



T3. Fatherhood Engagement in School-Based Settings

Tuesday, June 4, 2019
3:30 p.m. – 4:45 p.m.

Moderator:

- Damon Waters, Family Assistance Program Specialist, Office of Family Assistance, Washington, D.C.

Presenter:

- J. Michael Hall, President and Founder, Strong Fathers-Strong Families, LLC, Fort Worth, Texas

Damon Waters: Good afternoon. This is a very interesting session for me. I actually just graduated my third year of mentors in Washington, D.C. I like to call them affectionately the left behinds. D.C. has changed tremendously over the last couple of years. We graduated 37 Black and Latino students.

Today we have Dr. J. Michael Hall, President and Founder of the Strong Fathers-Strong Families, LLC in Fort Worth, Texas.

Dr. Hall: I'm glad you are here. We are going to talk about working in schools, because that's what I do. I am the President and Founder of Strong Fathers-Strong Families. This year, we just finished up our numbers. We worked with approximately 8,400 dads around several states through our school programs. Part of that number is not too hard to hit because we average 124 families per program out of 80 programs. We're right at 70 plus programs. This is what I've been doing for the last 16 years. I'll show you some numbers in a minute.

As far as my history goes, I am a former Special Ed teacher and a recovering middle school principal. My wife teaches middle school. My oldest son was a middle school teacher and now he's a senior AP English teacher. My youngest son, who was never going to teach, actually just finished his first year of teaching. He moved back to where he went to school, to live with his friends. He's not going back to teaching. He doesn't have a job yet, so we'll see if he goes back to teaching.

What I want to do before I get into some of the details and some of the stories is that the good part about this conference is you came to talk about dads. The problem is, I'm now competing against seven other sessions about dads. When I'm at Head Start or I'm at Title One, I'm the dad guy. We have got a lot of great dad guys here. For some of us it's like a family reunion because we've been doing this work for a good while. I want to know why you're at this session because I





can do 6, 8, 12 hours of training, talk a lot about father engagement, but I want to know what you want to know.

Participant: Getting the fathers to be as engaged as moms are.

Participant: Why aren't fathers engaged at school?

Participant: How to empower fathers and what they really want.

Dr. Hall: That's tied back to why they aren't engaged. They care, we're just not doing the right programs. When I'm throwing numbers at you, the numbers we found work, and we can tell you why. They're showing up because we built something for them.

Participant: What kind of events and activities can we do to keep dads involved? There's a lot we do for moms, but what activities can we do for dads?

Dr. Hall: Quit getting dads and children together to build something for mom. We had the dads and the children come in, they made something for mom. What if he hates her? It's like, "What is that?" "It's a burning heart." Literally on fire. Why are we doing that? That seems negative. The other piece is, when did the moms and children get together to make something for dad? Oh, they don't. Part of that is a joke but it's not funny at all.

Damon Waters: Since we're looking at school-based activities, making sure that they are educationally and culturally relevant for the dads since the goal is that the dads can transfer some of that knowledge to the child. So how do we make sure the school is inviting, the activities are inviting, and they can learn?

Participant: Can some of these strategies be placed in community-based work?

Dr. Hall: Yes. Although a couple of them aren't because they're very school specific.

Participant: How to empower fathers or how to get fathers to fully understand that they can really have a positive effect on their child's education rather than being "mom's area" or the "teacher's area".

Participant: Provide a little more context of how to work with families that are intact.

Participant: Adding on to family structure. How to work with young dads and especially young dads of color.

Participant: How to create a school-based, father-friendly environment.





Dr. Hall: Some of you are school people or Head Start people, some of you are not. How many of you have children? When a mom walks on a school campus or into a Head Start and looks around like she doesn't know what's going on, how do we treat her?

We ask her how we can help her. But, when a man walks on campus, we treat him differently. We treat him like he's a threat or not supposed to be there. We have lockdown drills. I told you I was a recovering principal. We have a lockdown drill. Why would we have a lockdown drill? In case of what?

Participant: Active shooter.

Dr. Hall: Active shooter. What's the first person you think of? A male. Guess what? Yes. A white male but not a white adult male, a student that we've locked into the building that has guns throughout. I did a session at Texas Associates with the school boards last year and I said, "How are you keeping your school safe?" Everything they talked about was this is how we lock the killer into the building and make it harder for our children to get out. I said, "Here's my proposal to you. What if we did the work to make sure that we raise children that didn't want to shoot others?" If you want to know why we're here, that's a big goal.

Damon Waters: I know that in our office we have breastfeeding rooms for the maternal side of taking care of a baby. Is there a way to make schools more inviting/friendly to a single father who is playing that role of having to nurture and take care of a baby?

Dr. Hall: Yes. When I train in schools, I say "You are worried about us just coming into the school and taking a child! We don't even really want the one we brought. There's a reason we put them in this public school. Here you have them for seven hours. No, I don't want another one. Thank you."

As a teacher and then as a co-parent, and particularly with our first child, we were really co-parents, shared most of that responsibility pretty equally. The reason I quit being a principal was so I could focus on being a parent. When I did that, people said I was heroic, I wasn't. I changed careers so I could be with my child. But in that, I could take my youngest to the doctor because my wife could teach, and I had some flexibility. I would go in the doctor's office, a male pediatrician even, and the other moms and children would get up and move away from me. At first I was highly offended. I would be like I don't want your sniffly child. Then I realized, it actually worked to my advantage because they were taking all the sniffly children away from me. I started to mean mug every time I went in the doctor's office. I was over being offended. Maybe I was perpetuating the myth, I'm not sure.





We just finished our 16th school year in about 45 states with Head Start and public schools, probably more Head Starts across the board. We've just started traveling in the last three or four years. Here's what this is about. First thing is this is all about grassroots. What I'm going to tell you about is not just what I do, but I did it this past week. I'm going to talk about that, and I want to talk to you about how you're going to do this work because for most of you, that's where you're at. So, if you are in policy or funding or whatever, I need you to know what we need you to know about grassroots. We're going to talk about how to do this nose-to-nose with dads. This is also about being strength-based. This conference is such a better field than when we started 15 or 20 years ago. We still have work to do, but the field 20 years ago was like "how are we going to fix these dads to let them be dads?" That's not the sentiment I hear today, and I'm really happy about that. That also shows you how old I am because the first thing we'd say when bringing dads in was we have to get him un-addicted, we have to get him more educated, we have to get him employed so we can let him be a dad. Do you have any moms that have issues? How many of you are moms with issues? Yes, we all are, dads are too. We don't stop the moms from being moms while we're working on their issues. What we did with dads was we got them straightened out, then we could let him be a dad. Again, no statistics are showing he's more dangerous in here. When I was principal, I had gang members that carried guns into school. That never bothered me because they're children and I could work with that. I still have recurring nightmares about what I call chainsaw cheerleader mom. "What do you mean my daughter didn't make the squad?" I'm way more worried about her than I am about some dads. I'd have dads come in saying, "I need to talk to that principal." I'm like, "Come on in." "What's going on?" We'd shut the door. He says, "I don't know, she told me I need to be here and be mad. I don't even know." "Okay." Then, we could have a conversation, but he had to come in mad.

We're going to talk about the strengths dads bring to their children. Then, the other issue is, and this is exactly what you're talking about, child outcome focused. I need you to hear me. Some of you are doing work for grown men, which I'm very happy about, and I'm glad you're doing it. We have a 10-week course that truly is built to help men be better fathers for the sake of their children. It is very intensive and focused on changing men. Everything that we're going to talk about, particularly at schools, is not about men. I'm okay if that's your work but I'm here for the children and what men do for their children. I enjoy working in a 10-week class and the camaraderie that I can get with a group of men. If I didn't get to work around dads and children, I wouldn't like what I'm doing. To see the smiles on the children's faces when we do these programs, to see children turn the corner on stuff because we got their father involved, that's what this is about, child outcome focused. I want you to understand, that's where we're headed.

Participant: I am on board with the child outcome focused part, but the challenge is, it takes a lifetime to recognize or even evaluate what those outcomes are and to connect them.

Dr. Hall: I will have an answer for you later on.



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How many of you have been to training about training? You are all professional people. We're going to do a little training about training.

Here's what we're going to do. We're going to get you into groups of 8 to 12 people. You need your nametag if you have it. If you have a ball, hold it up. You're going to look around your circle, you're going to either read their nametag or just ask them their name. If somebody asks you, tell them your name. When you hear their name, call it and then toss them the ball. Notice the order, know what their name is before you say it. Say their name before throwing the ball. When you hear your name, catch the ball, find someone else in your group who has not caught it or thrown it yet, call their name and toss it to them until everybody in the group has introduced themselves. Cover up your name tags and see who in your group can name everyone in the group. Here's what I would normally do. We would not only have you introduce yourself, but you would actually hold a child up and go around the room and you would tell us your name, and names and ages of your children. If you don't have children, you tell us about those that are like your children that are near and dear to your heart. Neighbors, nieces, nephews, somebody like that.

What this does is it brings us all down to the focus of children. Then, I would normally give you a flip chart to answer some questions. That gives us content for what we're going to talk about. I wanted you to do this exercise because we want to talk about, based on some of your questions, how we make this work. I want you to think about 200 to 300 dads in a cafeteria throwing chickens at each other.

In a 10-week class when we started writing up what we call "focused" or "strength training", we were using one curriculum and I didn't like it. I said, we have to build one. You need to come to the first class because it's court ordered and they're mad. We get it. Then, I said, "I'll tell you what we're going to do. We're going to throw chickens right off the bat." We would do it on week five and were reaching breakthrough about week seven or eight. We'd get that, oh, I get it, I'm over myself now. Because that's a big part of our class. Because these men have been through grief of losing a family and some other things that might have led them there.

We did this exercise on the first night and we were seeing breakthrough at week three and four. We were turning the corner on that. We have 25 angry men throwing chickens at each other but they're not angry while they're throwing chickens at each other. I had two men not want to participate in this. I'm talking two men out of 100,000 to 200,000 men. One said he was too old to be throwing balls around. Turns out he had a legitimate reason for being mad and another tried to walk out before class even started because he didn't see the point and left after a few rounds and we never saw him again. Other than that, they have done it. Then, we got to where we would do it the second week and third week. They're like, "We're going to throw chickens?" I'm like, "Yeah, we're going to throw chickens." What words would you use to describe that activity?





Participant: Fun

Participant: Engaging

Participant: Interactive

Participant: Teamwork

Dr. Hall: Teamwork. In some, not every group, just so you know.

Participant: Ice breaker.

Participant: Get to know each other.

Dr. Hall: Yes. Did I tell you that you had to know every name?

Participant: No.

Dr. Hall: No. I just said you had to know your name and one other name. What's interesting is if you have trouble, you don't get two names next to you. There's something about what you can and cannot see. The people that struggle with not naming it right. Some of us struggle with naming anyone. The ones that get really close, it's usually the two people next to them. It's something about how that works. It's very brain based, and it works out. It's also hard to be mad, isn't it? You can't take yourself too seriously when you're throwing chickens at each other. It's just not possible.

The things that you're doing with dads, would they describe them as fun, interactive, ice breaking, energetic, and team building? Maybe, but probably not. Look at the three keys to engagement at the top of your handout. This works for fathers all the time, every time. These are the rules used to build every program we built. No matter what you're using, if you're using a curriculum, a plan, or your own stuff, it has to have this to be effective. I don't mean possibly. I mean for you to truly see what good engagement looks like; it needs to have this.

The first thing is it has to be interactive. Men don't want to be talked at. They have to get up and do. When we do a "bring your dad to school day," they go to class with their children and they watch the teacher teach but they're interacting with their children. Then after they come out of class, we have all the dads, mom, parents, whoever is there to come to us. We ask, "What did you see in class?" We talk about what they saw in class. We talk about why we're teaching children. We talk about some of the research I'm going to show you in a minute about why we want dads doing that. Then we get them up and get them to throw chickens at each other. They're interacting with other men.





Every math night they sit across the table from each other and play math games with cards and dice because it's interactive. It's not death by PowerPoint. It's not a bunch of instructions. They're learning. They see the value instantly.

You should go home with your children and play these games because it just builds so much good stuff. Put them in front of that child, watch that child interact with the dad. Also, get that dad watching other dads. Dads will learn more from the other dads than they will from anything you say. If the dad's a jerk, you're like, "Man, I hope I don't look like that dude." Even a bad dad is a teacher.

Everything we do is interactive. Math night, we make paper airplanes and test them. We make mouse trap catapults with the spoon taped to a mouse trap and flying marshmallows across the room. Then we make Alka-Seltzer rockets. We have 150 rockets go off in 10 seconds. It's the most amazing finale ever.

The other thing is it has to be relational. Did you meet somebody you did not know? Some of us that have been doing this work for a while, we saw each other here at this session or at this conference and we're catching up because we've known each other for a long time. You will come to the next one or maybe even tomorrow and say, "Hey, you were the dude that threw a ball at me 27 times." Dads relating to children, dads relating to other dads and children, dads relating back to the campus or the Head Start, where you need that connection to be effective.

Then, the last thing is relevancy. Women with children 0-3 need to have training on breastfeeding. Men don't need to be at the same training. There's really good material for dads to support moms that are breastfeeding. Let's focus on their children and the mother. It's not just help her, which is very important. When you help her, here is how it also helps your children. That's more relevant. Helping her is relevant. Helping your child get a better start on life, more relevant. Us trying to tell men or women how to better deal with the adult in their life is not always relevant. Everybody will focus on their children. How to help your child be a better reader. How to help your child do better in math. Doing these activities and you as a parent having patience while your child is learning patience and perseverance helps your child be better in the classroom, regardless of what he or she is learning. It's all relevant. Understanding these dads you're working with have the same struggle and you see them twitching when their child acts like a child too, doesn't mean you're a bad dad. It means you're a dad that's struggling with a four-year-old that acts like a four-year-old. You also look around and go, "All four-year-old children are crazy." Yes, all four-year-old children are crazy. I ask my dads, "How many of you met the child in class that your child's always talking about? Because that child's always coming home and talking about that child." I say, "Don't raise your hand. How many of you found out your child is the child everybody else is talking about?" How come you don't talk about the bad child? Oh, you are the bad child.





Let's talk about this first key. If we're going to be relevant, we have to talk about why we would do these activities because this is not just fun time. One of the things I will tell you is that I'm not opposed to a spaghetti supper. This is more for the school crowd than a social work crowd. I'm not opposed to a spaghetti supper, but a child never learned to read because of a spaghetti supper. If you want to build community, if you want to raise some money, spaghetti supper is fine. Don't call it family engagement. We do that in Head Start.

The biggest session I probably ever did as a workshop was at a Texas PTA and it was called how to have family engagement. At that time, we called it parent involvement, how to have parent involvement without kidnapping children and making them sing. Because that's what they did to get you to come to a PTA meeting. PTA said, "We don't do that." I said "Yes you do because my child in second grade is singing. I'm going to that program. If he's in second grade and the third graders are singing, I'm not there." Most of my sons are musicians. I'm going to go to every music program but it's not family engagement.

We want to talk about what are we doing, why do we want fathers involved. We talk about behavior and mental health. When a father is involved in the caregiving of his children at an early age, that child is more likely to handle frustration better, be able to see themselves as not the center of the universe, be able to persevere through a task, and to be able to handle instruction in a classroom. Why is that important? Because frustration is inherent to learning. If it's not frustrating, it's not learning, it's practice. If you learn something, you bump up against it and work through it.

We have a whole set of children right now in class that when something happens and it doesn't come to them automatically, they melt down. Why? Because moms tend to rescue quicker than dads and therefore our children don't always learn how to handle frustration. When dads help their children deal with frustration, they are better learners. They learn perseverance and how to be in a classroom. We talk about aggression management. Those of you that are in Head Start, I call it the playground frenzy. You can see the children that do or don't have a father or father figure in their lives by watching them on the playground. Playgrounds are fun and cause adrenaline and aggression, which is not negative, but it can be. My job as a father is to teach my children how to handle adrenaline without aggression. We need moms reading to the children. When moms read to children, they learn to read. They learn to love to read. They learn to love books. We need moms reading to children. When dads read to children, their verbal skills can increase by up to 15% which doesn't happen when moms read. It's not better, it's different. Many of you are teachers, and many of you that are teachers are moms. And moms read like teachers. When dads read, they read differently.

Not too long ago I heard a podcast called Five Minutes with Dad. It's a dad with a child I think in kindergarten or second grade. The cool part about it was he really let his children be children. He





wasn't uptight. He let them go down the rabbit trails that children go down. He'd bring them back to whatever the story was or whatever the activity was. He did a really good job managing them. They were really cute. He would talk about being truthful or whatever. He would pitch a book that he had a link to on Amazon and would talk about a game they played. I would talk to my sons about what their favorite book was when they were little, in elementary, as a teenager, now as a college student or an adult. My son reminded me about books that I had read to him that I had forgotten about.

My oldest son said he remembered when we had the talk?" I said, "Yes, son. I'm still quite scarred from us having the talk. I don't know how you were, but I was scared, and I was the one giving it." He said, "We had the talk and then you read three chapters straight without ever stopping." I said because I didn't want you asking any more questions." I had an assistant principal hear me tell that story because I tell it all the time. She said, "That happened at my house just the other day." I asked her what happened. She said, "I'm walking past my daughter's room and my husband was rapping the book to my daughter." I'm like, "That is awesome. did the book rhyme?" She said, "Not at all." I asked her if her daughter hated it and she said no, she loved it so much, now I can't read that book because she wants her daddy to. Moms have their books and dad has his. The children know that. They see that, they know what's going on. Even if I found out this research was wrong, I would still tell this story. When we ask, "what are you going to do different," because this program is part of our evaluation, they answer that they are going to read to their children more.

I was a band dad, a marching band dad, for eight straight years. My youngest son was in high school and the dad of a freshman comes in and he says to me, "Hey, you're the dad dude?" I'm like, "Yes, I'm the dad dude." He said, "You said something when my daughter was in second grade." He told me verbatim what I just told you. "You said that when dads read to their children, our children's verbal skills increase by up to 15% which doesn't happen when moms read to them?" I said, "Yes, that's what I say all the time." He said that ever since she told him that, he has been reading to his children every night since. That's not me being powerful. It's this work being that powerful and what you can do as well. If a dad has a good physical relationship with his daughter, strong physical personal relationship with his daughter, she does better in math and science even if dad doesn't help with homework, sometimes because dad doesn't help with homework. What dads' first job is, is to tell his daughter she's beautiful.

I don't wear a suit most of the time. I wear boots, jeans, and a polo. My job is to show you that I have what it takes and wear whatever I want. I do that because I work with dads. My first job is to show you that I have what it takes. A girl's question is do I have what it takes? The dad's job is to say you're beautiful and you're smart and show her how to whoop every bat on the block. Hit the softball, shoot the basketball, hit the volleyball, run, whatever. When dad does that, when he has that physical relationship with his daughter, then she's not listening to the cultural norms of





what she can or can't do as a girl. She is going to pick a better boy when they're dating, we know that. We talk about that all the time.

This goes back to a second grader whose dad helped her with her science project. At a Kansas City, Missouri Head Start I met a dad with his daughter. She was building a block tower; three-sided magnetic blocks as high as her nose. She was giddy. There were two girls that had a three-block high tower and they're losing their minds over their tower because they're pretty sure it was going to fall. This girl was excited because she's pretty sure it's going to fall. You could tell who had their dad around and who probably didn't because these girls have been told to be careful, it might fall, which is okay. Do you know what this girl learned? It might fall. If it falls, it might be epic. If it falls, you won't die. If it falls, you can build it again because that's what dads do. The whole time, you could tell. What did she learn? She learned that she could do what she wanted and if it fell, she could rebuild it. She learned that she could build stuff if she wanted to build stuff. If she wanted to be an engineer, nobody could tell her as a girl that she couldn't be an engineer.

We know moms play a part in that. When dad is there, the numbers are way higher that she can do it right now. We look at that. We talk about a child's development. The other thing is, and this is what we're talking about, you asked the three questions I always get. How do you get them? What do you do with them? How do you keep them? The way we get them, there are more dads out there than you see. Sixty-five percent of the children in Head Start and inner-city communities have regular access to their dads.

The TED talk that I did is called father fullness. Why? Because I'm tired of talking about fatherlessness. Why? Because nobody here doesn't know that cancer is bad. Cancer sucks. Do we need to have a session on why cancer sucks? No, we all know. Is fatherlessness a problem? Yes. I'm here to talk about solutions. Here's what I have learned. Dads are there and they will come if you invite them. I have yet to go into a community, large or small, that when we say we're doing this, we don't get 65% to 70% of those children bringing their father or father figure. It can be mom. It can be grandparents. It can be stepdad. It can be mom's boyfriend. They're bringing somebody and more of these dads show up than you will ever know.

In September of this year, I did a program in El Paso ISD. We did a "bring your dad to school day." I asked who came the farthest? I knew some of them didn't get to live with their children and that some of them work outside of town. One said Minneapolis. Another said Vladykov! I was like what is that? I've been all through West Texas, where is Vladykov?" He said, Russia. I said, "What?" He said, "I'm a military contractor on the port in Vladykov. My child called me and said it's "bring your dad to school day," so I jumped on a C-130 from Vladykov to Ramstein, from Ramstein to Jersey on another military plane and caught a Delta flight to get here on Friday. I'll go back on Monday."





I had a principal tell me, "I've never seen some of these men." I said watch this. I didn't know what I was getting into, I knew something would happen. I asked how many came from out of town?" One came from Long Island, New York. Another said Long Beach, California. The principal looked at me, he said, "This is not a setup. I don't have coast to coast programs every day." I had a dad that picked up a load at midnight in New Orleans and made it to school at 8:00 a.m. The way I found out that he made it on time for "bring your dad to school day" was because I heard an announcement, "Will the person that has the tractor trailer rig in the bus lane, please move the tractor trailer rig from the bus lane. We still have buses dropping off children." Everybody was like, "What?" I'm like, "That's amazing. I want to find out who that is." That was the deal. He had picked up a load, but he was going to be there for his child. I have men that go from San Antonio to Fort Worth. The children know where they are and that's why those dads come. Here's the thing, and I think this crowd gets it but when we go into a school or Head Start, they want to say, bring your dads, stepdad, granddad, special other. It's dad's day. What do we celebrate in public schools in February?

Participant: Black History Month

Dr. Hall: Black History Month. Thank you. Should we apologize for celebrating Black History Month?

Participant: No

Dr. Hall: No, we shouldn't. Hispanic Heritage Month is September. Do we apologize for that? Do we say, "We're here to celebrate Hispanic Heritage and your other heritages too, it's okay, we don't mean to offend you?" No, we don't, and we shouldn't. Why? Because we're celebrating Hispanic Heritage or Black History. When you do a dad's day, you know who you want? The dads. Not every child has a dad. Yes, they do. 100% of the children in our country have a father. We know that not every dad is around. You don't know what dad is around or not. You don't know what dad would fly from Russia. You don't know what dad would drive a truck eight hours to be there. Our job is to invite the dads as dads, do a dads' day. That's why they come. By the way, with Hispanic families, everybody is coming. I'm just telling you. I'm not lying. Look at this picture, what do you see?

Participant: Trucks.

Dr. Hall: Trucks. Why? Because dads are going to work, but they're coming by there first. Why? Because we gave them a month's notice. You send out a save the date flyer, there were 140 children in this Head Start program. We had 108 dads. Why? Because we invited them as dads a month ahead in Spanish and English. Everything we do, English and Spanish. Not just in Texas, almost everywhere I go. This is a dad and child math night at a Head Start Early Childhood Center. What do you see?





Participant: Families

Dr. Hall: Yes. See, it's not just the moms. What else do you see?

Participant: Happy children.

Dr. Hall: Happy children and engagement. You know what they're not doing? Listening to somebody talk. They got the instructions and they're playing the games. We'll give them more instructions. By the way, this is all the time, not just in some special places. This happened in schools of 528 children, K-12, it happened in elementary schools of 780 children, K-5. We're getting those kind of numbers because dads want to be there if you invite them as dads and give them notice. Here's what you know, dads will work for their children. They're going to show up even though they have to go to work. Give them enough notice so they can make work arrangements.

All dads love their children. If you have a school that is 40% Hispanic, 40% African American, 20% Anglo. I have one school that speaks 38 languages. I don't mean represent; I mean speaks. Do you know how to say good morning in Burmese? I don't either but it's 27 vowels. I'm learning. Those folks are actually speaking all those languages. You know what, in those percentages how they showed up, if you have a 40/40/20 school, that's how the dads show up. If you have 40% African American children, 40% of your dads out of 200 to 300 dads are African American dads. Hispanic dads show up, Pakistani dads.

There's not a group of dads that we can't reach, because we're focusing on their children. There's not a culture that doesn't have a dad who doesn't love their child. You said culturally relevant. When we're working with dads, it's culturally relevant for them as their dad and their child. Yes, you need to do it in their language. The reason I'm doing some of my work is because I'm a redheaded white man who speaks semi-decent Spanish.

Let me finish up. Here's my information. At the bottom of the flyer, strongfathers.com. If you go there, it's going to ask for your name, organization, and email. I will send you the slides. I will send you the videos of what we talked about that I wasn't able to include. I have *100 things To Do with your Children this Summer*. It's a PDF. It's an eBook. It's available on Amazon. If you sign up, we can send you the link on the days that it's free. If you go to buy it when it's free and say I'm going to buy it for 20 of my friends and put that in, it'll send you 20 codes. Send it to the family, even 40, for all I care. I don't make a dime off of it, it's okay. I'm looking forward to talking to you this week about how we can help. This is what I've been doing for the last 20 years.



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The greatest part of this is not just that I get to work with dads and children, but I get to stand here and tell you that it works, so easy. The work is not always that easy, but it's not that hard. It's just so easy to say it works because it just keeps working.

Participant: I work for Head Start. One thing they do not have is fatherhood separate from family engagement. Head Start is a woman-orientated environment. Every time I try to propose male engagement activities, I'm confronted with "Why can't we be more inclusive? Why only males?"

Dr. Hall: Because we won't show up. The answer to that is, to get dads to come to everything else, you have to invite them specifically first. I don't know what your policy is but only males are fathers, and fathers are only males. There are great single moms and great single dads. But the way we get this done is that we focus on the children. If you want to sell this, get the dads to focus on the children. You'll get more dads there and they will talk. Then, if you want to do some talking and some group therapy, you can get your men out of that group. What you need to be doing right now is building your calendar. Within a calendar, you need three to four father specific programs. Begin to integrate other parenting engagement events but, start with dad-specific events. Particularly our model with Hispanic families. The dads won't come if it's not dad specific. When they come, we have the whole family. You focus on the children.

Build a calendar of activities that are interactive, relational, and relevant for both your moms and your dads. Spread your dad programs throughout the year because you're going to catch different dads, but build a calendar that's focused.

Participant: I'm a family coordinator for Head Start. This is the reason why I'm here, to get something for fathers. I also work for a tribe. I'm trying to get it going in the tribe too because there's a lot of fathers that aren't involved.

Dr. Hall: We have been on the Rez in several places. We have one program called Strong Fathers-Strong Tribes and instead of the house over our logo, they put a teepee. Not me, I didn't have some smart white man idea. They said that would work for us. They actually took Chief Joseph's hair silhouette and put it on our dad. That is the cultural piece. We had the same success number wise on the Rez and Head Starts in schools than we had on the other dad stuff.

Participant: We have a situation where the child, a son, talks about his dad all the time but there's a restraining order. We wiggled around it so that the father does come to some of the activities but it's hard when you have a mother that is so dead against the father having anything to do with that child.

Dr. Hall: The question I ask my moms is, and I have a lot of single moms, is he dangerous? If she says no, then I say, let him be with your children for two reasons. He will never mature





unless he's given the opportunity to mature. The other thing is, if you pull him away from the children, they are going to know it's mom that kept them from their dad. If you let the children spend time, even with an immature dad, that's not dangerous, the child will learn one of two things. "My dad grew up over time or my dad never grew up, and I know that." "I know it's not my mom's fault for keeping him away because she let me see my dad. She let me learn pretty early, sometimes 8, 9, 10 years old that my dad can't handle this."

Participant: Is there any way we could implement more training? Auto mechanics or anything like that?

Dr. Hall: Let me show you how to do this because that's what we want to do. Some people want to do sports activities, etc. In our 10-week class, we gave no job services. We just did 10 weeks of fatherhood for men coming in through court from child support, which had all kinds of issues including unemployment or underemployment. Of the men that came into that 10-week class, almost 60% of them that didn't have jobs had work by the end of the 10 weeks. Some of them we even lost in the class because they had to work at night. We gave no job services.

What we learned was when you give this man the importance of his role, then he will seek that out. We want to do our fatherhood stuff for the sake of fatherhood stuff. Because you can now get a crowd in, because it's a place to gather fathers together, that's where you begin to share services but not as a service. What I'm going to do is bring those men to the table and tell them, "Hey, as a father, here's what we need from you. Here's what your child needs from you. It gives you motivation."

Participant: I work for child support enforcement. What if they're not court ordered to attend your class? What's your success rate with individuals who are participating that aren't court ordered?

Dr. Hall: Our success rate, as far as graduation, is not very high for men that are court ordered. The 10-week class that I have, if somebody was to do a non-court ordered, we've done it as re-entry in Utah. We've done it at several places. The biggest issue is just to get a dad to come to six weeks of class, incentive or not. Don't ever do door prizes. Don't feed them if you don't have to. Those that come to our 6:00 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. programs bring their own dinner, eat at home and then come, or they'll eat when they get home. I'm in schools that are 98% free and reduced lunch. We have the same numbers whether we feed them or not. We don't increase our numbers by feeding them. You just increase the stress for everybody trying to put on the program.

What happened when we first started this 20 years ago, we gave away what I call turkeys and TVs. If you come, we'll give you a frozen turkey for Thanksgiving. If you come, we'll offer a TV. Guess what that says? That says our programs are so bad that we have to give you an incentive in order to get you to come. You build a program that they'll come to. You do what is





interactive, relational, relevant, and they keep coming back. We're not giving any incentives. I was in a program in the state of Kansas where they were giving gas cards to the dads to fill out surveys. I said, don't because they'll come anyway. They didn't listen to me and guess what happened? They weren't getting all the men they wanted into the program. Guess what happened when the gas cards ran out? Not only would they not come, they would not come to anything else because if you don't have a gas card, they're not coming.

Participant: You said it's interactive and you have the children come in. Are they coming in a particular setting or time?

Dr. Hall: I have four programs in a curriculum. We typically need to do three programs a year. We had grants to do 10. Ten was too much but one was not enough. Three to four is the magic number where dads get that we want them around. Again, you're also integrating with other things. The three programs also help staff know this is something we're doing throughout the year. I like to do a "bring your dad" either to school or Head Start pretty early. Not too early because teachers have to get settled in, but the end of September, beginning of October through the fall. I've also done them in January. You want to get that rolling because you now have the dad connected to other dads and the teacher of that child. They've seen the classroom, and so they do that. Then, the other ones, we just try to spread them throughout the calendar. There's a lot of work we've done on the calendars. Think about the ebb and flow of your staff and what's necessary. If you're in a Head Start and you have a review in April, you need to get that done before and then after, but not anywhere close to it. We don't do anything in December because we already have enough stuff prior to engaging the families in certain ways. We don't do anything in May because we're not only about to be finished, but we have field day. Build it into what makes the most sense. Night programs after the time change are harder to get attendance. A night program in January, when it's cold and dark outside, you will fill the place up. Just know the ebb and flow. You don't do math before science. The main thing I'll push that you really need to do is a bring your dad event just because it's the biggest crowd and then it helps bring others in. They will rotate through. They won't all come to all three programs. You'll get 200 men at bring your dad. 100 of those come back. Now, there's another 60 that want to leave that program. That other 100 is gone. I don't even know where they went. The next program, 50 of the first 100, 50 of the second 100. You get new people in the third program. You get new people the next year even if you're an elementary Head Start. There's just enough turnover for that.

