



Dads Matter Evaluation

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INTRODUCTION

The Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (OhioMHAS) provided funds to pilot and conduct an evaluation of the **DADS MATTER** curriculum offered at three different locations. Workshop trainers hired to provide this curriculum offered peer support and tools to help fathers become more engaged parents. Early childhood research emphasizes the importance of the parental role as a child's primary educator. Enrolling children in quality preschools and parent involvement have been shown to be key factors supporting kindergarten readiness. The **DADS MATTER** curriculum supported these outcomes by teaching fathers how to become more involved in early literacy effects that are predictive of children's school success. This curriculum aimed to increase father involvement in at-risk families through workshops that educate fathers on being present and contributing to their child's life by reading, library involvement, playing cards or educational games, engaging in their child's formal education, and knowing what programs their children are watching on TV or through other electronic media sources. This evaluation summarizes the results of the **DADS MATTER** curriculum by comparing self-reported datasets before the program started and after the program concluded. The **DADS MATTER** evaluation has two primary purposes:

- To explore the effectiveness of **DADS MATTER** on participant's behaviors towards their children
- To establish outcomes and impacts for **DADS MATTER**.

MEASURES

The evaluation instrument comprised of 12 questions (see attached instrument). The questionnaire contained items that pertained to reading to the child, listening to the child read, the number of books in the home, awareness of the child's TV watching habits, interaction with the child's teacher, and over-

all involvement in the child's life. Located towards the end of the questionnaire, there was a 6-item motivation scale that assessed motivation in these areas pre- and post-workshop. The pre-test questionnaire asked how motivated a participant had been in the domain areas and the post-test questionnaire asked how motivated a participant is now in each domain area.

DESIGN AND PROCEDURES

Prior to the workshop commencing, participants filled out baseline assessments. After the final day of training, workshop trainers collected post-workshop questionnaires. Forty-three out of the 102 participants in both groups did not complete a pre- or post-workshop assessment.

DATA ANALYSIS

A paired sample t-test was used to compare overall motivation pre- and post-intervention. The non-parametric Wilcoxon Signed-Ranks Test was used to evaluate motivational change over time on individual items (e.g. involvement in reading, school, library activities, games, etc.).

RESULTS

Results suggest that father participation in **DADS MATTER** increased participants' overall motivation to become more involved in their child's learning and education ($t = -5.23, p > .00$; mean difference = 3.02) (see Table 1). Table 2 and Figure 1 examine means for each factor contributing to the overall motivation score. For comparative analysis, a Wilcoxon Signed-Ranks Test indicated motivation improvements between pre- and post- test rankings for interacting with the child's teacher about school performance and behavior ($Z = 28, p > .00$), reading to the child ($Z = 13, p > .01$), playing games with the child ($Z = 14, p > .00$), getting books from the library for the child ($Z = 24, p > .00$), and listening to the child read ($Z = 12, p > .01$). Even though there was an increase in motivation to become more involved in their child's development pre- and post-intervention, it was not statistically significant.

Further analysis compared differences between this year's and last year's findings (See Table 3). Results suggest that outcomes across both time periods were equivalent in effectiveness ($Z = 19; p < .94$). To further explore both years' data, we combined motivational reports and ran Wilcoxon Signed-Ranks Tests on all study variables. This analysis similarly revealed the program's effectiveness in increasing motivation for interacting with the child's teacher about school performance and behavior ($Z = 796; p > .00$), reading to the child ($Z = 479, p > .02$), playing games with the child ($Z = 413, p > .01$), getting books from the library for the child ($Z = 877, p > .00$), and listening to the child read ($Z = 424, p > .01$).

DISCUSSION

Results suggest that the **DADS MATTER** program produced motivational improvements for fathers becoming more involved with their children's lives. Specifically, improvements were found for listening to the child read, reading to the child, going to the library to retrieve more books, interacting with the school teacher about the child, and playing games (board games and card games) with the child. The findings support the use of this program to enhance parental involvement in their children's lives and provides continued evidence of its effectiveness.

Table 1. Pre- and Post- Motivation t-test

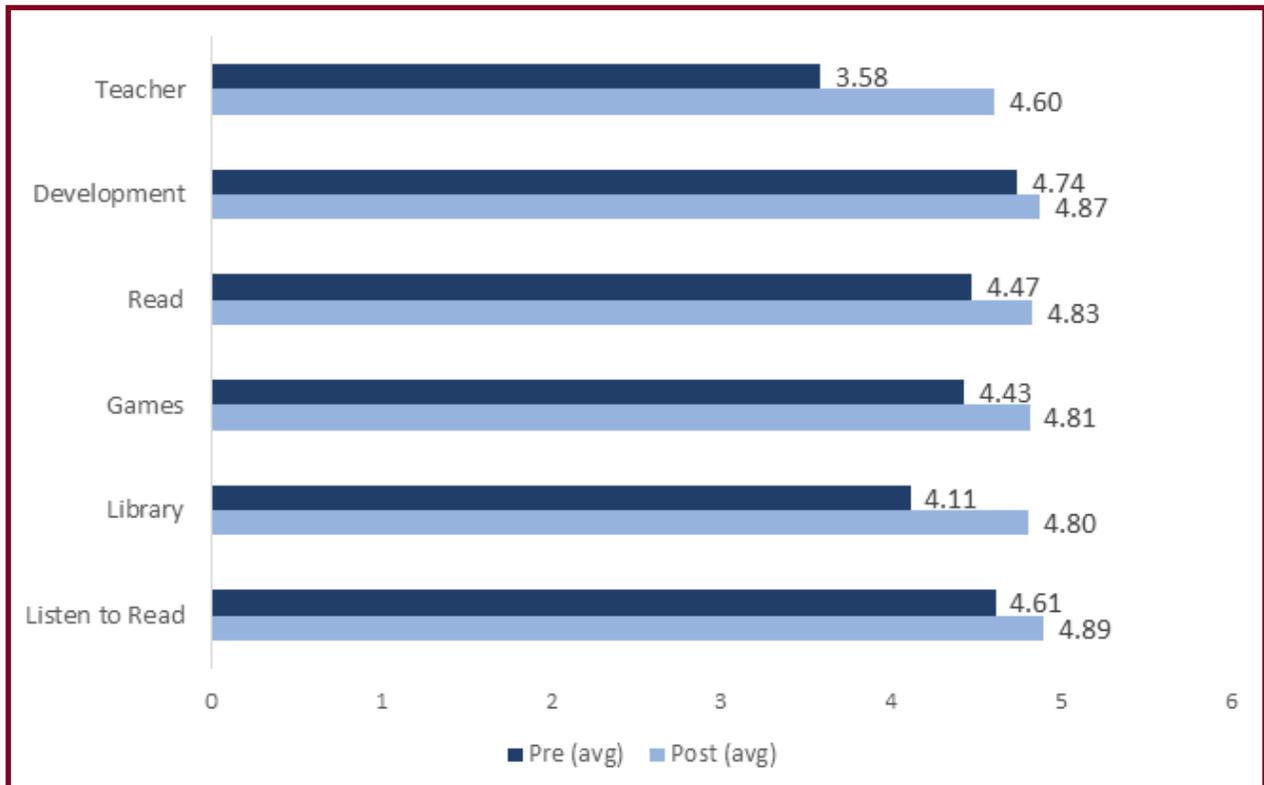
Trial	Mean	N	df	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pre-Motivation	25.78	50	49	-5.23	.00
Post-Motivation	28.80	50			

Table 2. Pre- and Post- Workshop Motivation

Measure	T1	T2	Mean Difference
Teacher	3.58	4.60	+1.02
Development	4.74	4.87	+0.13
Read	4.47	4.83	+0.36
Games	4.43	4.81	+0.38
Library	4.11	4.80	+0.69
Listen to Read	4.61	4.89	+0.28

Table 3. Year 1, Year 2, and Combined Years Comparison

Measure	Y1		Y2		Combined Years	
	Z	Sig. (2-tailed)	Z	Sig. (2-tailed)	Z	Sig. (2-tailed)
Teacher	165**	.00	28**	.00	796**	.00
Development	41**	.02	33	.22	155	.36
Read	74**	.04	13**	.01	479**	.02
Games	63**	.01	14**	.00	413**	.01
Library	119**	.01	24**	.00	877**	.00
Listen to Read	87**	.00	12**	.01	424**	.01

Figure 1. Pre- and Post- Workshop Motivation

SUMMARY**Out of 56 participants:**

- Thirty (54%) enjoyed and praised the program.
- Twenty-one (38%) specified that they wanted to become a better father because of this program.
- Seventeen (30%) stated that they wished the program was longer and had more classes.
- Thirteen (23%) left personalized recommendations to improve the program
- Twelve (21%) expressed thankfulness for the program.
- Eleven (20%) articulated that they learned valuable tools to become a better father.
- Seven (13%) disclosed motivation to be more involved in their child's life.
- Six (11%) confirmed that they discovered the importance of being a father.

Trainers asked participants to provide feedback about the program and any recommendations they had during the final session. Participants wrote these responses on the back of their post-questionnaires. These statements comprise the qualitative data for this study. Out of 102 participants, 56 provided responses about the program.

The most common element of responses was "praise" and/or "enjoyment of the program."

Participant statements included:

- "I think everybody can benefit from this class. I think this is the best class that the Salvation Army has to offer. I really like your outlook on life and how to ask and recite on things. It is very spiritual class and a positive class. Thank you for all that you do."
- "I think this program was the best part of the bell center! Loved it. Real talk"
- "I love the class. Nothing needs to be changed. It's a wonderful class. I would come to the class every week. I learned a lot of stuff. I really like that he doesn't take anything personal"

- “Dads matter was a wonderful experience. It helped me in a lot of different ways. I would really enjoy giving back to this program. I’m passionate about it”

Multiple respondents specified that they wanted to become a better father because of this program:

- “Dad’s matter is and was an awesome program. I’ve been moved tremendously by each and every moment spent learning how to become a better father. Besides the information provided in this class, I’ve been blessed enough to apply all the other teachings into my daily life. Life enrichment class of joys is what I call this class”
- “I thought the dads matter class was very helpful. Being a new, first-time father, I learned many helpful things that will help me to be a good father to my son. The class helped me put my family first, especially with being a recovering addict I missed out on most of my son’s first year of life and now I know how truly important it is for my son to have me in his life. Thank you for taking the time to bring this class to us”
- “Great program. I have finally made amends with my children’s mothers. I am finally back in my children’s lives. I can’t wait for the second phase of this program”
- “I enjoyed the dialect in the dad’s matter class. The information and discussion was good and opened me up to learn and consider new information. I feel like I can father now from another perspective. I am confident I can be ready to parent my son when he is ready to contact me”

Many participants requested that the five-week program would be longer and have more classes:

- “I like the genuineness of the class. I think it could be longer in weeks. It feels like a sense of purpose and, I like getting a chance to share about my kids and to learn better ways to treat them. There seems to be unity in this class”
- “The only thing I wish is it was longer. I feel there is a lot more to learn from this man”
- “Classes need to be longer maybe not more time but more days. Maybe talk about legal matters. Just to encourage us to take that step. Maybe talk about positive things we have done”
- “I feel a bit relief because I was able to talk about what’s really bothered me about the relationship with my son. I think it should be more of these programs for DV classes. I wouldn’t change anything about this group”

Per instructions, some participants left recommendations for the program:

- “The dads matter program was great and very eye opening. It would help to talk one on one at the end of the group. Maybe make that an option. It’s easier to get something instilled in someone that has your undivided attention. Thanks”
- “I enjoyed this class and the only thing I might want to learn more about is children who are about to enter adulthood and how I might better interact with them. Thank you for reminding me that it’s not too late to be a part of my child’s life in a positive way”

- “Maybe just a little more ‘hands on’ activities to keep some people a little more engaged. Other than that, everything was great. Very good information and great facilitator!”
- “Dad’s Matter is the one best class I’ve ever took! Everyone should take it! I feel it’s too short. Need longer weeks, more classes. It would be nice to have a day where you could bring your kids to a class and do a class together. Thank you for the class and your time”

Several respondents felt the desire to say “Thank you” to the DADS MATTER program.

Variations included:

- “This class was the most important thing in my week at the ARC. Thank you very much”
- “I am very thankful for Dads Matter. This class was very eye opening. It showed me how important my presence is to my son. We have a great relationship. I very much look forward to growing even closer with my son. Also, to help fill any voids within my family. This experience is truly sent from God. Thank you very much. P.S. Please continue providing this class, for anyone who is interested. Thank you again. We need more than five weeks”
- “Most beautiful class I’ve been part of. Thanks for your time AYA”
- “The dads matter class has really helped me with my behaviors towards my children. It has been a blessing to attend the social settings and gain the wisdom and knowledge from Bro. Briggs. This class has brought up my awareness on nutrition, diseases, and so much more. I am very thankful for your help in every aspect you have helped me with in my life. Thanks! You’ve been a blessing”

Various participants stated that they learned valuable tools to become a better father:

- “I love how much information I was given about the importance of being actively involved in my kids’ life. I appreciate all the different ways of participating in my children’s life that cost nothing just different ways to stay involved that doesn’t involve spending any money just spending time. Maybe one way we can improve the program is having a day that we can bring in the family, children, mother, or child, grandchildren, etc. to sit in and listen and hear what’s being taught and have an understanding on the importance of being present and ways to properly raise our children without damaging their minds”
- “This program really is helpful to become a better father. It gives us resources for us as fathers how to spend quality time with our children. Just not buying them things, but actually I’ve learned that I need to sit down with my daughters and read to them, help them with their homework, play cards and board games, etc. I loved this class. I would recommend it to all fathers that are struggling with spending quality time with their kids. I’ve also learned that I need to talk to them more and just ask them how their day was, how was school, just tell them that I care about them and I loved them. The only thing I would put into effect would be talking to children that don’t have fathers and show the kids that they are worth it and can be whatever they want to be in life. Just follow their dreams”
- “Dads matter made me feel important. I was always in Madison’s life but I could have done a better job and been a better dad. I also learned a healthy happy way to be a father and activities to do. Be humble to your kids, the tone of your voice and your actions play a really big role in your kid’s life. Being there for your pregnant girlfriend/wife plays a big role

during pregnancy and how the baby grows and learns in the womb. I would really like the class to be longer or a second part of the class 'Phase 2'"

- "I really enjoyed this class. I gained a lot of knowledge to help me become the best dad I can be. Also with this class it helped me to be more positive with my words (speak it into existence). Also to respect others always and that it's not that respect is earned; it should always be given"

Seven respondents reported motivation to be more involved in their child's life:

- "Very eye opening discussions. Positive, spiritual, real life experiences talked about. Looking forward to changing my diet and seeing the results, some regrets about lost opportunities due to the fact that my children are 35 and 30, but I was and still are very involved in their lives and my grand-children's lives. Hoping to do better with the next generation and teaching them to do the same. Pass it on! I wish it was longer"
- "My child is not in my life right now. I am very motivated to stay clean to get my son back in my life. I wish I was motivated but I wasn't there for them"
- "I've done a few great things with my children when they were young. Now it time to get involved with my grandchildren. This program has been an inspiration in my life and it was well received"

Participants also reported their discovery about the importance of being a father:

- "This program has taught me to get involved in the life of my kids that had not be involved so much so during my using of my alcohol. Now that I haven't been on alcohol, I can understand more of dad's contribution in kids' lives fathers are important part of kids' future. I wish that dads matter had more classes to understand more deeply of man's responsibilities. Also, this taught me I can be a father to my kids no matter where I am, in ARC Program, Jail, etc."
- "I got a lot from the dad's matter program. Even though my children are grown, I have grandchildren and two more twin boys on the way. This class will help me inform my son on ways of how important it is for a father to be in their child lives. It is very important to their growth. Do things they are interested in and things that they need also. Every father can learn from this program. I am thankful for this program even though children are grown but they can still learn as time goes on. Five-week program went by quick and I'm sure there is more to learn. Thank you"
- "It help me to identify what my role is as a dad and that it's important to be kind and living in every aspect of my daughter's life"