

### School-specific factors

- A tendency for schools to communicate primarily with mothers.
- Staff attitudes and language.
- The predominance of women in the teacher workforce.
- The quality and frequency of home-school communication.
- Schools are traditionally a female-dominated environment.
- The school's ethos and culture.

### Strategies

- Take into account that for some fathers the only contact they may have had with the school or their perception of their contact with the school will be for negative reasons, for example if their child is in some sort of trouble.
- Review for subtle messages that may create barriers for some fathers to feeling welcome in the school
- Promote messages to fathers that promote a positive 'open door' policy for communication and contact with the leaders, teachers and staff.
- Provide fathers with clear information about the best times and the procedures for visiting the school or meeting with leaders, teachers and staff.
- Ensure every effort is made to provide fathers with information about procedures for contacting and approaching the school.
- Utilise the orientation process to promote the school's policy of open, positive interactions with fathers while you have them in the school. Make the point very clear that they are welcome in the school and that you encourage communication and contact as a two way relationship.





### Best Practice Advice from Schools

- Fathers who are reluctant or nervous about coming to school have expressed they are more likely to attend when their children invite them to come to the school. Where possible also get the children to lead and run the activities at the event, so it is truly child centred. Children are also the best interpreters for the parents for whom English is an additional language or dialect.
- We utilised fathers from our Dads Group to contact and build individual relationships with these fathers and then personally invite them to join in activities with their children through the Dads Groups.
- There are a range of reasons fathers are reluctant to engage with the school. Some of our dads have only ever come to the school because of a problem with their child and this sets a very negative tone to the relationship. The key is to help them to become comfortable in the school environment. We wanted to begin with fathers having a positive experience in the school, so we spent time building trust and goodwill.

It was apparent that it was far less threatening for them to begin with activities with their children than to come alone to the school. When their children invite them to come and share an activity at the school, they are far more likely to come. Try planning an event and lean on the enthusiasm of the children to encourage their dads to attend. The children can create and give the invitation to their dads. Just make sure that invitations are given to fathers, father figures and other carers to be inclusive.

#### References

- Cross, D., Erceg, E., (2013). Friendly Schools Plus Evidence for Practice. Hawker Brownlow Education. ISBN 9781743307656.
- Family - School partnerships framework a guide for schools and families - Australian Government, Department of education, employment and workplace relations <https://www.education.gov.au/family-school-partnerships-1> link.
- National Institute for Urban School Improvement. (2004). Family School Linkages Products. Retrieved from <http://www.inclusiveschools.org>.
- Nistler, R.J., and Maiers, A. (2000). Stopping the Silence: Hearing Parents' Voices in an Urban First-Grade Family Literacy Program. The Reading.