

Dads Play Important Role in Education

Until recently fathers have been the hidden parent in research on children's well-being. Many understand the father's importance in a child's financial well-being, but often assume that fathers play a less important role than mothers in other aspects of children's development. A recent national study, however, reveals that children do better in school when their fathers are involved in their schools, whether their fathers live with them or their mothers are also involved.

According to the study, fathers can be a positive force in their children's education, and when they do get involved, their children are more likely to get mostly A's in school. The study also shows that fathers in two-parent families are less likely than mothers to be very involved in their children's schools. In two-parent families, the report indicates, the proportion of children with highly involved fathers is about half the proportion of those with highly involved mothers (27% and 56%, respectively).

"This study tells me that if America's Dads got as involved as America's Moms in their children's education, America's children would be studying harder and getting a lot more A's," said former U.S. Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley. "Dads make a powerful difference in defining expectations and challenging children to do their best." Overall, children in two-parent families where the father and mother are highly involved get better grades, enjoy school more and are less likely to repeat a grade, compared with those in which only mothers are highly involved.

The study surveyed parents of 16,910 kindergartners through 12th-graders and asked which parent had participated in four types of school activities since the beginning of the school year: 1. attending a general school meeting; 2. attending a regularly scheduled parent-teacher conference; 3. attending a school or class event; and 4. volunteering at the school. Parents were said to have low involvement in their children's schools if they participated in none

or only one of the four activities in during the current school year. Parents who participated in two activities were categorized as having moderate involvement, and parents who participated in three or more activities were said



to be highly involved. The study controlled for other factors that have been associated with a child's school success such as race and ethnicity, parents' education and family income.

According to the study, mothers and fathers are more likely to be highly involved in their children's schools if the schools welcome parental involvement and make it easy for parents to be involved. Parental involvement is also higher if classroom and school discipline are maintained and if teachers and students respect one another.

Fathers in single-parent families have a powerful role to play in keeping their children out of trouble and on the right track. The study shows their school involvement reduces the likelihood of their children's suspension or expulsion. "Highly involved fathers and mothers almost double the odds of good things happening in their children's education," said Riley. "This is why I urge America's schools to redouble their current efforts to reach out to mothers and fathers."

The study shows that fathers of more than half of the K-12 children participate at their children's school at a moderate or high level. The study also found that:

- Children who live in single-parent families headed by fathers are twice as likely to get mostly A's if their fathers are highly involved at school, compared with those whose fathers have little involvement.

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What Fathers Can Do at Home, at School, and in the Community

At home, fathers can:

- Read with their children.
- Establish a daily routine.
- Make the most of bedtime. Talk about the day's events or tell a story. Bedtime can be a great opportunity to connect with children.

At school and other childcare and child development programs, fathers can:

- Participate in efforts to keep their children's schools or childcare centers safe.
- Plan with their child or the child's teacher for the future.
- Attend parent-teacher conferences and school or class events.
- Volunteer at school.

- Visit their child's school or center.
- Meet their child's teachers.
- Pitch in to help meet school and program needs.
- Join the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) or other parent groups.

In the community, fathers can:

- Play or coach a game or sport.
- Become involved in community activities.
- Take time for family outings.
- Participate in activities at their community learning center. These educational or recreational activities are often designed for parents and children to enjoy together.

Help your child Read*Write*NOW!



Editor's note: Summer's here! How can you keep kids busy, and actively learning, even when school's out? Read on. This Bulletin is filled with ideas on encouraging literacy and helping your kids explore the wonders of reading and writing.

Reading is one of the most essential skills needed in school and life and the key to many opportunities. However, current reports show that 2 out of every 5 children read below their grade level. In addition, research has shown that reading 30 minutes a day with a child significantly increases that child's reading ability.

National reading experts for the U.S. Department of Education Initiative's America Reads Challenge developed *Activities for Reading and Writing Fun*, a booklet for families, teachers, librarians and others to help all children to develop strong reading and writing skills. Excerpted below are activities for the "Early Years" for infants and preschoolers; "Beginning to Read" for children through grade 2, and "Encouraging the Young Reader" for older children through grade 6.

You may wish to consider using these activities to develop your children's enjoyment of reading and writing. It is less important for your child to get every word exactly right than it is to enjoy the experience. If he or she finishes one book and asks for another, you know you are succeeding. If the child writes even once a week and comes back for more, you know you are accomplishing your goal!

Early Years

Stories Come to Life

Reading stories is important, but creating and acting out a story makes it come to life. This activity will keep children interested as they listen to stories.

What you'll need: A book or story that is familiar to your child, and room to move about.

What to do: Select a story your child knows. Tell your child that you will read the story aloud. As you read, find one word such as HOPPED, and say it in a loud voice. Ask your child to act out the "loud" word when he hears it (by hopping).

You may then choose words to say loudly that show emotions ("John was SAD"), or words that are nouns ("Bart saw a DOG" or "The LEAF fell to the ground") or words that show action ("The leaf FELL to the ground").

Beginning to Read (through Grade 2)

Word Tag

It is important for children to read words in sentences and stories, so they realize that reading is about understanding.

What you'll need: An easy-to-read story with many words your child can already sound out or read.

What to do: Tell your child, "In this story, I'll read some of the words and you'll read some words. When it's your turn to read a word, I'll tap your shoulder." Start reading. As you come to a word that your child can read, tap the child's shoulder.

Keep taking turns reading the story. You can go back and reread parts of the same stories for extra practice.

Encouraging the Young Reader (Grades 3 – 6)

The Moose Café

Opportunities for reading and writing are all around us—even when the subject is food.

What you'll need: Menus.

What to do: Go with your child to several restaurants to ask for free copies of their menus. Take them home. Ask your child to read several of the items of each menu with their descriptions.

Then ask your child to make up a menu for an imaginary restaurant—the Moose Café or the Tuna Bake Bistro—with creative descriptions.

Family Words Matter

Reading and writing can enable family members to share important life stories. This activity can also be done on computer.

What you'll need: Letter (or email) from grandparents or other family members.

What to do: Select a family member whom your child knows well and likes. Ask the family member to write a letter to your child. The letter should tell a story, funny event, or something about your child.

When your child receives the letter, have the child read the letter. Ask your child to write a return letter to the family member, telling a story or something about the family member that the family has told the child.

Repeat the activity with another family member.

This Read Write* Now! activity book can be viewed online or downloaded from the U.S. Dept. of Education, at <http://www.ed.gov/Family/RWN/Activ97>. Printed copies can be ordered from the Dept of Education's free Education Publications hotline at 1-877-433-7827.*

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- While non-custodial fathers are less likely (only 31 percent participate in any school activity) to participate at school than custodial fathers, when they are involved, they make a difference, particularly for children in grades six and above. Their children are much more likely to get A's, enjoy school, participate in extracurricular activities and are less likely to repeat a grade.
- In single-parent families, children living with single fathers or single mothers are about equally likely to have highly involved parents, 46% and 49% respectively. When fathers have primary responsibility for raising their children, they are almost as involved in school activities as mothers in either two- or single-parent families. And the involvement of single parents -- both mothers and fathers -- is similar to that of mothers in two-parent families.

This article was taken from NCES website, at <http://www.nces.gov/Pressrelease/father.html>. The full report is available via the Internet at <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs98/fathers>.

Explore the Joy of Learning with Your Children—At the Library!

As a parent, you can awaken your children to the joy of learning by encouraging their imagination and curiosity. And one of the best places to do this is at your local library! Libraries are an excellent source for kids of all ages. You may be surprised at the array of resources your library has to offer—for your kids, and for you!

Getting Children Interested

Helping your children enjoy reading is one of the most important things you can do. By far, the most effective way to encourage your children to love reading is to read aloud to them, and the earlier you start, the better. Even a baby of a few months can see pictures, listen to your voice, and turn cardboard pages. Continue to read aloud to your children, even after they have learned to read for themselves. Also encourage them to read to you some of the time. This shared enjoyment will continue to strengthen your children's interest and appreciation for reading.

When You Visit the Library

As soon as you can, include children—even toddlers—in trips to the library. (Libraries are often open in the evening for working parents.) Help your children get their own library cards as soon as possible so they can check out their own books. Also, encourage your kids to ask librarians for help in finding books and materials. Remember, however, that your participation in selecting and sharing books with your child is very important.

Libraries are a Privilege!

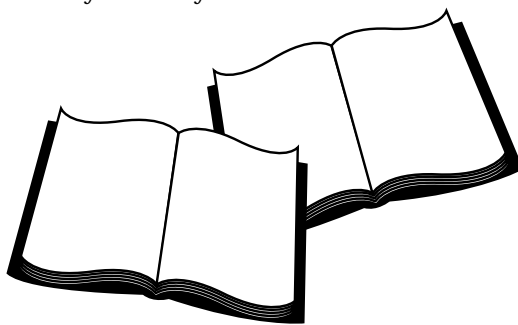
There are commonsense guidelines for behavior that parents need to teach their children:

- Explain to your kids that library books are everybody's property and should be treated carefully.
- Be sure that you and your children know the library's policies regarding loan periods and fines for overdue books.
- Explain to your kids that the library is there for the whole community and they need to be considerate of others' needs.

Library Services

So what exactly can you expect when you take your children to the library? Most public

libraries offer a wide variety of children's books and magazines. Some offer selected materials in foreign languages. Usually there is a children's librarian to help find just the right book—whether it's Mother Goose or how to do a science project. In addition to printed materials, libraries often lend audio- and videocassettes of children's books and movies. They may sponsor special programs, like the ones described below. The best way to find out about what's available is to call or visit your library.



For Preschoolers

Some libraries offer programs for infants, where new parents obtain information on how to stimulate a baby's language development. Other programs for toddlers include activities such as reading aloud, storytelling, fingerplays, rhymes and songs. Children who are 3 to 5 years old usually enjoy group activities such as storytelling, films, puppet shows, arts and crafts, and reading programs.

For School-Aged Children

Libraries often take on an additional role for school-aged children. Libraries often have special services for helping with school work, such as homework hotlines and term paper "clinics." But this does not diminish the library's importance as a source of fun. Books are key, especially for kids ages 7 to 9. These are the years that children usually make the transition to reading independently. It is very important to find well-written books for your children at this stage. A story that will make them laugh or want to know what happens next will motivate them to read.

One of the most important services for school-aged children is a summer reading program sponsored by the library. Recent research has shown that kids who participate in library summer reading programs start the school year with stronger reading skills than those who don't. In addition, the increasing number of computer software programs available at public libraries are of particular interest to school children. As a result, computers are often found in the children's section of the library.

For Teenagers

Teenagers, of course, are more independent than younger kids, so parents will have a somewhat different role in helping them use the library. Making sure that teenagers know what kinds of programs are available and setting the example of visiting the library and reading yourself may be the best help you can give.

A number of public libraries have developed special programs for teens as they transition into adulthood. For instance, some libraries publish book reviews written by teenagers or help young people to publish their own newsletters or magazines. Many libraries enlist teenagers to help with programs for younger children, such as tutoring summer reading participants, doing puppet and craft shows, storytelling, and theater productions. Finally, the local library can help young people seeking information on very serious, personal choices and challenges. There is information on school and career planning, including choosing a college and financial aid, and educational material on drugs and alcohol. Other libraries act as referral agencies to other community resources, such as counseling centers and runaway services. And always, there is an abundance of books.

For Parents

Keep in mind, too, that a visit to the library can help enrich your life as an adult. Whether you are seeking information or just a "good read," your local public library has a lot to offer!

This article is adapted from Helping Your Child Use the Library, one in a series of books on different education topics intended to help you make the most of your child's natural curiosity. You can find this series online at www.ed.gov/pubs/parents. You can order a copy of this book for free from the U.S. Dept. of Education by calling toll-free Ed Pubs at 1-877-433-7827.

Parents' PLACE Workshops

Workshops are regularly scheduled and are also available upon request. For any workshop requested, we prefer a minimum of 10 participants and two hours for presentation. For more information or to request any of these workshops, please call 617-236-7210. For workshops in English, call Becca Hubble, at ext 142. For Spanish, call Diana Rocha, at ext. 171. For Portuguese, call Sandy Blanes, at ext. 144.

EDUCATION WORKSHOPS FOR PARENTS (AVAILABLE IN ENGLISH, SPANISH, AND PORTUGUESE)

- **Parents Are Powerful:** A workshop to promote family involvement in education
- **Parents Are Powerful in American Schools:** A workshop for new immigrant families
- **Families and Schools Together:** How families can partner with schools to ensure that children receive a quality education
- **Raising Student Achievement:** Family involvement really works
- **MCAS:** High standards and high stakes for students and schools

EDUCATION WORKSHOPS FOR SCHOOLS (AVAILABLE IN ENGLISH)

- **Raising Student Achievement:** Family involvement really works
- **Creating Family-Friendly Environments in Schools**

- **Opening the Door to Family-Friendly Schools:** Building partnerships with families through the front office

PARENTING WORKSHOPS

Parents' PLACE sponsors parenting workshops through its collaboration with FamiliesFirst Parenting Programs in Cambridge, MA. To learn if your group or community is eligible, please call 617-236-7210.

WORKSHOP TOPICS INCLUDE:

- *Helping Children Maintain Friendships During the School-Age Years*
- *Self-Esteem: How Do Children Get It? How Do Parents Give It?*
- *Helping Children Understand Differences and Resist Prejudice*
- *When You're Tired of Yelling: Talking, Listening, and Problem-Solving in the Family*
- *Bullies, Victims, and Violence: How to Nurture Empathy, Assertiveness, and Resilience in Our Children*
- *Understanding and Responding to Challenging Behavior*
- *Introduction to Discipline: From Parent to Child and Back Again*
- *Positive Approaches to Discipline: Expanding Your Repertoire*
- *Home/School Partnerships*
- *Let's Talk About It: Keeping Communications Open*
- *Media as Teacher: For Better or Worse*

Parents' PLACE Resources

Resources in English

America Reads Write Now: Activities for Reading and Writing Fun. Free publication from U.S. Dept of Education by calling 1-800-USA-LEARN. 36 pages. Also available online at <http://www.ed.gov/Family/RWN/Activ97/>.

Helping your Child Use the Library. Free publication from the U.S. Dept of Education by calling 1-800-USA-LEARN. 15 pages. Also available online at <http://www.ed.gov/pubs/parents/Library/index.html>.

Helping Your Child Become a Reader. Free publication from the U.S. Dept of Education by calling 1-800-USA-LEARN. 51 pages. Also available in PDF format online at <http://www.ed.gov/pubs/parents/Reader/index.html>.

"National Study Links Father's Involvement to Children Getting A's in School." Article from the National Center for Education Statistics, October 1997. Also available online at <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs98/fathers/>.

"Family Support and Father Involvement." Article from National Parent Information Network website. Available online at <http://npin.org/library/pre1998/n00288/n00288.html>.

Recursos em Português

A Vida do Bebê. Dr. Rinaldo de Lamare. Ensinamentos e conselhos modernos e práticos, escritos especialmente para as mães criarem e educarem o seu filho, desde o 1. dia de vida até completar os 2 anos, justamente na idade mais importante, difícil e interessante do ser humano.

Guia Prático dos Pais. Suzy Camacho. "Através de seus ensinamentos pais e filhos se encontram, se reconhecem, e caminham abraçados."

Coisas que toda garota deve saber. Samantha Rugen. Este livro vai dar dicas e toques, com muito humor para ajudar o adolescente sair bem das situações com classe e naturalidade.

Modos e Maneiras. Beatriz Monteiro da Cunha. Guia para crianças sobre modos e maneiras aceitáveis hoje e dia.

Recursos en Español

Aquí hay algunas direcciones electrónicas con artículos en español sobre las etapas del desarrollo de los niños:

www.worldbank.org/slides/children/nino/que/faces.htm

www.kaimh.org/slides/desarrol/sld001.htm

www.parenting-ed.org/spanish.htm

www.unidos aqui.com/content/es00526F96.html



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