

Dad serves SCHENECTADY

Fathers a hit with kids at school

*Dads adjust morning schedules for special day*BY KATHLEEN MOORE *Gazette Reporter*

Bryant Williams doesn't have to personally escort his daughter to school. She could walk. But at age 6, he doesn't want to send her off alone.

He had to rearrange his work schedule to take her himself, but he's not complaining about the extra minutes he gets to spend with his daughter every morning.

"It's been wonderful," he said as he sat with Imani in the library at Central Park International Magnet School.

He was surrounded by fathers who came to school Tuesday for the first Dads Take Your Child To School Day. They described changing their schedule for one day, or taking a half-day off. But for Williams, it was just another day. "The hardest part is making the adjustment at work," he said. "But this is what you do. They have to see you care. It's not about what you buy for them. It's getting up early, getting up first." As Imani watched him, he added, "These are the things, when she gets to be 30, she'll do for her kids." Imani shook her head. "They'll walk," she said. "Because I'll have to go to work early." He considered this for a moment. "It's all right," he told her. "When I was younger, I didn't want kids either."

But his example, he said, will give her the guidance she'll need if she ever becomes a mother.

In the meantime, he's already met his first goal: Imani said she feels special every time he drives her to school.

"We get to listen to music. To Justin Beiber!" she said, before adding that Beiber is not Dad's favorite.

"He plays it just for me."

Other children were thrilled to get one morning with their father.

"It's really exciting," said Veronica Lybrand, 8. "I couldn't wait for him to bring me."

Her father, Eric Lybrand, would have happily brought her to school before. But he teaches special education at Schalmont High School. He has to leave for work before she heads to school.

"This is my first time ever," he said as she led him through the school. Other fathers did double-duty. Loren Chrisman walked to school twice on Tuesday — first with his middle-school son, then with his 9-year-old daughter. Usually he's at work at 6 a.m. In honor of the special event, he took a half-day off. His daughter was basking in his attention. Usually, she said, her mother just drops her off. Since the dads were gathering for a meeting with the principal, they stayed. So Lauryn Chrisman, 9, made her father sit outside with her and her friends until school started. "Normally parents don't do that," she said happily.

So many fathers came to school that Central Park ran out of fl iers, paperwork and goody bags.

"This is fantastic!" said Principal Tonya Federico. "I am amazed at how many of you came out this morning to support your child."

She signed up for the first dads day because she said it could pass on a message to her students.

"When the kids see dads are coming to school ... it tells them school is important," she said. "I love today. At the PTOs, it's almost always the moms."





MARC SCHULTZ/GAZETTE PHOTOGRAPHER Bryant Williams prepares a bagel and cream cheese for his daughter, first-grader Imani Williams, upon arriving at Central Park International Magnet School on Tuesday.



MARC SCHULTZ/GAZETTE PHOTOGRAPHER Central Park International Magnet School Principal Tonya Federico speaks to fathers on Tuesday morning as part of the school's "Dads Take Your Child To School" program.