

Fastbreak For Fathers

a monthly e-mail to help you be the kind of dad your child needs you to be.

by Rich Batten, Family and Consumer Science Agent, Douglas County
Colorado State University Cooperative Extension

You are receiving this e-mail because you sent a request to fatherwork@douglas.co.us. You may unsubscribe at anytime by sending an unsubscribe request to the same address. **If you find this e-mail helpful, please forward it to others you know.** Back issues of *Fastbreak* are available online at www.douglascountyextension.org and www.beafanofyourkid.org.

In this issue: The Importance of Reading – Take the FRED Challenge!

OBSERVATIONS

The real magic of Harry Potter was the number of children and families who began to read again. I have four children ranging between the ages of 11 and 17 and reading aloud together is still one of our favorite activities.



Research and practice demonstrate that reading aloud is one of the best ways to prepare children for learning to read and to keep them reading as they grow and learn. However for many dads reading seems to be something left for their kids to do at school or on their own.

A poll commissioned by the National Center for Fathering, discovered that 40.2% of fathers never read to their children. In this national telephone survey, parents of school-aged children were asked, "How often does your child's father read to your child?" 34.0% of fathers self-reported that they never read to their child. Mothers, when asked the same question, reported that 45.5% of the fathers of their children never read to them.

Dads of children ages 5-12 were more involved, but not by much; 35% still never read to their children. Non-married and non-custodial dads (55% and 65%) were more likely to never read to their kids.¹

Reading together, like sharing a family meal, provides a centered time of enjoying one another's company. Don't get me wrong, my kids and I aren't above an argument here and there about how we think a certain character's voice should sound, who gets to read, or who's touching who, but in the long run the discussions and memories that result from engaging in a common story together transcends the time and hassle it takes to make it happen.

¹ The study consisted of a random sample of 894 individuals, 18 and older, available from residential phone number in the contiguous United States (www.fathers.com/research/involvement.html).

Cooperative Extension programs are available to all without discrimination.

IDEAS

The next time the entire family is around the dinner table take turns **sharing your current favorite book** by naming the title, author and illustrator, and giving a brief description of the book and why it's a favorite.

After dinner, instead of watching television, read aloud from a book (or books) to each other. If you haven't been read to in awhile, you'll be surprised how much fun it is.

If you are new to **reading aloud** you may want to consider these tips:

Use expression. Change your voice for different characters. Let your voice get soft and loud. Put some life into your reading.

Practice patience. Take time to answer your children's questions. The questions mean you have their attention. If your children have no questions, invent some yourself: Ask what they think about the story you read and why.

Slow your pace. Do not race while reading. Slow down. If time is a problem, read a shorter story. Don't expect smaller children to sit perfectly still; they are listening even when they are squirming.

Challenge your listener. Choose books that challenge your child's mind and interests.

Have fun. Sharing stories is fun and creates a closeness that you and your children will remember all your lives.

You'll soon discover that one good book leads to another and that family reading might just take on some magic of its own.

RESEARCH

Results from a recent evaluation study of the **Fathers Reading Every Day (FRED)** program in Texas – see below for how you can be involved – demonstrated significant improvements in the amount of time fathers spent reading to their children, number of books read during a typical week, level of involvement in their children's education, amount and quality of time spent with their children, and level of satisfaction with the father-child relationship. Other significant findings from FRED participants include:

- 61.4% reported that FRED "Increased the time I spent with my child."
- 58.7% reported that FRED "Improved the quality of the time I spend with my child."
- 57.2% reported that FRED "Helped me become more involved in my child's education."
- 66.2% reported that FRED "Increased my satisfaction level as a parent."
- 70.3% reported that FRED "Improved my relationship with my child."

RESOURCES

Family Literacy Initiatives: Reading with Dad Initiative Book List –

Reading with Dad is a list of quality children's picture books featuring fathers. The List was compiled in 2001 by a group of local children's literature specialists.

www.minnesotahumanities.org/Literacy/dadlist.htm



Cooperative Extension programs are available to all without discrimination.



Reading With Dad, written by Richard Jorgensen and illustrated by Warren Hanson, is a book that brings focus to the joys and love of reading, and honors dads spending time with their children. The story carries the reader on a journey through the cycle of life, as one generation sets an example for the next. Listen to an interview with the author on Minnesota Public Radio

www.mpr.org/books/titles/jorgensen_reading.shtml

Kids Literacy Colorado – Resources and ideas to help every child experience the fun, the challenge, and the fulfillment of literacy.

www.kidsliteracycolorado.douglascountylibraries.org/litindex.htm

Children's Book Week November 15-21, 2004 www.cbcbooks.org/cbw/

CONNECTIONS (Metro Denver & Beyond)

Take the FRED Challenge! – Online reading program for fathers and their children. FRED is a 4-week program designed to encourage dads read to their children every day during the month of November. Get all the details at www.douglascountyextension.org

- Complete the online pre-program survey
- During the first 2 weeks, read to your child at least 15 minutes a day
- During the last 2 weeks, read to your child at least 30 minutes a day
- Record the time you spend reading and the number of books on the reading log
- Return your reading log to the CSU Extension Office – Douglas County via
 - mail: FRED c/o CSU Cooperative Extension, 410 Fairgrounds Rd. Castle Rock, CO 80104
 - fax: 303.688.4862
 - e-mail: fatherwork@douglas.co.us
- Complete the online post-program survey



Participants who submit pre and post program surveys and reading logs will be entered into a drawing to receive a bookstore gift certificate.

Father Fraternity – (Parker Adventist Hospital) Classes for new dads. Call 303.269.4390 for more information and to register.

Sky Ridge Dads – (Sky Ridge Medical Center) Classes for new dads. Call 720.225.2229 for more information and to register or visit www.skyridgemedcenter.com

The Parent University – (Douglas County School District) Parenting classes for dads and moms. Call 303.387.0128 or visit www.dcsdk12.org for current course schedule.

At Home Dads 9th Annual Convention – (Oakton Community College, Chicago area) Saturday, November 20: 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Annual convention for new dads. Keynote address by Dr. Kyle Pruett, Yale University. Call 847.635.1812 or visit www.oakton.edu/dads

"You can't be the kind of dad that you want to be. You can't be the kind of dad that you wanted to have. You've got to be the kind of dad that your child needs you to be."
 -Roland Warren, The National Fatherhood Initiative

Cooperative Extension programs are available to all without discrimination.

If you find this e-mail helpful, please forward it to others you know. Subscribe to *Fastbreak for Fathers* by sending an e-mail to fatherwork@douglas.co.us with "subscribe" in the subject line. Non-electronic versions of this newsletter are available upon request by calling 720.733.6926.

Back issues of *Fastbreak* are available online at www.douglascountyextension.org and www.beafanofyourkid.org.

Fastbreak for Fathers is a publication of the *Douglas County FatherWork Connection*, a countywide, research-based, fathering education and advocacy initiative committed to increasing the probability of every child in Douglas County Colorado being intimately connected to an involved, responsible and loving father or father figure.

**The Douglas County FatherWork Connection is facilitated by
Rich Batten, Family and Consumer Sciences Extension Agent - Douglas County
Colorado State University Cooperative Extension
720.733.6926 / rbatten@douglas.co.us
www.douglascountyextension.org**