

Men's Day

*Robert H. Jamison School
Cleveland, Ohio*

The staff at Robert H. Jamison School had a problem: Suspensions and classroom disruptions were on the rise, and students were missing class and roaming the hallways. Rather than responding with punishments, the administration, led by the Action Team for Partnerships (ATP), tried a positive solution: getting dads and other men who were important in the students' lives involved. The school hosted Men's Day, inviting fathers, grandfathers, uncles, and other male role models to a special waffle breakfast.

At the breakfast, speakers encouraged the men to volunteer, visit the school during the day, and have conferences with teachers. After breakfast, each man had his picture taken and wrote a note of encouragement to his child or family member. The school posted these words of support with the pictures around the school for the children to see. About 25 men attended.

Jamison's ATP planned Men's Day to increase volunteerism and give fathers more ownership in the K–8 school. This strategy worked: Many of the men stayed after the event to help monitor the hallways and keep students in class. Some even organized themselves to help out again the following day.

The breakfast was a joint effort: Community members provided the food; ATP members cooked; and two of the speakers came from the community. Another was from the school staff. The school sent home fliers with students and also e-mailed parents directly to invite them. Getting upper-grade students to take the fliers home was a challenge; the school included

response notices with the fliers to ensure that enough families heard about the event.

Since Men's Day, behavior and attendance at Jamison have improved noticeably. Teachers have been able to teach with fewer interruptions. There have been fewer students in "lockout" and more students in the classrooms. Most importantly, Jamison has strengthened the influence of positive male role models on students, increasing family involvement in the school. Plans for next year include scheduling the activity after school, when more dads will be available.

*Doris Wright, Family Liaison
(216) 295-4538
wrightmrs@att.net*