Important DATES:

Mobile Dentist:  
Sept. 30

Policy Council:  
Sept. 16  
Oct. 28

NO CLASS:  
Sept. 6  
Sept. 17  
Oct. 11  
Oct. 18-22

WHEN YOU DON’T KNOW WHERE TO TURN, CALL 211 RESOURCE HELPLINE
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From the Education

We are excited to begin a new school year! The Education Staff looks forward to sharing experiences with the children and families alike. Throughout the school year, there will be a variety of fun and hands-on activities for families in this “From the Education Coordinator’s Desk” segment of the Newsletter. For any additional activities you would like to do in the home, do not hesitate to contact your teacher, home visitor, or an Education Coordinator.

Bridging Home and School

We all know that if a bridge is not structurally sound, it will eventually collapse. Likewise, if relationships are not built on a sturdy foundation, they too will fail.

Too often parents and program staff are intimidated by each other. But by willingly beginning the home/school relationship with an open, sharing approach, we can build trust. Then, when issues arise – even sticky ones – we can talk about them without hesitation.

All of us here try to do our best to keep you informed. We post pertinent information on the parent bulletin board as well as include it in newsletters. We send home other information with your child. We also want to talk with each of you often.

Feel welcome to visit the classroom or socialization at any time. Come eat lunch with us. Drop by and tell us a story or show us something special. Or just take a break, have a seat, and enjoy the children.

Clearly, ongoing interaction and support from both families and staff make the connection between home and school a two-way street. You can help by sharing information about your child with us. Especially during any crisis or period of change, when children are under stress and act or react differently, please keep us informed. Obvious times include a change in jobs, a move to a new house, or an illness or death in the family, but they also could involve the child experiencing nightmares, making changes in eating habits, and stopping or starting medication.

In turn, we’ll alert you to anything out of the ordinary that we might notice in your child here. Only by sharing information can we build a bridge strong enough to support our children.
Coordinator’s Desk

What is “Developmentally Appropriate Practice”? 

You probably will notice that our classrooms exhibit a lot of bustle and noise, that children are up doing things, talking, playing, and exploring. Such a classroom environment differs from the old grade-school images of a teacher doing a lot of talking at a blackboard while children sit and listen quietly at their desks. 

Research and experience tell us that to be effective with young children, teaching practices need to be “developmentally appropriate.” What this means is simply that educators need to think first about what young children are like and then create an environment and experiences that are in tune with children’s characteristics. 

Early childhood, after all, is a time of life quite different from adulthood, and even from the later school years. Children 3-6 learn far better through direct interactive experiences than through just listening to someone talk. They learn extraordinary amounts through play and exploration.

And the younger children are, the more what they learn needs to be relevant and interesting on the day they learn it, not just the context of some future learning. Based on such knowledge about what children of this age are like, we design our program to fit them. It works a lot better than trying to re-design children!

A developmentally appropriate program like ours is age-appropriate. But that’s not all. To make the program a good place for every child, we gear our classroom environment and activities to this community and the families involved. We’re eager to learn as much as we can about each child’s family, cultural background, past experience, and current circumstances. With this knowledge we work to create a program that fits the children and the families we serve.

For more information or any concerns in reference to your child’s educational experience, please contact your home visitor, teacher, or an Education Coordinator at 717-477-1626.
School Days

September is famous for the start of school. You most likely have been shopping and preparing for school to start. New shoes, backpacks and bedtime routines aren’t the only things to consider. Did you know that your child’s physical activity has an impact on how well they do in school? Movement stimulates brain activity. Movement increases blood flow and helps children think more clearly. Certain movements even prepare your child to become a reader. Check out this month’s Move it! activity for a great way to help your child learn the alphabet while moving their body.

Back to School Tips

The key to preparing your child for school is careful planning. Here are some ways you can make it a success.

- Start early with the new routines. Don’t wait until the night before school to change the dinner, bath, story and bed times.
- Make sure your child starts the school day with plenty of rest and a good breakfast. Be careful about giving them sugary cereals and make sure to offer some protein (cheese, milk, yogurt, nuts, etc) with their breakfast.
- Children need plenty of fresh air and activity to help their bodies adjust to being in school and sitting for longer periods of time.
- The night before... Pack lunch (don’t forget to include fruits and vegetables) and have it ready in the refrigerator. Help your child pick out what they will wear the next day. Have the book bag packed and ready at the door.
Chant it!
If your child is enrolled in a program that promotes *I am moving I am learning*, you might be familiar with this chant, adapted from this I’m Moving, I’m Learning CD song.

I’m Moving, I’m Learning
I’m learnin’ what, what, what
What my body does
Like bend and stretch.
(bend and stretch your body)

I’m learnin’ how, how, how
How my body moves
Like fast (move your body fast) and slow
(move your body slow)
Like start (stop moving, start moving and stop again) and stop.

I’m learnin’ where, where, where
Where my body moves
Like high and low (reach up high and then touch down low)
Like forward and backward. (move forward and backward)

I’m moving with, with, with
With my Choosy friends.
Now everybody dance and sing
Everybody dance and sing.
“I’m moving, I’m learnin,
I’m moving, I’m learnin,
I’m learnin to move, and
I’m moving to learn,”
So come on everybody help me sing this song. (move your body all around and dance)

Move it!
This month’s Move It! focuses on a fun and simple activity families can do to promote the development of gross motor, problem solving and literacy skills.

Body ABC’s
Create the letters of the alphabet, using only the body. Here are some ideas on how you can do it.

- 2 people use their bodies to make the letter A.
- 1 person uses their body to create a B
- 1 person uses their body to form a C
- 3 people use their body to make a D
- 2 people use their bodies to create an E

Mix up the number of people needed to make the rest of the alphabet letters. Need more people? No problem, use stuffed animals or dolls.

Some letters could be done using only the hands to help with fine motor development. The letters can be either upper or lower case. Be creative, have fun and most importantly laugh!

For more info on *I am moving I am learning*, visit:  [http://tinyurl.com/movelearn](http://tinyurl.com/movelearn)
Check out Choosy Kids and their resources at:  [www.choosykids.com](http://www.choosykids.com)
This publication was developed as part of the KKGI initiative. Visit the KKGI website at:  [www.panen.org/keystone-kids-go](http://www.panen.org/keystone-kids-go)
TIPS for parents of Preschoolers

Read early and read often. The early years are critical to developing a lifelong love of reading. It’s never too early to begin reading to your child! The tips below offer some fun ways you can help your child become a happy and confident reader. Try a new tip each week. See what works best for your child.

- **Read together every day.**
  Read to your child every day. Make this a warm and loving time when the two of you can cuddle close.

- **Give everything a name.**
  Build your child’s vocabulary by talking about interesting words and objects. For example, “Look at that airplane! Those are the wings of the plane. Why do you think they are called wings?”

- **Say how much you enjoy reading.**
  Tell your child how much you enjoy reading with him or her. Talk about “story time” as the favorite part of your day.

- **Read with fun in your voice.**
  Read to your child with humor and expression. Use different voices. Ham it up!

- **Know when to stop.**
  Put the book away for awhile if your child loses interest or is having trouble paying attention.

- **Be interactive.**
  Discuss what’s happening in the book, point out things on the page, and ask questions.

- **Read it again and again.**
  Go ahead and read your child’s favorite book for the 100th time!

- **Talk about writing, too.**
  Mention to your child how we read from left to right and how words are separated by spaces.

- **Point out print everywhere.**
  Talk about the written words you see in the world around you. Ask your child to find a new word on each outing.

- **Get your child evaluated.**
  Please be sure to see your child’s pediatrician or teacher as soon as possible if you have concerns about your child’s language development, hearing, or sight.

Visit www.ReadingRockets.org for more information on how you can launch a child into a bright future through reading.
Shippensburg Head Start & Pre-K Counts Events

Parent Center Committee meetings:

Shippensburg Head Start Home Base
   Sept. 10th at 10 am
Shippensburg Early Head Start 1 & 2
   Sept. 14th at 10:15 am
Newville Head Start Center
   Sept. 23rd at 12:30 pm
Shippensburg Head Start Center
   Sept. 24th at 12:30 pm
Letort Head Start Center
   Sept. 22nd – time TBD
Carlisle Early Head Start 1 & 2
   October 13th at 11 am

The purpose of the Parent Center Committee meetings:
   1. Parent-Child Education
   2. Social Activities
   3. Discussion of Program Concerns

Center Committee Meetings will be held at least 3 times per year. Center committees are known as classroom meetings. The center committees are comprised of the parents/guardians with children enrolled in the Head Start and Early Head Start program.

Salvation Army Christmas Assistance Sign-Ups 2021
* Family Development Office will provide information to families when it becomes available
SITTING ON SAFETY

Drive safely & ensure your child’s safety by using a proper child car seat.

Checklist:

- Straps are snug with one finger-width of slack; no twists.
- Straps are at shoulder level.
- Ensure the seatbelt straps/tethers are tight, keeping the car seat in place.
- Position your child with his or her back and bottom flat against the car seat.
- Chest clip is at armpit level.

Never leave your child alone in a car

0 – 2 years
- REAR-FACING

2 – 7 years
- FORWARD-FACING

4 – 12 years
- BOOSTER

8 years and above
- SEAT BELT

Keep your child in the specified car seat until they reach the recommended height & weight limit of the seat.

All children under 13 years old must be buckled and seated at the back seat.

Never place a rear-facing car seat in front of an active airbag.

Don’t substitute a booster seat with a cushion; they can slide off, displace the child & cause strangulation.

Brought to you by Positive Parenting
Malaysia’s Pioneer Expert-Driven Educational Programme
www.mypositiveparenting.org
Rules for getting on and off the school bus

Getting on the school bus

When waiting for the bus, stay away from traffic and avoid roughhousing or other behavior that can lead to carelessness. Do not stray onto streets, alleys or private property.

Line up away from the street or road as the school bus approaches.

Wait until the bus has stopped and the door opens before stepping onto the roadway.

Use the hand rail when stepping onto the bus.

Behavior on the bus

When on the bus, find a seat and sit down. Loud talking or other noise can distract the bus driver and is not allowed.

Never put head, arms or hands out of the window.

Keep aisles clear -- books or bags are tripping hazards and can block the way in an emergency.

Before you reach your stop, get ready to leave by getting your books and belongings together.

At your stop, wait for the bus to stop completely before getting up from your seat. Then, walk to the front door and exit, using the hand rail.

Getting off the school bus

If you have to cross the street in front of the bus, walk at least ten feet ahead of the bus along the side of the road, until you can turn around and see the driver.

Make sure that the driver can see you.

Wait for a signal from the driver before beginning to cross.

When the driver signals, walk across the road, keeping an eye out for sudden traffic changes.

Do not cross the center line of the road until the driver has signaled that it is safe for you to begin walking.

Stay away from the bus's rear wheels at all times.

Correct way to cross the street

Children should always stop at the curb or the edge of the road and look left, then right, and then left again before crossing.

They should continue looking in this manner until they are safely across.
Step away from the couch!

All children, regardless of their ability, need to participate in daily physical activity. The only difference is that some children might need the activity or materials adapted. Here are some things to consider for all children, particularly those with special needs:

- **Make it fun!** Children are much more likely to get moving if it is fun.
- **Reduce sedentary time.** Shut off the TV, computer and video games. This will encourage your child to find something active to do.
- **Plan for safety and then relax.** Is the area safe and free from obstacles? Does the equipment work properly? Does your child have on needed safety gear? If you can answer yes to these questions then sit back, relax and allow your child to be a child.
- **Allow your child to experience challenges.** When starting an activity, your child might not be able to do it completely and may tire easily. No worries! Encourage them to do the best they can, as much as they can, for as long as they can. Over time they will build up strength and stamina.
- **Involve peers and community.** Children are typically more motivated when they are doing something with others. Check into your local YMCA, community programs and clubs for kids to see if there is anything they can be involved in.

Adapted from Finding Balance. For information on nutrition and physical activity for children with special needs visit: [www.abilitypath.org](http://www.abilitypath.org)
Chant it!
If your child is enrolled in a program that promotes *I am moving I am learning*, you might be familiar with the words of this chant, adapted from this *Choosy Nation* CD.

**I Move Myself**
I move myself in many ways
I move myself in many ways. (move your entire body)

Shake your head. C’mon shake your head. Choosy says, Can you show me, Can you show me red? (point to something red)

Put your arms up (put your arms up)
Put your arms down (put your arms down)
Choosy says, Can you show me brown? (point to something brown)

Wiggle your front. (wiggle to the front)
Wiggle your back. (wiggle to the back)
Choosy says, Can you show me black? (point to something black)

Be a jumping bean (jump up and down)
Go on be a jumping bean.
Choosy says, Can you show me, Can you show me green? (point to something green)

Move it!
This month’s Move It! focuses on a fun and simple activity families can do to promote body awareness, self control and listening skills.

**FREEZE**
You surely remember playing freeze. Although it seems like nonsense game, there is a lot learned. When children are asked to start and stop activities, they learn self control and this is a skill that helps them throughout their life.

Play music using a CD, MP3 player, or radio. Have the children do whatever movement they wish or dance while it is playing. At random points and without the children seeing, stop the music. Whenever the music stops, they must freeze.

To mix it up, you can change the freeze command to something different like touch your nose, sit on the floor, etc.

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For more info on *I am moving I am learning*, visit: [http://tinyurl.com/movelearn](http://tinyurl.com/movelearn)
Check out Choosy Kids and their resources at: [www.choosykids.com](http://www.choosykids.com)
This publication was developed as part of the KKGI initiative. Visit the KKGI website at: [www.panen.org/keystone-kids-go](http://www.panen.org/keystone-kids-go)
Depression

It is estimated that up to 17 percent of people in America will suffer at least one major depressive episode in their life. An episode can be classified by having at least 5 of 9 major symptoms in a 2-week period.

WATCH FOR 5 OF THESE SYMPTOMS WITHIN 2 WEEKS
1.) Depressed mood
2.) Reduced interest in almost all activities
3.) Unintended significant weight gain or weight loss
4.) Insomnia, or sleeping too much
5.) Increased or decreased motor activity
6.) Fatigue or loss of energy
7.) Feelings of worthlessness or guilt
8.) Reduced ability to concentrate or think
9.) Recurrent thoughts of death

Depression causes unnecessary pain. It is known that stressful life events can trigger depression. Alcohol or drug abuse, steroids, sleeping problems, and illness can also make it worse. Depression in older adults is something to note because it often goes undetected.

TIPS TO AVOID DEPRESSION
1.) Simplify your life
2.) Join a support group with other stroke victims
3.) Do not become isolated
4.) Take care of yourself: eat right, exercise, and get plenty of sleep
5.) Structure your time: plan your day and activities, including leisure time
6.) Practice relaxation techniques
7.) Build emotional skills: these will help you to recognize and express your emotions in a healthy way
8.) Antidepressant medications: direct relief
9.) Psychotherapy: teach coping strategies and problem solving

https://www.uky.edu/chs/karrn/coping-depression
WHAT CAN YOU DO TO PREVENT OPIOID MISUSE?

TALK ABOUT IT.
Opioids can be addictive and dangerous. We all should have a conversation about preventing drug misuse and overdose.

BE SAFE.
Only take opioid medications as prescribed. Always store in a secure place. Dispose of unused medication properly.

UNDERSTAND PAIN.
Treatments other than opioids are effective in managing pain and may have less risk for harm. Talk with your healthcare provider about an individualized plan that is right for your pain.

KNOW ADDICTION.
Addiction is a chronic disease that changes the brain and alters decision-making. With the right treatment and supports, people do recover. There is hope.

BE PREPARED.
Many opioid overdose deaths occur at home. Having naloxone, an opioid overdose reversing drug, could mean saving a life. Know where to get it and how to use it.

For help, resources, and information:
https://www.hhs.gov/opioids/
1-800-662-HELP (4357)
Shippensburg Head Start Program
Male Involvement Initiative

Volume 2

September/October 2021 Edition
Appreciating How Fathers Give Children a Head Start

By ECLKC


Mothers and fathers are more likely to become involved in their children's education if they believe they can make a difference. Parents can learn about the different ways that fathers can make a difference in the lives of their children. Children with involved fathers show up to school ready to learn.

OVERVIEW

Nearly 30 years ago, leading child psychologist Michael E. Lamb reminded us that fathers are the "forgotten contributors to child development." Since then, much work has been done to explore the ways fathers uniquely contribute to the healthy development of their children. Scholars now know that boys and girls who grow up with an involved father, as well as an involved mother, have stronger cognitive and motor skills, enjoy elevated levels of physical and mental health, become better problem-solvers, and are more confident, curious, and empathetic. They also show greater moral sensitivity and self-control.

As they grow, well-fathered children are substantially less likely to be sexually involved at an early age, have babies out of wedlock, or be involved in criminal or violent behavior. They are much more likely to stay in school, do well there, and go to college.

Fathers can help Head Start programs become more effective in achieving positive outcomes for children. Head Start programs can help to strengthen the parenting partnership, and help fathers to be more effective in their children's lives.

These five Building Blocks for Father Involvement will support Head Start programs in their efforts to promote father involvement. Building Block 1 provides up-to-date research on the essential role that fathers play in the healthy development of their children.

It is important that Head Start staff and parents understand the importance of the parenting partnership and why fathers are essential to children's well-being. This knowledge will help them to better meet the needs of families and children.

HOW FATHER INVOLVEMENT IMPROVES CHILD WELL-BEING

There is a substantial body of research literature documenting the positive benefits fathers bring to the lives of their children. A review of studies on father involvement and child well-being published since 1980 found that 82 percent of these studies showed "significant associations between positive father involvement and offspring well-being..."

An analysis of over 100 studies on parent-child relationships found that having a loving and nurturing father was as important for a child's happiness, well-being, and social and academic success as having a loving and nurturing mother. Some studies indicated father-love was a stronger contributor to some important positive child well-being outcomes. Weinraub, in "Fatherhood: the Myth of the Second Class Parent," states that "There is no doubt that fathers are important contributors to child development. In particular, fathers significantly affect the development of sex roles, cognitive abilities and achievement motivation."

ESS AND BEHAVIOR

Children who have an involved father in their lives in the early years show up for school with more of the qualities needed for learning. They are more patient, curious, and confident. They are better able to remain in their seats, wait patiently for their teacher, and maintain interest in their own work.

Educational psychologist Paul Amato explains that this higher level of self-control in school children with involved fathers was also associated with many other healthy qualities, such as improved general life skills, self-esteem, and higher social skills.

Kyle Pruett, in Fatherneed, reports on another major scientific study that linked positive fatherhood involvement with:

- Lowered levels of disruptive behavior, acting out, depression, and telling lies;
- Obeying parents, being kind to others, and being responsible;
- Fewer behavioral problems in young boys; and
- Girls being happier, more confident, and willing to try new things.

Pruett concludes, "Positive father care is associated with more pro-social and positive moral behavior overall in boys and girls."

COGNITIVE, MOTOR, AND VERBAL DEVELOPMENT

Psychologist Ellen Bing was one of the first scholars to explore how fatherhood impacts child well-being. In the early 1960s, she
found that children who had fathers who read to them regularly were more likely to do much better in many important cognitive skill categories than children who did not have fathers who read to them. Interestingly, one of the strongest benefits was a substantial increase in a daughter’s verbal skills.

A study nearly ten years later, published in *Developmental Psychology*, found that both well-fathered preschool boys and girls had increased verbal skills compared with kids with absent or overbearing fathers.

Ross Parke’s research shows that father involvement in the early months of a child’s life contributes to increased intellectual, motor, and physical development.

Henry Biller, noted fatherhood researcher, finds time and again that father-involved children are more confident and successful in solving complex mathematical and logical puzzles. This may be because fathers tend to be more specialized in and have a higher interest in analytical problems. Norma Radin found that high father involvement contributed to higher mathematical competencies in young daughters.

Michael Yogman conducted a study of the role fathering plays in overcoming the effects of prematurity in Latino, African-American, and other inner-city populations. When he followed up with these preemies at 3 years of age, Yogman found that kids with highly involved fathers had substantially higher cognitive skills than those children who did not have involved fathers. Michael Lamb found that preschool children who had involved fathers had higher cognitive competencies on standardized intellectual assessments.

SECURITY, CONFIDENCE, AND ATTACHMENT
Infants who have involved fathers in their lives for the first 18 to 24 months of life are more secure and are more likely to explore the world around them with increased enthusiasm and curiosity than children who did not have close, involved fathers. Father’s active play and slower response to help the child through frustrating situations promotes problem-solving competencies and independence in the child.

MAKING WISE LIFE CHOICES
Research from the University of Pennsylvania found that children who feel a closeness and warmth with their father are twice as likely to enter college, 75 percent less likely to have a child in their teen years, 80 percent less likely to be incarcerated, and half as likely to show various signs of depression.

"A white teenage girl from an advantaged background is five times more likely to become a teen mother if she grows up in a single-mother household than if she grows up in a household with both biological parents."

The likelihood that a young male will engage in criminal activity doubles if he is raised without a father and triples if he lives in a neighborhood with a high concentration of fatherless families.

"The research is absolutely clear ... the one human being most capable of curbing the antisocial aggression of a boy is his biological father."

DEVELOPMENT OF EMPATHY
A long-term study started in the 1950s found that the strongest indicator for a child being empathetic later in adulthood was warm father involvement in the early years of the child’s life.

In a 26-year-long study, researchers found that the number one factor in developing empathy in children was father involvement. Fathers spending regular time alone with their children translated into children who became compassionate adults.

Kyle Pruett, after reviewing the large body of research on father involvement and child development, concludes "these findings take us beyond a shadow of a doubt" that fathers play an important and irreplaceable role in healthy child development. He adds, "the closer the connection between father and child, the better off they both are now and in the future."

THE PROBLEM OF FATHERLESSNESS
Just as it has documented the many benefits of positive father involvement, the research is clear on father absence and its negative consequences for children.

HOW MANY FATHERLESS CHILDREN ARE THERE IN AMERICA?
The United States is the world’s leader in fatherless families.
Tonight, some 24 million children (approximately 34 percent of all children) will go to bed in a home where their father does not reside.

Nearly 40 percent of children in father-absent homes have not seen their father at all during the past year.

More than half of all children who do not live with their father have never been in their father's home.

Percentage of children living apart from their biological fathers (by race):
- African-American children: 66 percent
- Hispanic children: 35 percent
- White children: 27 percent.

SINGLE MOTHERS ARE THE PRIMARY CAREGIVERS IN 84 PERCENT OF ALL SINGLE-PARENT FAMILIES.

FATHERLESS FAMILY GROWTH OVER THE DECADES

From 1960 to 1996, the number of children who lived in homes without a father or stepfather rose from 7 million to nearly 20 million. However, since the mid-1990s, the number of children in fatherless homes has leveled off.

The number of children raised by single mothers more than tripled between 1960 and 2000—from 5.1 million to 16.2 million.

IN 1960, ONLY 4 PERCENT OF SINGLE MOTHERS HAD NEVER BEEN MARRIED. IN 2000, THIS NUMBER WAS UP TO 41 PERCENT.

GOOD NEWS

The percentage of children under the age of 18 who were raised by only a mother was steady from 1985–1990. This number dropped eight percent between 1995–2000.

ATTITUDES TOWARD FATHERS AND FATHERLESSNESS

Sixty-four percent of Americans believe that the rise of single-parent families is very problematic.

A poll conducted in 1999 found that 77 percent of Americans feel that upsurges in divorce and single parenting have weakened family connectivity.

When asked to name the adult "you most look up to and admire," only 20 percent of children in single-parent families named their father, compared to 52 percent of children in two-parent families.

SEVEN IN 10 ADULTS BELIEVE A CHILD NEEDS A HOME WITH BOTH A MOTHER AND A FATHER TO GROW UP HAPPY.

HOW FATHER-LOVE IS DIFFERENT FROM MOTHER-LOVE AND WHY IT MATTERS

Mothers and fathers parent differently, and this difference is a big benefit for children.

Fatherhood is just as essential to healthy child development as motherhood. The professional journal, *Review of General Psychology*, finds that "Evidence suggests that the influence of father love on offspring's development is as great as and occasionally greater than the influence of mother love." Fathering expert Dr. Kyle Pruett explains in *Fatherneed: Why Father Care is as Essential as Mother Care for Your Child*, "Fathers do not mother," *Psychology Today* states that, "Fatherhood turns out to be a complex and unique phenomenon with huge consequences for the emotional and intellectual growth of children." Erik Erikson, a pioneer in the world of child psychology, explained that father love and mother love are qualitatively different kinds of love. Fathers "love more dangerously," Erikson states, because their love is more "expectant, more instrumental" than a mother's love. A father, as a male biological parent, brings unique contributions to the job of parenting a child that no one else can provide.

These are some of the most compelling ways father involvement makes a unique and positive difference in a child's life.

FATHERS PARENT DIFFERENTLY

The mother/father difference provides an important diversity of experiences for children. Dr. Pruett explains that fathers have a
Appreciating How Fathers Give Children a Head Start

By ECLKC


distinct style of communication and interaction with children. By 8 weeks of age, infants can tell the difference between their mother or father in interactions. This diversity, in itself, provides children with a broader, richer experience of contrasting relational interactions—more so than for children who are raised by only one parent. Whether they realize it or not, children are learning at an early age, through experience, that men and women are different and have different ways of dealing with life, other adults, and children.

FATHERS PLAY DIFFERENTLY

While mothers and fathers are both physical with their children, fathers are typically physical in different ways. Fathers tend to play with their children, and mothers tend to care for them. Generally speaking, fathers tickle more, they wrestle, and they throw their children in the air (while mothers warn "Not so high!"). Fathers chase their children, sometimes as playful, scary "monsters." Fathers are louder at play, while mothers are quieter. Mothers cuddle babies, and fathers bounce them. Fathers roughhouse, while mothers are gentle. Fathers encourage competition; mothers encourage equity. Fathers encourage independence while mothers encourage security.

Fathering expert John Snarey notes that children who roughhouse with their fathers learn that biting, kicking, and other forms of physical violence are not acceptable. They learn self-control by being told when "enough is enough" and when to "settle down." Fathers help girls and boys learn a healthy balance between timidity and aggression. Children need mom's softness, as well as dad's roughhousing. Both provide security and confidence in their own ways by communicating love and physical intimacy.

FATHERS BUILD CONFIDENCE

Go to any playground and listen to the parents there. Who is often encouraging kids to swing or climb just a little higher, ride their bike just a little faster, or throw just a little harder? Who is encouraging kids to be careful? Mothers tend toward caution while fathers often encourage kids to push the limits. Either of these parenting styles by themselves can be unhealthy. One can tend toward encouraging risk without consideration of consequences. The other tends to avoid risk, which can fail to build independence, confidence, and progress. Joined together, they keep each other in balance and help children remain safe while expanding their experiences and confidence.

FATHERS COMMUNICATE DIFFERENTLY

A major study showed that, when speaking to children, mothers and fathers are different. Mothers typically simplify their words and speak on the child's level. Fathers are not as inclined to modify their language for the child. Mother's way facilitates immediate communication. Father's way challenges the child to expand his or her vocabulary and linguistic skills—an important building block of academic success.

Father's talk tends to be more brief, directive, and to the point. It also makes greater use of facial expressions and subtle body language. Mothers tend to be more descriptive, personal, and verbally encouraging. Children who do not learn how to understand and use both styles of conversation will be at a disadvantage, because they will experience both of these styles as they enter the adult world.

FATHERS DISCIPLINE DIFFERENTLY

Educational psychologist Carol Gilligan tells us that fathers stress justice, fairness, and duty (based on rules), while mothers stress sympathy, care and help (based on relationships). Fathers tend to observe and enforce rules systematically and sternly, which teach children the objectivity and consequences of right and wrong. Mothers tend toward grace and sympathy in the midst of disobedience, which provide a sense of hopefulness. Again, either of these by themselves is not good, but, together, they create a healthy, proper balance.

FATHERS PREPARE CHILDREN FOR THE REAL WORLD

Generally speaking, fathers tend to see their child in relation to the rest of the world, while mothers tend to see the rest of the world in relation to their child. For example, mothers are often very aware of things from the outside world that could hurt their child (e.g., violence, lightning, accidents, disease, strange people, dogs or cats). Fathers, while not unconcerned with these things, tend to focus on how their children will or will not be prepared for something they might encounter in the world.

Fathers often help children see that particular attitudes and behaviors have certain consequences. For instance, fathers are more likely to tell their children that if they are not nice to others, kids will not want to play with them. Or that, if they don't do well
in school, they will not get into college or land a good job. Generally speaking, fathers help children prepare for the reality and harshness of the real world, and mothers help protect against it. Both are necessary as children grow into adulthood.

FATHERS PROVIDE A LOOK AT THE WORLD OF MEN

Men and women are different. They eat differently. They dress differently. They smell differently. They cope with life differently. Stereotypically, fathers do "man things" and mothers do "woman things."

Girls and boys who grow up with a father are more familiar and secure with the world of men. Girls with involved fathers are more likely to have healthier, more confident relationships with boys in adolescence and men in adulthood. This is because girls have a greater opportunity to learn from their fathers how men should act toward women. They understand from experience which behaviors are inappropriate. Girls raised by involved fathers also have a healthy familiarity with the world of men. They don't wonder how a man's facial stubble feels or what it's like to be hugged by strong arms. This knowledge builds emotional security and safety from the exploitation of predatory males.

Boys who grow up with dads are less likely to be violent. They have their masculinity affirmed and can learn from their fathers how to channel that masculinity and strength in positive ways. Fathers can help boys understand appropriate male sexuality, hygiene, and age-appropriate behavior. It can be difficult for mothers to teach these things to their boys.

FATHERS CAN TEACH RESPECT FOR THE OTHER SEX

Research consistently shows married fathers are substantially less likely to abuse their wives or children than other men. This means that boys and girls with married fathers in the home are more likely to learn by observation how men should treat women.

Girls with involved fathers, therefore, are more likely to select good boyfriends and husbands because they have had a good model by which to judge all candidates. Fathers also help weed out bad candidates. Boys raised with fathers are more likely to be good husbands because they can emulate their fathers' strengths and learn from their shortcomings.

*The American Journal of Sociology* finds that, "Societies with father-present patterns of child socialization produce men who are less inclined to exclude women from public activities than their counterparts in father-absent societies."

FATHERS CONNECT CHILDREN WITH JOB MARKETS

A crucial point in life is the transition from financial dependence to independence. This is usually a gradual process, spanning from about 16 to 22 years of age. Fathers can help connect their children—especially boys—to job markets as they enter adulthood. Fathers often have the kinds of diverse community connections needed to help young adults get their first jobs. When dad is not around, boys may be less likely to have the connections and motivation necessary to land a summer job.

CONCLUSION

As noted sociologist David Popenoe explains, "Fathers are far more than just 'second adults' in the home. Involved fathers—especially biological fathers—bring positive benefits to their children that no other person is as likely to bring." Fathers make substantial contributions to the lives of their children. Children are impoverished developmentally when they are deprived of their father's love.

*The Review of General Psychology* states, "Many studies conclude that children with highly involved fathers, in relation to children with less involved fathers, tend to be more cognitively and socially competent, less inclined toward gender stereotyping, more empathetic, and psychologically better adjusted."

Fathers help children attain all the positive outcomes that Head Start programs do. Fathers can help Head Start programs become more effective. Head Start programs can help fathers be more effective in their children's lives. *Building Blocks 2–5* will help programs to prepare, plan, and sustain their efforts to make fathers a key and effective part of their missions.
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By ECLKC


READING LIST: RESOURCES ON UNDERSTANDING WHY FATHERS MATTER


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FNS nutrition assistance programs, State or local agencies, and their subrecipients, must post the following Nondiscrimination Statement:

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http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html, and at any USDA office, or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by:

(1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights 1400 Independence Avenue, SW Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;
(2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or
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