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How Important Is A Father's Involvement In His Children's Education?

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A weekly question/answer column

**How Important Is A Father's Involvement
In His Children's Education?**

Sue Cardwell answers:*

There is no question that parental involvement in their children's education increases the likelihood of scholastic success. The more parents are involved in such activities as school meetings, parent-teacher conferences, school or class events or volunteering at the school, the better the chance for their children to have higher grades, fewer incidents of repeating a grade or less problem behavior that results in suspensions or expulsions. Most of the research, however, has been focused on mother involvement and we know less about contributions fathers' involvement makes to their children's scholastic performance.

Following are some important findings and suggestions:

- Fathers in two-parent families are not as involved as mothers in two-parent families, but fathers in single parent families are as involved as mothers in two-parent families. When there is only one parent, that parent fills the role regardless of gender.
- Fathers who are involved in their children's lives at home are more inclined to be involved in their children's lives at school. Reading and attending museums or other educational facilities are often activities fathers participate in when school involvement is high. Fathers who share home activities are also more inclined to discuss future educational goals with their children.
- In two-parent families, the strongest predictor of father involvement is mother involvement and her encouragement of father. Other important factors include the father's educational level and number of family activities at home.
- Fathers' involvement has been linked to children's class standing, school enjoyment, and extracurricular participation. In both two-parent and single-parent families, fathers' involvement is associated with the likelihood of children getting mostly A's, enjoying school participation and becoming involved in extracurricular school activities such as sports, drama, music, etc.
- Although nonresident fathers are the least involved in their children's educational experience, when the nonresident father is involved, benefits to their children are similar to both two-parent involvement and single-parent involvement. With research expanding more and more into the area of fatherhood, results will likely continue to show the importance of father's involvement in many, if not all, aspects of their children's lives; the educational arena is only one aspect.

* Sue Cardwell is a graduate student in family and development, Utah State University