



Dads and Early Literacy



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What is Literacy?

- Definitions of Literacy
 - Ability to read and write (Whitehurst & Lonigan, 2003)
 - Reading, writing, other creative or analytic arts, and knowledge and skills in specific subject matter (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998)



Alternative Literacies

- Literacies represent ways of seeing, understanding and responding to problems and may include:
 - Linguistic (talking, reading & writing)
 - Mechanical (creating and building with tools)
 - Consumer (awareness of products and advertising)
 - Interactive (“reading” people)
 - Computer

Voss (1996)



Fathers and Literacy

- Important Questions
 - How does gender socialization influence the development of different literacies?
 - Are men less likely than women to value, model, and teach linguistic literacy to young children?



Review of Research

- What do we know about dads and early literacy?
 - What are the benefits of father involvement in early literacy?
 - What is the level of involvement in reading to young children?
 - What kinds of materials do fathers read?
 - Why do fathers engage in literacy activities?
 - What are some of the differences between mothers and fathers related to literacy?



Benefits of Fathers Reading to Children

- Flouri (2003)
 - Fosters emotional security
 - Aids relaxation
 - Vital means of transmitting shared values
- Green (2002)
 - Children are superior readers
 - Children perform better in school
 - Children have better relationship skills



Level of Fathers Involvement in Reading to Children

US Studies

- Brown et al. (2001) Children ages 3-12
 - 39% of resident fathers read at least once a week
 - 55% of resident mothers
- National Center for Fathering (1999) Fathers of children K-grade 12 read:
 - 25% every day
 - 23% 1-2 times a week
 - 40% never



Level of Father Involvement in Reading to Children

UK Studies

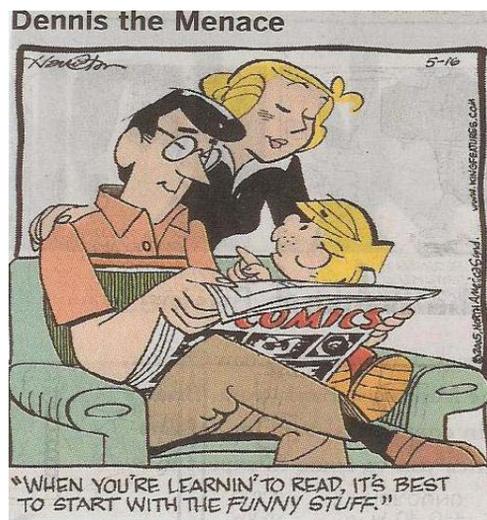
- Flouri & Buchanan (2003) Children age 7; parent reads most weeks
 - Fathers 37% of children
 - Mothers 50% of children
- National Literacy Trust (2003) ages 5-11 helped with reading at home
 - Fathers 50% of 5-7 year olds, 25% of 7-11
 - Mothers 75% of 5-7 year olds, 50% of 7-11

What do dads read?

- Newspapers
- Magazines
- Dictionaries
- Maps
- Telephone Directories
- Manuals

Ortiz, 1999

What Dads Like to Read





Why do Fathers engage in literacy activities?

- **Skill Building**- getting children ready for school - **60%**
- **Bonding with children**- Comfortable and fun activity to share with child- **35%**

Ortiz, 2000



Mother/Father Comparisons

- Dads are less certain about expected reading behaviors (Bus, et. al., 1997)
- Dads have less experience reading to children
- Dads are less inclined to participate in conventional print-related activities
(Clark, 2005)



Mother/Father Differences

- Mothers more likely to recognize importance of early exposure to books
- Mother more likely to initiate book reading at various times throughout the day
- Fathers more likely to read only at bedtime
- Reading by fathers often delegated and supervised by mothers

Nichols, 2000

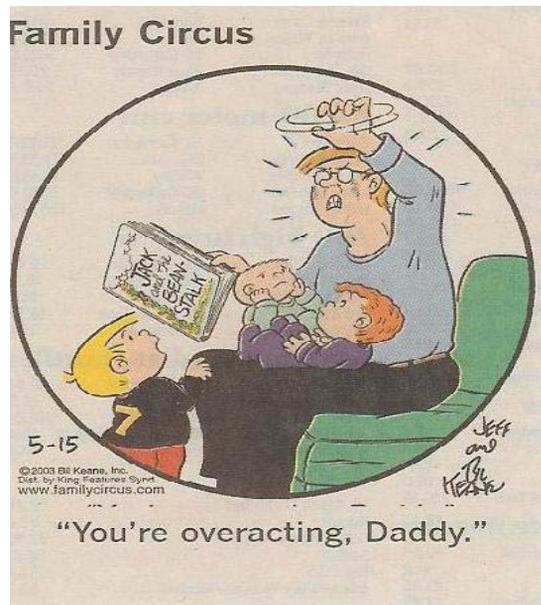
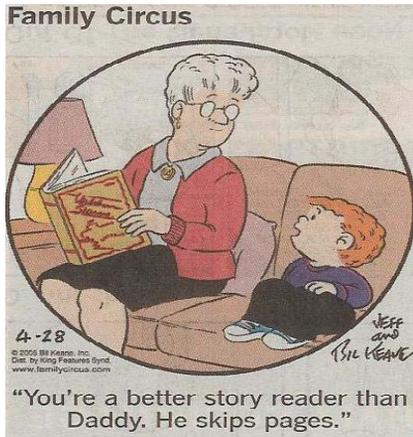


Fathers' attitudes & behaviors

- Fathers are more likely to report a history of school failure in literacy
- Fathers more likely to dislike reading aloud
- Fathers are more likely to use strategies to shorten time spent reading

Nichols, 2000

Dads' Reading Style





Characteristics of Dads Involved in Early Literacy Activities

- Fathers who share child rearing duties are more involved in child's reading & writing (Ortiz et. al, 1999)
- Father's reading habits provide a model for child (Clark, 2005)
- Father's level of education is a factor (Gadsden & Ray, 2003)
- Fathers are more likely to be involved when the family context is positive (Clark, 2005)



Barriers to Father Involvement in Early Literacy

Group Exercise

- What are the top 10 reasons that more dads are not more involved in reading and related early literacy activities?



Lessons from Practice Literature

- Teachers should not exclude or underestimate fathers
- Communicate directly with fathers
- Fathers may be unsure of where to begin with literacy activities
- Teachers may want to start with books with traditional male themes
- A broad view of literacies and valuing fathers abilities and interests can increase motivation

Karther (2002)

Fletcher & Dally (2002)



Major Conclusions about Fathers and Early Literacy

- Father involvement is an important factor in child's learning and school success
- Fathers are involved in a number of formal and informal ways but less than mothers
- Fathers may be limited in knowledge and skills involved in supporting literacy
- Strategies to engage fathers should build on fathers' interests and strengths
- Fathers' attitudes and beliefs about literacy are important to consider

Fathers are an important and understudied resource for promoting literacy with young children

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