



NATIONAL STUDY LINKS FATHERS' INVOLVEMENT TO CHILDREN GETTING A'S IN SCHOOL

According to a new national study, 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.

"This study provides hard evidence about the powerful and positive influence that parents can have as full and equal partners when they make the commitment to help their children get a good education," Vice President Gore said. "Fathers matter a great deal when it comes to helping their children succeed in school and this study should encourage millions of American fathers to step up to the plate and make a difference in their children's education."

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 percent and 56 percent, 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 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 is 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 findings come from a new report, ***Fathers' Involvement in their Children's Schools***, which provides data from the National Center for Education Statistics's 1996 National Household Education Survey of the parents of 16,910 kindergartners through 12th-graders. The report emphasizes fathers' involvement in their children's schools, but information on mothers' involvement is also included.

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. In two-parent families, mothers' involvement reduces the likelihood that their children will be suspended or expelled.

"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 (two activities per year) or high (three or more activities per year) level.

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U.S. Department of Education - Father Involvement, Page 2 of 2

The study also found that:

Children who live in two-parent families are more likely to get mostly A's, regardless of the level of the mothers' involvement. 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 (none or only one school activity) involvement.

- 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 percent and 49 percent 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.
- Families with high parental involvement in their children's schools are more likely to visit a library, museum or historical site with their children, and are more likely to have high educational expectations for their children.

The survey is one of the first bodies of research that looks at the individual contributions of mothers and fathers in their children's education. Fathers have in the past been overlooked in research, but in 1995 President Clinton asked all executive departments to include fathers in their programs, policies and research, where possible. The report is based on interviews with the parents of nearly 17,000 kindergartners through 12th graders. 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.

Parents were asked which adult in the household had participated in four types of school activities since the beginning of the school year: attending a general school meeting; attending a regularly scheduled parent-teacher conference; attending a school or class event; and volunteering at the school.

The report is available via the Internet at <http://nces.ed.gov/pub98/fathers/>

Five Steps to Being a Stronger Father in Your Child's Education

- 1. Meet your child's teacher or teachers and introduce yourself.**
- 2. Call the teacher yourself if you have any questions or concerns.**
- 3. Attend teacher conferences and set appointments to discuss your child's progress.**
- 4. Help your child with homework and projects on a regular basis.**
- 5. Let teacher know you want to be involved and provide your contact information.**



Strong Fathers-Strong Families

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10 Things Strong Fathers Can Do



To Keep Their Children Away From Drugs and Alcohol

1. Consistently set rules and expectations for child's behavior.

When rules are set consistently and children know that they are *expected* to follow rules concerning their behavior, they are more likely to follow those rules. As well, when kids know that the rules are set for their safety and well-being, they find it easier to do the things that are expected of them.

2. Monitor what your child is watching on television.

By controlling the content of their TV watching, you are controlling what messages they are receiving about alcohol, drug use, and other risk taking behaviors. You are also setting expectations for positive, responsible viewing habits for the future.

3. Monitor your child's internet usage.

Understand the internet and its many uses, monitor the sites your child has access to, and what they are viewing. Set the expectation of what they should and should not access. Purchase filtering software if possible to screen out undesirable content but do not depend on it to do the monitoring for you.

4. Restrict the music your child is listening to and purchasing.

Let your child know that no matter how popular a performer or group may be that you will not tolerate lyrics condoning or promoting drug and alcohol use, violence, hate, or other negative messages. Listen to your child's music, seek to understand the messages being promoted and look for parental advisory labels on CDs.

5. Be aware of how well your child is doing in school.

Set the expectation for children to do their best in school. Communicate with school personnel such as teachers, counselors, and administrators. Monitor your child's homework, their grades, and their behavior at school on a regular basis. Let your child know that you are monitoring their efforts and be available to help when needed.

6. Communicate to your child that you oppose drug use.

Fathers that let their children know that they would be very upset if their child was to use drugs cut their child's risk of using drugs by two-thirds. Make sure you are sending this message regularly.

7. Eat dinner with your children (with the TV off).

Parents who spend time in conversation over dinner without the distraction of TV at least 6 to 7 times a week reduce the risk of their children taking drugs by over 50 percent. 47 percent of the children in these types of homes report an excellent relationship with their father.

8. Know where your children are at all times.

When there are not periods of time of an hour or more after school or on weekends when parents do not know where their child is and curfews are set, children are at half the risk of using drugs or alcohol.

9. Expect the truth about where your child is going.

Fathers should expect to be told where a child is going in the evening or on weekends and to be told the truth by the child. Children should be held accountable about where they are going, and with whom they are going.

10. Have chores for your child to do on a regular basis.

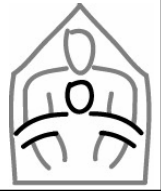
Set the expectation that your child will have certain responsibilities on an ongoing basis. The combination of responsibility and set daily or weekly activities helps children to find alternatives to risk-taking behaviors.

Information derived from the National Survey of American Attitudes on Substance Abuse VI:Teens conducted by The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University.



Strong Father Facts

Good news for strong fathering from strong research



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Fathers Involved in the Early Development of Their Child

A study assessing the level of adaptation of one-year-olds found that, when left with a stranger, children whose fathers were highly involved were less likely to cry, worry, or disrupt play than other one-year-olds whose fathers were less involved.

Kotelchuk, M. "The Infant's Relationship to His Father: Experimental Evidence." *The Role of the Father in Child Development*, Ed. Michael E. Lamb. 2nd edition. New York: Wiley, 1981.

In a study of 75 toddlers it was found that children who were securely attached to their fathers were better problem solvers than children who were not securely attached to their fathers. Children whose fathers spent a lot of time with them and who were sensitive to their needs were found to be better adapted than their peers whose fathers were not as involved and were less sensitive.

Esterbrooks, M. Ann and Wendy Goldberg. "Toddler Development in the Family: Impact of Father Involvement and Parenting Characteristics." *Child Development* 55 (1984): 740-752.

In a study of preschoolers, children whose fathers were responsible for at least 40 percent of child-care tasks had higher cognitive development scores and a greater sense of mastery of their environments than those children whose fathers were less involved.

Radin, N. "Primary Caregiving Fathers in Intact Families." In A.E. Gottfried & A.W. Gottfried (eds.) *Redefining Families: Implications for Children's Development*. New York: Plenum Press, 1994: 55-97.

Fathers who had spent more time with their children without the mothers present during the first year of life (independent of maternal employment status) were found to exhibit greater variety in their interactions when their children were 12 months old, and their children showed more responsivity and exploration.

Pedersen, F.A., et.al. "Paternal Care of Infants during Maternal Separations: Associations with Father-Infant Interaction at One Year." *Psychiatry* 50 (1987) 193-205.

A study on parent-infant attachment found that fathers who were affectionate, spent time with their children, and overall had a positive attitude were more likely to have securely attached infants.

Cox, M.J., et.al. "Prediction of Infant-Father and Infant-Mother Attachment." *Developmental Psychology* 28 (1992): 474-483.

In 1988, a study of preschool children admitted to New Orleans hospitals as psychiatric patients over a 34-month period found that nearly 80 percent came from fatherless homes.

Source: Jack Block, et al. "Parental Functioning and the Home Environment in Families of Divorce," *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, 27 (1988)

"Father hunger" often afflicts boys age one and two whose fathers are suddenly and permanently absent. Sleep disturbances, such as trouble falling asleep, nightmares, and night terrors frequently begin within one to three months after the father leaves home.

Source: Alfred A. Messer, "Boys Father Hunger: The Missing Father Syndrome," *Medical Aspects of Human Sexuality*, January 1989.

Strong Father Facts : Good news for strong fathering from strong research

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Fathers Involved in Their Child's Education

A study using a national probability sample of 1250 fathers showed that children whose fathers share meals, spend leisure time with them, or help them with reading or homework do significantly better academically than those children whose fathers do not.

Cooksey, Elizabeth C. and Michalle M. Fondell. "Spending Time with His Kids: Effects of Family Structures on Fathers' and Children's Lives," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 58 (August 1996): 693-707.

Children whose fathers were highly involved in their schools were more likely to do well academically, to participate in extracurricular activities, and to enjoy school, and were less likely to have ever repeated a grade or been expelled compared to children whose fathers were less involved in their schools. This effect held for both two-parent and single-parent households; and was distinct and independent from the effect of mother involvement.

Nord, Christine Windquist. *Students Do Better When Their Fathers Are Involved at School* (NCES 98-121). Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, 1998.

In a study of 29 fathers of academically successful African-American males, six childrearing practices were observed: child-focused love (consistent concern and showing interest); setting limits and discipline; high expectations; open, consistent, and strong communication ("talking with" rather than lecturing); positive racial and male gender identification; and drawing from community resources (especially the church).

Greif, Geoffrey L., A. Hrabowski, and Kenneth I. Maton. "African American Fathers of High-Achieving Sons: Using Outstanding Members of an At-Risk Population to Guide Intervention." *Families in Society* 79 (January/February 1998); 45-52.

Children who have fathers who regularly engage them in physical play are more likely to be socially popular with their peers than children whose fathers do not engage them in this type of play.

Carson, J., V. Burks, & R.D. Parke. "Parent-child Play: Determinants and Consequences." In K. MacDonald (ed.), *Parent-child Play: Descriptions and Implications*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1993: 197-220. See also Parke, R.D. "Fathers and Families." In M.H. Borstein (ed.) *Handbook of Parenting, Vol. 3, Status and Social Conditions of Parenting*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum, 1995: 27-63.

"... for girls, studies link a sense of competence in daughters – especially in mathematics and a sense of femininity – to a close, warm relationship between father and daughter."

Radin, N. and G. Russell. "Increased Father Participation and Child Development Outcomes." *Fatherhood and Family Policy*. Eds. M.E. Lamb and A. Sagi. Hillside Lawrence Erlbaum, 1983: 191-218.

Fathers Involved in Their Child's Behavior

The higher a child rated acceptance by his or her father, the higher teachers rated the child on social competence and positive conduct.

Forehand, Rex, and S. Nousianen. "Maternal and Paternal Parenting: Critical dimensions in Adolescent Functioning." *Journal of Family Psychology* 7 (1993): 312-221

When both boys and girls are reared with engaged fathers they demonstrate "a greater ability to take initiative and evidence self-control. Pruet, K.D. *The Nurturing Father*. New York: Warner Books, 1987.

For predicting a child's self esteem, it is sustained contact with the father that matters for sons, but physical affection from fathers that matters for daughters.

Duncan, Greg J., Martha Hill, and W. Jean Young. "Fathers' Activities and Children's Attainments." Paper presented at the Conference on Father Involvement, October 10-11, 1996, Washington D.C., pp. 5-6.

The children of single teenage mothers are more at risk for later criminal behavior. In the case of a teenage mother, the absence of a father also increases the risk of harshness from the mother.

M. Mourash, L. Rucker, *Crime and Delinquency* 35. 1989.

Using a national probability sample, father involvement correlates with fewer behavior problems exhibited by their children. This finding holds after controlling for the level of maternal involvement.

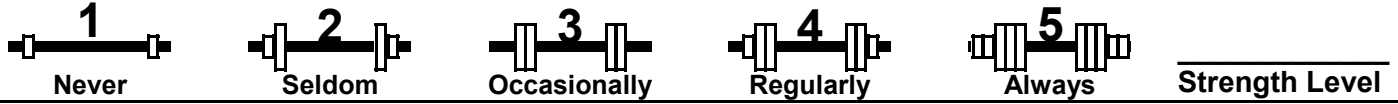
Amato, Paul R. and Fernando Rivera. "Paternal Involvement and Children's Behavior Problems." *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 61 (1999): 375-384.



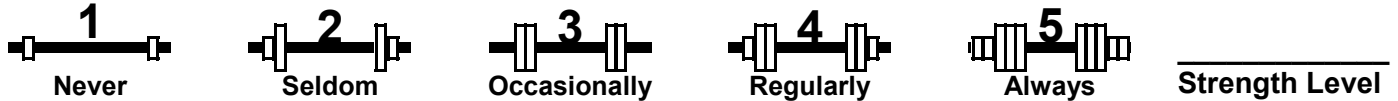
Strong Father Strength Assessment

Instructions: Read each statement and rate your honest strength level in each area.
Add your scores and check the chart at the bottom to see your present strength as a father.

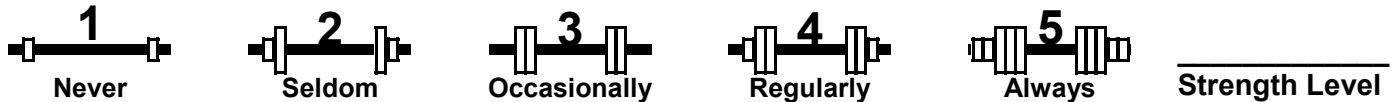
1. I read to my child or encourage them to read to me.



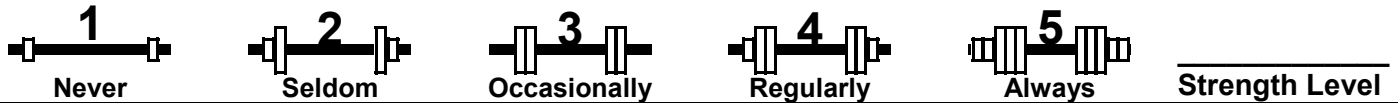
2. I ask my children about their classwork and homework.



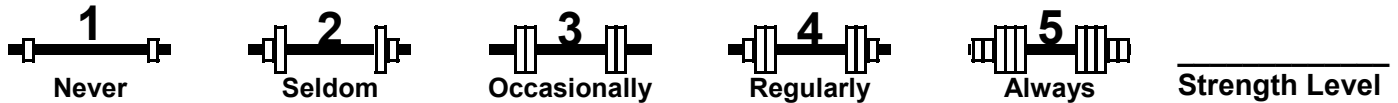
3. I check my child's progress through reports and teacher contacts.



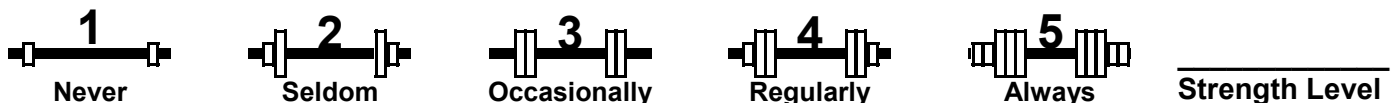
4. I find time to play with my children individually and as a group.



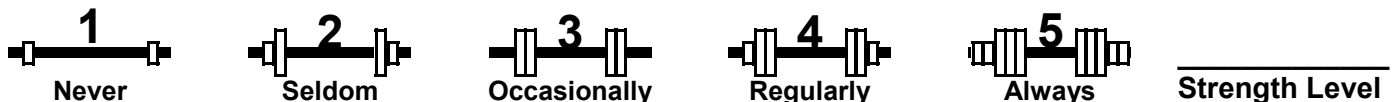
5. I talk to my children about my dreams and expectations for them.



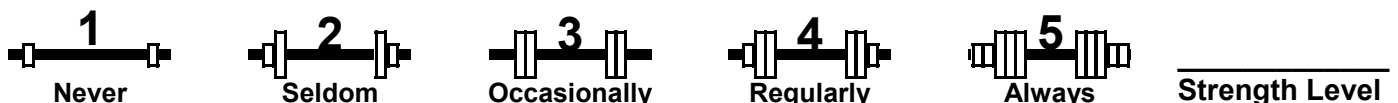
6. I balance time for work and family to focus on my children.



7. I commit time and effort to the moral development of my child.



8. I talk to my child about the dangers of drugs, alcohol, and tobacco.



Strong Father Chart:

- 35-40 **SUPER STRONG Father**-Share your success with other fathers.
- 28-34 **STRONG Father**-Continue the good work, encourage other fathers.
- 20-27 **DEVELOPING Father**-Continue to learn seek, help from other fathers and programs.
- 8-19 **WEAK Father**-Seek help immediately!! Develop a plan to gain strength as a father.

_____ Strength Totals