

Wise Notes

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Importance of Fathers

Father's Day is Sunday, June 18, 2017. You may say why should there be a day set aside for fathers? After all they didn't go through nine months of pregnancy, then labor and delivery and to top it all off, moms usually get the raw end of the deal with diaper changes, runny noses and the like. However, most of us know fathers who really do pull their weight in the parenting department.

In honor of all fathers, this week's article will focus on the importance of a father and how he plays a critical role in the development of children. Children need fathers who love and care for them on a consistent basis.

Here are just a few current trends that would indicate their importance. The latest research indicates that fathers who are actively involved in raising their children can make a positive and lasting difference in their lives. In contrast, research reveals a number of potentially negative outcomes for children whose fathers are not involved. Children who grow up with absent fathers are at greater risks for poverty, school failure, child abuse, suicide, criminal behavior, emotional and behavioral problems, early sexual activity, and drug and alcohol abuse. These risks diminish substantially when children grow up with an active and loving father in the home.

The latest research indicates that kids who grow up with warm, nurturing and actively involved fathers:

- do better in school
- have higher self-esteem
- build better relationships with other kids
- develop healthier ideas of how they should behave as adults
- grow into more successful adults

Fathers can have a powerful impact on their children's success in school. According to a study by the U.S. Department of Education, when fathers took an active role in their children's education (like attending school meetings, volunteering in school) the kids were more likely to make A's, participate in activities like sports and clubs, and enjoy school, and they were less likely to repeat a grade.

A child's potential for success in school starts long before he or she walks into a classroom. An easy activity fathers can do with their young child, which is consistently linked with better school performance, is reading. Why is reading so good for kids? Educators believe that reading and storytelling stimulate children's imaginations, enhance their vocabularies and help them learn about the world around them. It is also an activity that is very child-centered and creates warm and positive interaction between parents and children.

Fathers! I encourage you to be a hero by reading with your children on a regular basis and they will reap the benefits that last a lifetime! There is no real "right" or "wrong" way to read to your child, but these tips might help you both have more fun while you read.

- Begin reading to your child as soon as possible
- Chose books your child likes
- Set aside a special time for reading
- Focus on the 3 R's: Rhythm, rhyme, and repetition
- Read and re-read books that are predictable and contain repetitions
- Point to words as you read
- Talk about the story as you read
- Read slowly enough for your child to build mental pictures.

Happy Fathers Day! You do deserve a day set aside just to honor you and recognize the positive impact you make on our children.

For additional information concerning the importance of reading to children or to obtain a recommended reading list for young children, contact Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, Wise County office at 627-3341.