Father Engagement in Early Childhood Programs: Research-to-Policy Resources

Research demonstrates the importance of father-child relationships in the early years and the effects on children’s development. Recent studies have found positive associations between father-child interactions and young children’s social emotional development, academic achievement, self-regulation and language development. Recognizing the important role that fathers play in their children’s development, there has been a growing focus on engaging fathers in early childhood education programs.

Father engagement in early childhood programs (ECPs) has been defined as “...direct and indirect connections that fathers have with ECPs including selecting programs, participating in program-related activities, assuming responsibility for children’s health and well-being in the program, and supporting joint program and family goals.” Research on father engagement in ECPs focuses on defining and measuring father engagement, examining fathers’ beliefs and barriers to engagement, father engagement for children with disabilities, child care decision-making by fathers, and interventions to engage fathers in early childhood programs (such as home visiting, Early Head Start, and Head Start). Additionally, more recent research focuses on culturally responsive approaches to father engagement in ECPs.

This resource list includes research on father engagement in ECPs from 2008 to 2018. An earlier resource list developed by Research Connections also examined father engagement in ECPs from 1999 to 2008. Resources in this list are grouped under the following categories:

1) Literature reviews and syntheses on father engagement in ECPs
2) Studies on father engagement in ECPs
3) Interventions to engage fathers in ECPs
Literature Reviews and Syntheses on Father Engagement in ECPs


Studies on Father Engagement in ECPs


Interventions to Engage Fathers in ECPs


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