

MOTION BY SUPERVISOR MARK RIDLEY-THOMAS

September 25, 2012

Promoting the Importance of Male Participation in Early Childhood Education

Early childhood education provides children with the social, emotional, and cognitive proficiency that is essential to their maturation and has a positive impact on the educational and long-term life outcomes of children. The Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE) Office of Head Start, Los Angeles Universal Preschool (LAUP), Los Angeles County Office of Child Care, and other public and privately administered programs provide children and families with high quality early childhood education that is critically important during the first five years of their child's life.

Research has consistently established that parental involvement in a child's early education has an overwhelmingly positive correlation to long-term student achievement. In addition, there is a strong relationship between parent involvement and positive social behavior. This is particularly important in Los Angeles County where over 20,000 youth are under the jurisdiction of the Los Angeles County Probation Department.

Various studies have demonstrated that mothers and fathers influence their children in distinct, but equally important ways. Early childhood education programs frequently

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undervalue the significance of fathers and other male figures in the lives of young children. A study from the U.S. Department of Education concluded that fathers make their children better students by virtue of their involvement. Regrettably, far too many men do not recognize that the foundations for lifelong learning are established during the early years of life.

The trend can be changed by encouraging fathers, grandfathers, uncles, and other male family figures to support the ongoing education of young children through reading with them, encouraging active play, talking with them, and visiting their early education programs on a regular basis. The development of early childhood literacy skills are an important factor in placing a child on track to read at grade level by third grade. Programs such as the Freedom Schools program developed by the Children's Defense Fund are one example of a model that promotes literacy development. While comprehensive high quality programming is needed in this area, male figures can participate by reading aloud to a child in both the school and home environments.

The Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE) Office of Head Start is already undertaking an effort to improve male participation in early education in its programs. However, children, their families, and early childhood education programs will benefit if thoughtful and coordinated strategies are implemented to boost ongoing male involvement in early care and education programs.

I THEREFORE MOVE, THAT THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS:

1. Proclaim October 1, 2012 as “Be a Hero! Take Your Child to Preschool Day” in the County of Los Angeles by encouraging fathers, grandfathers, uncles, and male family figures to visit their child’s early care and education programs.
2. Encourage early care and education programs throughout the County of Los Angeles to increase outreach to fathers, grandfathers, uncles and male family figures and welcome them into their classrooms on October 1, 2012 and throughout the 2012-2013 school year. A toolkit to assist programs is available at: www.childcare.lacounty.gov or www.Prekkid.org
3. Encourage early care and education programs throughout the County of Los Angeles to advocate the importance of fathers, grandfathers, uncles and male family figures to read-aloud to children and identify opportunities to do so in the classroom environment.
4. Direct the Chief Executive Officer, in coordination with the Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE) Office of Head Start, Los Angeles Universal Preschool (LAUP) and any other relevant agencies to report back in 90 days on a plan to sustain and encourage male participation in early childhood education.

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