family. During the harsh winds, Sarah Ann realizes that she left her favorite doll outside and runs off to find her. There is considerable damage, but somehow the doll is found safely after the storm.

Gilchrist, Jan Spivey. Madelia. 1997 Dial.

Madelia can't wait to go home from church to play with her six new jars of watercolors. As Madelia thinks about what she is going to paint, she waits impatiently for the sermon to end. Suddenly, Madelia becomes inspired and knows precisely what she will do.

Holman, Sandy Lynne. *Grandpa, is everything black bad?* 1999. Ill. Lela Kometiani. The Culture Co-op.

This picture book describes how a little boy named Montsho looks around his environment and notices that things associated with blackness are bad. Montsho learns to appreciate his dark skin when his grandfather teaches him about his African heritage.

Howard, Elizabeth Fitzgerald. *When will Sarah come?* 1999. Ill. Nina Crews. Greenwillow.

While his sister Sarah goes off to school, Jonathan stays at home and plays throughout his busy day. As he anxiously listens and waits for Sarah to come home, he rides his firetruck, watches mail falling through the mail slot, plays with his teddy bear, and listens to the sounds of the tree trimmers. Jonathan finally hears the sound of Sarah's yellow school bus. His sister is finally home!

Howard, Elizabeth Fitzgerald. *What's in Aunt Mary's room?* 1996. Ill. Cedric Lucas. Clarion.

Susan and Sarah help their aunt locate a key that unlocks the door in great-aunt Flossie's house. They are surprised to discover a family Bible in which Susan is given permission to write her own and Sarah's name.

Hru, Dakari. *The magic moonberry jump ropes.* 1996. Ill. E B. Lewis. Dial Books for Young Readers.

April and her sister love to jump Double Dutch. But nobody in the neighborhood wants to jump rope, until Uncle Zambezi arrives with a pair of brightly dyed jump ropes from Africa and claims that they will grant wishes.

Lester, Julius. *Sam and the tigers.* 1996. Ill. Jerry Pinkney. Dial Books for Young Readers.

This is a retelling of Helen bannerman's *The Story of Little Black Sambo* (1923, HarperCollins). In this story a little boy named Sam (in fact all of the characters are called Sam) outsmarts a gang of hungry tigers. The tigers turn into a pool of butter, and that night Sam and his family have tigerstriped pancakes for dinner.

McKissack, Patricia C. *The honest-to-goodness truth.* 2000. Ill. Giselle Potter. Atheneum.

When a young girl is caught in her first lie to her mother, she decides to tell only the truth. Soon, she begins to spread the truth all over town about how Thomas didn't have enough money for lunch and needed to borrow some from the teacher. She learns there's a right and wrong way to tell the truth.

Medearis, Angela Shelf. *Rum-a-tum-tum.* 1997. Ill. James E. Ransome. Holiday House.

In the late 1800s, a young girl wakes to the festive, celebratory sounds of street vendors busily selling their produce on Market Street in New Orleans, Louisiana. She is mesmerized by Creole women in red bandannas, baskets of richly colored fresh fruits and vegetables, and a jazz parade that lights up the town.

Miller, William. *The piano.* 2000. Ill. Susan Keeter. Lee & Low. early 1900s, is about a unique friendship between a little girl named Tia and her employer, an elderly woman named Miss Hartwell. Tia loves music; Miss Hartwell teaches her how to play the piano. In return Miss Hartwell is given a rare and precious gift.

Mollel, Tololwa M. *My rows and piles of coins.* 1999. Ill. E.B. Lewis. Clarion Books.

A little boy works very hard and saves his money to buy a new bike, only to discover that he doesn't have enough.

Nolen, Jerdine. *Big Jabe.* 2000. Ill. Kadir Nelson. Lothrop, Lee & Shepard.

In this modern tall tale, Addy, a house slave on Simon Plenty's plantation, finds a little boy floating down the river in a basket. Addy is taken by the boy's ability to call fish to jump out of

the river and into her wagon. In no time at all, the little boy grows into a giant named Jabe, who has the strength of 50 men and the ability to transport slaves away to freedom.

Orgill, Roxanne. *If I only had a horn: Young Louis Armstrong*. 1997. Ill. Leonard Jenkins. Houghton Mifflin.

This autobiographical picture book describes how young Louis Armstrong received his first instruments. Before playing the trumpet, he played the bugle and the cornet. His first musical success occurred in the Colored Waifs' Home Band.

Pinkney, Andrea D. *Duke Ellington: The piano prince and his orchestra* (1999 Caldecott Honor Award & 1999 Coretta Scott King Honor Award). 1998. Ill. Brian Pinkney. Hyperion Books for Children.

This biographical picture book illustrates the life of the legendary jazz composer Duke Ellington.

Pinkney, Andrea D. *Bill Pickett: Rodeo-ridin' cowboy*. 1996. Ill. Brian Pinkney. Gulliver.

This biography describes how Bill Pickett became the most famous black rodeo performer who ever lived and the first African American to be inducted into the National Cowboy Hall of Fame.

Schroeder, Alan. *Minty: A story of young Harriet Tubman* (1997 Coretta Scott King Illustrator Award). 1996. Ill. Jerry Pinkney. Dial Books for Young Readers.

This fictionalized account based upon real events profiles the early life of Harriet Tubman and her relationship with her parents. The story describes how she became a conductor on the Underground Railroad.

Siegelson, Kim. *In the time of the drums* (2000 Coretta Scott King Illustrator Award). 1999. Ill. Brian Pinkney. Hyperion Books for Children.

This story is based on the Gullah legend of a slave rebellion at Ibo's Landing in South Carolina. Mentu's grandmother Twi was born in Africa and remembers her experiences well. Twi teaches her grandson many things, including how to play ancient rhythms on a goatskin drum. One day, slave ships arrive at Mentu and Twi's island. The slaves refuse to get off the ships because they know they are not home. Twi knows she must take her people back to Africa, so together Twi and the slaves walk into the ocean for home. Mentu is left all alone, but he grows up strong, begins a family of his own, and teaches them all that his grandmother taught him.

Sierra, Judy. *Wiley and the hairy man*. 1996. Ill. Brian Pinkney. Lodestar Books Dutton.

This African American folk tale describes how Wiley and his mother outsmart the Hairy Man by tricking him into doing things for them. But Wiley's mother warns him that he must trick the Hairy Man two more times in order for the beast to go away forever.

Step toe, John. *Creativity*. 1997. Ill. E. B. Lewis. Clarion.

An African American child learns to appreciate his similarities and differences with his friend Hector from Puerto Rico. Once Charlie befriends Hector he helps him adjust to the new school and neighborhood. Charlie even tries to help Hector with his English.

Stewart, Dianne. *Gift of the sun: A tale from South Africa*. 1996. Ill. Jude Daly. Farrar Straus & Giroux.

This South African tale describes how a farmer named Thulani wants to do no more than lie in the sun all day. After a series of lopsided exchanges with others to make his life easier, he finds that his crop is worth something after all. A pocketful of sunflower seeds proves to be very beneficial.

Tarpley, Natasha. *I love my hair*. 1998. Ill. E.B. Lewis. Little, Brown.

This picture book celebrates African American identity through hair. Every night before bedtime Keyana sits down with her mother to get her hair combed. It hurts, but her mother gently reminds her of all the different ways that she can wear her hair.

Thomas, Joyce Carol. *I have heard of a land* (1999 Coretta Scott King Illustrator Honor Award). 1998. Ill. Floyd Cooper. HarperCollins.

Set in the late 1800s, this lyrical tribute describes what it was like for African American pioneers to journey westward to Oklahoma to begin a new life. Newly freed slaves were anxious to receive railroad tickets to travel to a place where all people were promised free land and a new beginning.

Wilkins, Verna Allette. *Dave and the tooth fairy*. (1998). Ill. Paul Hunt. Gareth Stevens.

Dave's wobbly tooth finally comes out when he sneezes. But he doesn't know where it went. His grandfather and the tooth fairy get a shock when they look under his pillow later that evening.

Woodtor, Dee Parmer . *Big meeting*. Ill. Dolores Johnson. Simon & Schuster.

During the midsummer heat, families from all over cross the wooden bridge at Pigeon Creek and travel to grandma and grandpa's home for a special reunion. They gather at church for fellowship, to learn about their heritage, and to celebrate the gospel.



Appendix D

Name Tags

Print on cardstock and laminate

A rectangular box containing three horizontal lines for handwriting practice: a solid top line, a dashed middle line, and a solid bottom line. A small logo with the text 'C.A. Education' is located in the bottom right corner of the box.

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Appendix E

*F.A.R.* Agenda for Initial Communal Meeting



Arrival of Families/Evening snack

6:00 – 6:45

Welcome and Evening Overview

6:50 – 6:55

Storytelling

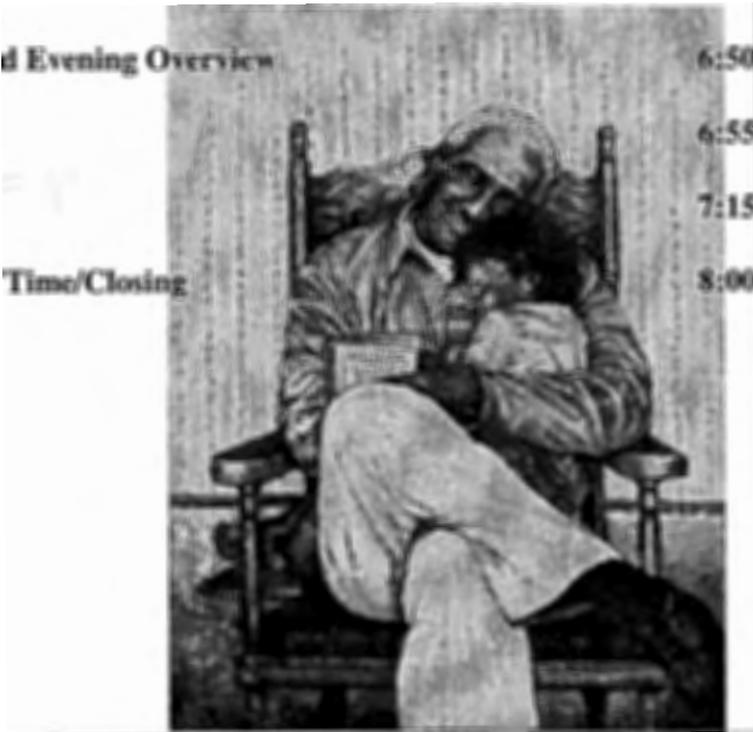
6:55 – 7:15

Breakout

7:15 – 8:00

Community Time/Closing

8:00 – 8:15





## Appendix F

## y the Owl Never Sleeps at Night

--Retold by John C. Branner  
(Beaver, 2006)

Have you noticed that whenever a creature starts in this world with a habit, it stays with him all his life? Not only that, he passes it along to his children and his grandchildren. Whether the creatures have two legs or four legs or more legs, it works just the same. Another thing is that if you want to see anything, you must open your eyes.

There's the case of the owl. At the very first, he was like the other birds; he had the same kind of eyes as the other birds, and he flew around and sang in the daytime, and when it came dark he went to roost and stuck his head under his wings and slept till daybreak, just like the others. But it wasn't long before he got into the habit of sitting up nights and calling out "Who-who," and he never has stopped that to this very day.

Here's what happened. During the week that the creatures were all created and were just learning how to keep house, the Good Lord noticed that there was something going wrong in the night and he felt mighty nervous about the whole thing. One morning he found the pig's tail curled up; the deer's tail and goat's tail were cut clean off; the possum and the rat had had their hair all pulled off their tails; the duck had lost his forelegs, the snake had lost all of his; and the guinea hen and the turkey gobbler had lost all the hair off their heads; and nobody knew what was going to happen next.

God had a suspicion that it was some of Old Nick's doings, but he never said anything to anybody. He just asked the owl if he wouldn't stay up that night and keep a lookout and see what the matter was and how it all had happened. And the owl said he'd be mighty proud to stay up, only he's afraid he couldn't see very well in the dark. The Good Lord told him that all he had to do to see in the dark is to open his eyes wider. So they fixed it up that way. And when it turned dark, the owl never went to bed; he just opened his eyes a little wider, and got out in the open where he could look around over the countryside. And every time it got a little darker the owl would open his eyes an little wider, and he didn't ever have any trouble seeing all the carryings-on.

And sure enough, along about midnight he saw Old Nick tying knots in the horses' manes. And the owl called out, "Who-who, who-who, who-ah?" With that, Old Nick was so scared that he ran away and left the horses, and struck out across the country in the dark. But the owl opened his eyes wider than ever, and he followed after him and every once in a while he'd call out, "Who-who, who-who, who-who-ah!" Well, he sure scared Old Nick away; but when it became day, Mr. Owl had his eyes so wide open that he couldn't shut them, and the bright sun gave him a terrible headache. Then the Good Lord told the owl that as he'd been up all the night before he

could find himself a shady place and sleep all day to make up for the loss of sleep the night before. But when night came around again the owl was rested, and he didn't have his headache anymore, and he felt so wide awake that he stayed up that night too. After that, he got the habit, and he's had it ever since.

### **The Owl Never Sleeps At Night Identifying Facts:**

1. List three ways the owl was at first like the other birds.
  - He had the same eyes, flew and sang in the daytime, and slept at night.
2. Why does God ask the owl to stay up late one night?
  - He noticed that strange things are happening to the animals and wanted to see if the owl can find out what is happening.
3. What does the owl have to do to see in the dark?
  - He must open his eyes wider.
4. Why does the owl sleep all the next day? And why have owls since stayed awake at night?
  - The sun hurts his eyes and God tells him to rest.
  - He just got into the habit of staying up all night.

### **Interpreting Meanings:**

5. This story is a "why" story. Find two examples of humor and exaggeration in the story and tell what origin the story explains.
  - Old Nick's being frightened off by the owl's call, the owl opening his eyes so wide that he couldn't shut them the next day are examples of exaggeration.
  - The story explains why animals look the way they do and why the owl is nocturnal.
6. What moral, or lessons about life, does this story illustrate?
  - Traits are passed on from one generation to the next.
  - If we are alert and look around we'll be able to spot evil and avoid it.

## Appendix G

## Amazing Grace Lesson Plan

(Peterson, 2007)

**Purpose:**

Students will hear a story that illustrates how an African-American girl is encouraged by her family to be anything that she wants to be regardless of how her classmates discourage her from trying out for a part in a play.

**Objective:**

Students will be able to discuss the ways families work together to encourage and support each other.

**Materials:**

- Amazing Grace by Mary Hoffman
- lined paper

**Instructional Procedure:***Anticipatory Set:*

*Ask students to recall a time that they really wanted to do something and someone said, "That's too hard for you." Ask those students to explain what they did and how they felt when they heard that. Tell the students that in the story you are going to read, Grace is told that she can't do something. Let's see what Grace does . . .*

- Read the book to the class in a shared-reading experience, guiding their attention to detail and helping to increase their comprehension through questions. Encourage them to predict what might happen next as you read. Ask students to identify the feelings of the characters throughout the reading.
- Discuss how Grace acted when she was told she couldn't be Peter Pan. How did her family act and what did they do and say? Why did people tell her she couldn't do it? Discuss and label the attitudes of the different characters. How might the characters act differently next time? Discuss how people influence each other in the story and in the classroom. What techniques are helpful and which are harmful?
- Ask students to think of a time they were afraid to do something hard and their families encouraged them. Students draw a picture in their journals of such a time.

- Have students role-play small parts of the story, especially the scenes in which her family members encourage her.

**Assessment:**

- discuss and label the attitudes of the characters.
- describe how a family member or friend gave them encouragement to try a difficult task and draw an example in their journals.
- suggest how classmates can encourage each other in school.

**Bibliographical References:**

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Appendix H

PowerPoint Presentation

# F.A.R

## Fathers As Readers

### You are Important!

- The latest research indicates that kids who grow up with warm, nurturing, and actively involved fathers (U.S. Dept. of Edu., 1998):
  - do better in school.
  - have higher self esteem.
  - build better relationships with other kids.
  - develop healthier ideas of how they should behave as adults.
  - grow into more successful adults.
- You can have a powerful impact on your children's success in school. According to a study by the U.S. Department of Education, when fathers took an active role in their children's education (like attending school meetings, volunteering in school), the kids were more likely to make A's, participate in activities like sports and clubs, and enjoy school, and they were less likely to repeat a grade.



### Ice Breaker

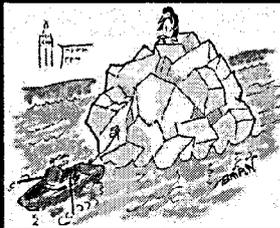
- **Alliterative Introductions**
  1. Introduce yourself to the group with an alliterative sentence based upon the first letter of your name. Example:  
*Tim looks Katherine. I like taking letters.*  
 (Pattern: *I'm ADJECTIVE NAME. I like ACTION by NOUN*)
  2. Participants introduce themselves to the group with alliterative sentences.  
*Tim introduces Yvonne. I like volunteering books.*  
*Tim introduces George. I like playing golf.*

**Names Chain**

You can play "Name Chain" as a follow-up to "Alliterative Introductions."

  1. Introduce yourself, and the person to your right.  
*Tim looks Katherine. Tim & Katherine Yvonne.*
  2. The person to your right repeats previous introductions, and introduces the person to their right.  
*She's lucky Katherine. Tim introduces Yvonne. He's generous George.*
  3. Continue with the next person to the right, until all names have been repeated.
  4. Challenge volunteers to rhyme off all names quickly!

This game can be repeated for a few days, moving around the group to the left or to random order, until participants have mentioned each other's names.



Appendix H con.

## Why is reading so good for kids?

- Your child's potential for success in school starts long before he or she walks into a classroom.
- Educators believe that reading and storytelling:
  - stimulate children's imaginations.
  - enhance their vocabularies.
  - introduce them to components of stories (characters, plot, action, and sequence).
  - help them learn about the world around them.
- It is also an activity that is very child-centered and gives you an opportunity to spend time with your children doing something fun and educational

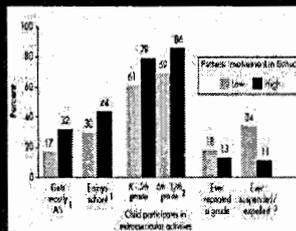


## Mom's thing, right?

- Reading with your kids is a great opportunity to interact with them in a positive way, while helping them grow intellectually and socially.
- In a study that began in the 1960s, psychologist Ellen Bing discovered that the amount of time fathers spent reading with their children was a very strong predictor of children's cognitive abilities, including verbal skills. Surprisingly, in this study, the amount of time mothers spent reading with their children did not predict daughters' or sons' verbal ability.
- This doesn't mean that mothers' contributions aren't important. What it does mean is that there's something unique about the impact you can have on your children's future



- **Figure 2.—Student outcomes, by fathers' involvement in school: Students in grades K-12 in father-only households, 1996**
- 1 Children in 1st through 12th grade.
- 2 Youth report.
- 3 Children in 6th through 12th grade.

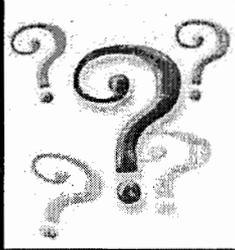


■ SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1996 National Household Education Survey

Appendix H con.

## Concerns

- What concerns do you have?



## Be a Hero!

- Dad, don't underestimate the important contributions you make to your children's lives. Read with your children on a regular basis, and they will reap benefits that last a lifetime! Be a Hero!



Appendix H con.

PowerPoint Outline

**Ice Breaker**

**Alliterative Introductions**

1. Introduce yourself to the group with an alliterative sentence based upon the first letter of your name. Example:

*"I'm kooky Katherine. I like kissing kittens."*

*(Pattern: I'm ADJECTIVE NAME. I like ACTION-ing NOUN)*

2. Participants introduce themselves to the group with alliterative sentences.

*"I'm vivacious Vesna. I like volunteering violets."*

*"I'm generous George. I like giving gifts."*

**Name Chain**

You can play "Name Chain" as a follow-up to "Alliterative Introductions."

1. Introduce yourself, and the person to your right.

*I'm kooky Katherine. This is vivacious Vikki.*

2. The person to your right repeats previous introductions, and introduces the person to their right.

*She's kooky Katherine. I'm vivacious Vikki. He's generous George.*

3. Continue with the next person to the right, until all names have been repeated.

4. Challenge volunteers to rhyme off all names quickly!

This game can be repeated, moving around the group to the left, or in random order, until participants have memorized each other's names.

## Appendix H con.

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■The latest research indicates that kids who grow up with warm, nurturing, and actively involved fathers (U.S. Dept. of Education, 1998):

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Appendix H con.

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- In a study that began in the 1960s, psychologist Ellen Bing discovered that the amount of time fathers spent reading with their children was a very strong predictor of children's cognitive abilities, including verbal skills. Surprisingly, in this study, the amount of time mothers spent reading with their children did not predict daughters' or sons' verbal ability.
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**Be a Hero!**

- Dad, don't underestimate the important contributions you make to your children's lives. Read with your children on a regular basis, and they will reap benefits that last a lifetime! Be a Hero!

**Concerns**

What concerns do you have?



Appendix J

*F.A.R.*

Agenda for Second Communal Meeting



**Arrival of Families/Evening snack**

**6:00 – 6:45**

**Welcome and Evening Overview**

**6:50 – 6:55**

**Storytelling**

**6:55 – 7:10**

**Breakout**

**7:10 – 8:00**

**Awards/Closing**

**8:00 – 8:30**



# Congratulations

For the completion of the

*Fathers As Readers program*

Presented to:

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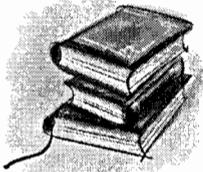


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Date

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Signature



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