

# Fathers Matter!



We all know that parents make a difference in children's lives and that when parents are involved in a child's education, the child learns more. But often when we think of parents' involvement, we think of mothers who drive car pools, attend PTA meetings, and show up for parent/teacher conferences.

But fathers make a huge difference too.

Did you know that children do better in school when their fathers are involved, regardless of whether their fathers live with them or whether their mothers are also involved?

## Here's What We Know About Fathers' Involvement In Children's Learning

*Children benefit from positive fathers' involvement.* Greater involvement by fathers in such activities as eating meals with their children and helping with homework is associated with fewer behavior problems, greater sociability, and better school performance by children and adolescents. Children do better in school when their fathers participate in school activities even when other possible influences, such as race and ethnicity, parents' education, family income, and mothers' involvement are taken into account.

### Children Whose Fathers Are Involved In Their Schools Experience:

- ★ Improved grades
- ★ Decreased likelihood of repeating a grade or of being expelled or suspended
- ★ Increased participation in extracurricular activities
- ★ Increased enjoyment of school

*Fathers' involvement matters.* Fathers' contribution to children's development over and above that of mothers is not yet well documented because there have been too few studies and because there are so many ways in which fathers may influence children's cognitive development. There is evidence, however, that fathers are more likely to promote young children's intellectual and social development through physical play, while mothers are more likely to do so through talking and teaching while caretaking. Cultural, economic, and individual circumstances also influence child-father interactions.

### Fathers Help Keep Kids Safe, Healthy, And Drug Free

*Dads make a difference.* From the prenatal stage through young adulthood, children benefit from having fathers (and mothers) engaged in keeping them safe and healthy. Parent, family, and extended family are recognized by research to be the single most important factor in a child's intention to use drugs, selection of friends who may or may not use drugs, and decision to use or not use

drugs. Furthermore, when parents monitor the youth's behavior and use good communication patterns, the youth is less likely to use drugs.

There are lots of things that fathers can do to help keep kids safe, healthy, and drug free. Spending time doing fun, structured activities is one of the best things you can do.

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- ★ Volunteer at a school – lend a hand in the classroom, supervise field trips, or lead an after-school program.
- ★ Coach a sport.
- ★ Help your children with their homework.
- ★ Take your child to an art museum.
- ★ Talk to your child about what happens at school.
- ★ Read to your child.
- ★ Lead a scout troop or a youth group
- ★ Host a father/child breakfast.
- ★ Organize a father/child book club.
- ★ Take your child to a basketball game, soccer game, or other sporting event.
- ★ Involve your children in household fix-it projects, through all aspects – planning, budgeting, shopping for materials, reading directions, and learning about tool safety.
- ★ Teach your children how to care for a car. Show them how to pump gas, change a tire, and check the oil.
- ★ Go for a bike ride with your child.
- ★ Play catch.
- ★ Teach your children to play chess, checkers, or other board games.
- ★ Spend time on the computer together.
- ★ Take your child to work for the day.



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