

Child Care & Early Education RESEARCH CONNECTIONS

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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

Ancell, K. S., Bruns, D. A., & Chitiyo, J. (2018). [The importance of father involvement in early childhood programs](#). *Young Exceptional Children*, 21(1), 22-33.

Honig, A. S. (2008). [Supporting men as fathers, caregivers, and educators](#). *Early Child Development and Care*, 178(7 & 8), 665-687.

Palm, G., & Fagan, J. (2008). [Father involvement in early childhood programs: Review of the literature](#). *Early Child Development and Care*, 178(7 & 8), 745-759.

Saracho, O. N., & Spodek, B. (2008). [Fathers: The 'invisible' parents](#). *Early Child Development and Care*, 178(7 & 8), 821-836.

Studies on Father Engagement in ECPs

Anderson, S., Aller, T. B., Piercy, K. W., & Roggman, L. A. (2015). ['Helping us find our own selves': Exploring father-role construction and early childhood programme engagement](#). *Early Child Development and Care*, 185(3), 360-376.

Freeman, H., Newland, L., & Coyl, D. D. (2008). [Father beliefs as a mediator between contextual barriers and father involvement](#). *Early Child Development and Care*, 178(7 & 8), 803-819.

Gorvine, B. J. (2010). [Head Start fathers' involvement with their children](#). *Journal of Family Issues*, 31(1), 90-112.

Rose, K., Johnson, A., Muro, J., & Buckley, R. R. (2018). [Decision making about nonparental child care by fathers: What is important to fathers in a nonparental child care program](#). *Journal of Family Issues*, 39(2), 299-327.

Interventions to Engage Fathers in ECPs

Acevedo-Polakovich, I. D., Spring, H. E., Stacy, S. T., Nordquist, E. A., & Normand, M. M. (2017). [Engaging Latino fathers into Early Head Start: A review of the literature](#). *Children and Youth Services Review*, 82, 347-353.

Chacko, A., Fabiano, G. A., Doctoroff, G. L., & Fortson, B. (2018). [Engaging fathers in effective parenting for preschool children using shared book reading: A randomized controlled trial](#). *Journal of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology*, 47(1), 79-93. (intervention)

Guterman, N. B. (2012). [Promoting father involvement in home visiting services for vulnerable families: A pilot study](#). Washington, DC: Pew Center on the States.

Saracho, O. N. (2008). [A literacy program for fathers: A case study](#). *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 35(4), 351-356.

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