

COACH'S CORNER

Coach's Corner is a monthly DIEEC blog dedicated to providing fresh ideas for all early childhood education professionals.

Men in Early Childhood Education

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It's no secret that the majority of the early childhood education workforce is made up of women. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, women accounted for 94.3% of "childcare workers" in 2022. The percentage of men in education increases moving into elementary and secondary education. Going back to the roots of humanity, women have traditionally taken on more of the caregiving roles in society, while men were typically engaged in "hunting" or more physical work. Much has changed in our modern society and gender has less dictation over our roles. In other words, this is a great time to welcome more men to the field of early childhood education!



DELAWARE INSTITUTE FOR EXCELLENCE IN EARLY CHILDHOOD

Importance of men in early childhood education

One of the most important reasons to have men involved in early childhood education is for children to experience men in caretaking roles. This exposure helps to reduce gender stereotypes and provides a greater variety of role models for young children. Seeing men as early childhood educators also helps to broaden the perspective of young boys which leads to a wider variety of career opportunities when they get older.

Starting with our classrooms

Recruiting more men to our field starts within our classrooms. It starts with our curriculum, environment, and materials. It is important for our children to see men (and women) in a variety of roles. We want to challenge gender stereotypes with our materials. For example, when learning about community helpers, look for print materials or books that showcase women as construction workers or men as nurses or teachers. This may seem insignificant but this begins sending the message that we do not need to stay within previous ideas of gender norms.

In addition, we want to make sure we are encouraging all children to engage with a variety of materials. Encourage girls to build and create in the block area and boys to spend time in dramatic play. Consider adding different accessories to your interest areas. The addition of writing utensils and paper to the block area might encourage different children to participate in block play. Another idea is to add dramatic play materials to your outdoor play area to change things up.

Recruitment and Retention

When working on the recruitment and retention of men in early childhood education, we need to consider support. If you have men working in your program consider asking them what would be helpful in terms of support or accommodations. Many times there may only be one male educator in a program. If this is the case, reach out to other programs to put together a community of practice for men working in early childhood education.

Involving Fathers

When we discuss the role of men in early childhood education programs, we often think in terms of educators. It is important that we also focus on the role of fathers or other male family members. As stated earlier, in alignment with traditional gender roles, mothers/female family members tend to be more involved in a child's education; especially during the early years. While we want to encourage all family involvement, we may need to look at more ways to engage fathers or other male family members.

- Take a survey! Find out how fathers would like to be involved.
- Provide volunteer opportunities specifically for fathers or male family members.
- Plan events that are geared towards fathers. Father's Day is a great opportunity to encourage men who are involved in a child's life!

While we talk about working to include more men in early childhood education, it is important to mention that we also need to be supportive of non-binary educators. One way to be inclusive of all gender expressions is to include preferred pronouns on recruitment information. No matter our focus, inclusion should be at the heart of all we do.

Professional Learning Experiences

[Engaging Fathers \(Self-paced\)](#)- DIEEC