



The Bloomingdale Family Program serves preschool children in upper Manhattan, with priority given to children and families in poverty and children with special needs. Our mission is to provide an educational foundation that will allow our children to succeed in school and in all the areas of their lives after they leave us—healthy in body, in mind and in their feelings. This includes involving parents in the educational process and strengthening them as advocates for their children, as policy makers, as Bloomingdale staff, and as explorers and achievers of their own dreams and aspirations—moving toward independence and self-sufficiency.

José Velilla
Executive Director

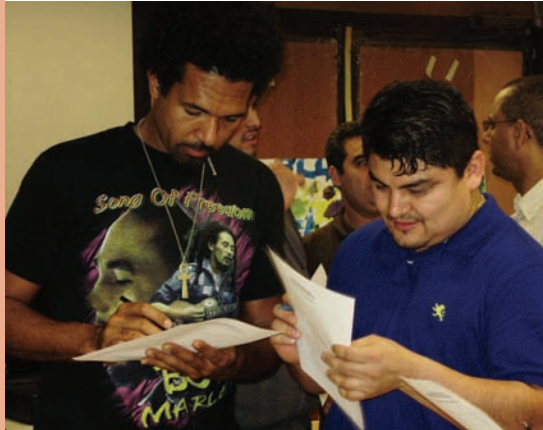
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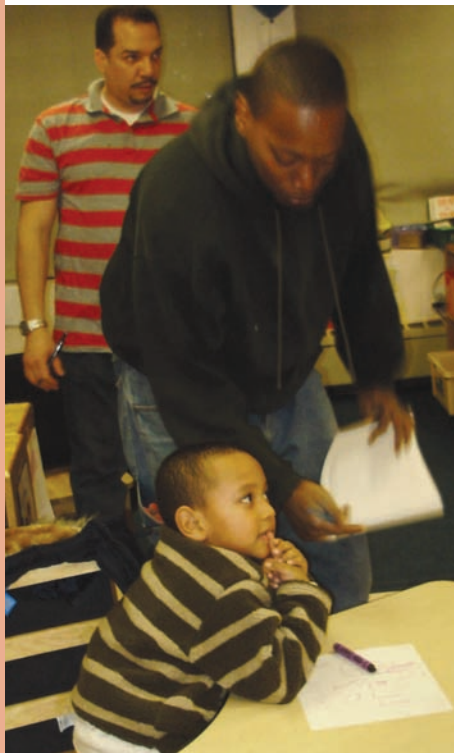
PROJECT GROWTH
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Men Matter — Supporting Children and Each Other



Top: Mark Lowe and Artemio Vergara take part in a "Getting to know you" activity.

Bottom: Terrance and Justin Epps, with Ezequiel Inoa, in the background.



The research is clear: children benefit from having male role models involved in their lives. In 2003, Bloomingdale began a men's involvement group, *Men Matter*, as part of a citywide effort to include men in their children's education. Now in its sixth year, *Men Matter* has been so successful that fathers and others in the group have continued to participate—even after their children no longer attend Bloomingdale. *Men Matter* activities can range from a Saturday afternoon basketball game, to an outing with their children, to an opportunity for the men to get together to discuss their parenting role.

On March 6, *Men Matter* kicked off its sixth year with a wonderful welcoming dinner. Fourteen men attended the supper, which began with an ice-breaker activity that helped participants discover new information about each other and get to know one another. They shared their experiences as fathers and spoke about what being a father means to them:

- Keith:** "It is something special. If you have a daughter she needs your support."
Edwin: "It is a commitment to be a father.... It is the joining of commitment and love."
Terrance: "It is an inspiration. It's a good feeling."
Hayes: "You can't be a good father without [also] being a good husband and a good friend."
Artemio: "It is one of the greatest things you can do. You try to do the best you can."
Mark: "It is love, it's everything. You do everything for your child."
Keith: "I feel more involved in my daughter's life after her attendance at Bloomingdale."

Coordinators of this year's *Men Matter* program are Miguel Rodriguez, Adalberto Delgadillo, and Nicholas Donis — all assistant teachers in our classrooms—with support from Family Assistant Evelyn Morales, Family Services Coordinator Luz Legakis, and Executive Director José Velilla. At the supper, the coordinators shared the program goals shown on the group's logo: "Supporting our children, ourselves, our program and each other."

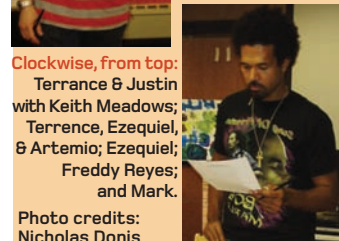
The men are excited and proud to be a part of our program and to start a journey from fatherhood to the classroom. The coordinators are equally enthusiastic and have high hopes that this year will be successful and that more men will become a part of the classrooms.

CALLING ALL ALUMNI to our 13th annual alumni reunion, April 17th from 1–3 p.m. Call Marilyn (212-663-4070) or Dolores (212-665-4631).

Some Upcoming Events

- April 24 Men's Health Workshop
- May 8 Family Movie Night
- June 1 Meeting
- June 19 Father's Day Book/Toy Sale
- July 18 Family Trip

For more information: Miquel Rodriguez, Nicholas Donis (212 665-4631) or Adalberto Delgadillo (212 663-4070)



Clockwise, from top: Terrance & Justin with Keith Meadows; Terrance, Ezequiel, & Artemio; Ezequiel; Freddy Reyes; and Mark.

Photo credits: Nicholas Donis