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Dads show dedication to education

'Calling All Men' to be involved, to be role model

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McCarly Thompson always walks his 5-year-old son Machi about a block to Washington Elementary School, but most days he sees his son's classmates walk alone or with their mothers. Yesterday, Thompson joined about 400 fathers who walked their children to school in Roselle as part of an effort to jump start men's involvement in their children's education.

"It shows there are fathers who are connected to their children," said Thompson. "We do care just as much as the mothers."

The "Calling All Men" event, hosted by the Roselle Board of Education, was designed to be an entry point for fathers to get involved in their children's school life. School officials handed out free coffee and doughnuts and collected contact information at the school door to let the fathers know about upcoming events.

"Men are the secret weapon," said Superintendent Elnardo Webster, who said the day's message was one of joint responsibility. "It's going to produce a better student and going to enhance the child's education."

Webster said women usually take on most of the responsibilities when it comes to educating their children. And he wants that to change. He said he plans on hosting more events like the "Fathers Make a Difference" workshop, which attracted about 100 attendees last October.

Madison Dixon, a kindergartner at Washington Elementary, said she loves walking with her dad to school in the mornings. "We talk about what happened in school, and how much fun I have and if I have homework," she said.

Madison's father, Dwayne Dixon, said walking his daughter to school ensures she is safe and gives him quality time with her. "It makes a difference," Dixon said when a father is involved in their child's education. He said if a father doesn't act as a role model, a sports figure or entertainer will fill the spot. "If there's no man or male figure in your life, you may choose the wrong person" as a role model.

At Polk Elementary, the principal said the event went so well, she plans to hold a similar event every month.

Thompson said he hopes to see more fathers involved throughout the rest of the school year, not just on days when the school serves doughnuts and coffee. "I hope it sparked something in someone's life to say, 'Wow, I want to do this every day or as often as I can.'"

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