

Co-op Community News

From the Parent Advisory Council
of the North Seattle Community
College Cooperative Preschool
Program



March 2008

Do Dads Really Matter?

How today's enlightened fathers are impacting their kids' lives

By Karen Lee Willemsen, Ed.M., NSCC Parent Education Instructor

“**Y**ou know the rocket going to the moon, honey?” William Sears, a pediatrician, father, and author of countless child care books, recalls telling his five year-old daughter in his pioneering book, *Becoming a Father: How to Nurture and Enjoy Your Family* (1995, revised edition 2003). “There are a lot of people on the ground watching it at Mission Control monitoring it, so that if the spaceship gets a little off path, they can help the astronauts get on course so they can reach their goal — the moon.” That’s what he wanted to do as a father, he explained, to help his children when they get a little off path, so that eventually they could reach their goals on their own.



We know it, intuitively, that fathers play an influential, even crucial part in the lives of young children. And when we see them in our co-op classes, at the playgrounds, at Mommy and Me classes around town, we realize that they know it, too. Each generation of fathers is both a product of and a response to the fathering they received.

Matthew Walker is the stay-at-home dad of a four year-old daughter, an involved co-oping parent at Latona 3 to 5’s, and my husband. For him, knowing what kind of father he wanted to be came easily. “I had a dad and a stepdad who were both angry, aggressive men. And I had that in me, too. Marriage made me see how everything I do affects my core relationships, but having a child really made me realize I had to change.

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2008 Calendar

March

10	PAC Meeting
10-13	Cross-Over Registration
22	Open Registration
31-April 4	Spring Break (no school)

April

14	PAC Meeting
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May

19	PAC Meeting
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When I asked him what he thought the most important thing he'd like to share about his own experience with other dads, he said without hesitation, "For me, it's all about **communication**. I mean, everything flows from that. I started when Bridget was a baby, and couldn't talk back. But I thought, 'Well, this will help her language development, and we're bonding, so that's good.' And now, if I really take the time to talk to her, about everything, she can work through most things. It's about being really present now, but also keeping the long term picture in mind. If I want her to talk to me when she's a teenager, I need to talk to her now, and listen, show her respect, and make sure she trusts me."



In the Psychology departments of major universities research studies devoted to maternal influences still far outpace their paternal counterparts. The presumptive focus is most often mothers' relationships to babies, toddlers, and preschoolers. Despite this, modern dads want to be involved in all aspects of parenting. And the research on fathering that is emerging supports them in that.

Dr. Kyle Pruett of Yale University's Child Study Center, in his research summary, *How Men and Children Affect Each Other's Development (Zero to Three Journal, August 1997)* concluded that "Male involvement...has measurable, positive effects on the development of children."

Looking over the research, here's what we do know:

- Dads who are nurturing and available create a close, trusting relationship with their children. Based on this, children whose dads exhibit positive masculine traits including the ability to be assertive, decisive, responsible, logical, and able to take charge in difficult situations, will likely also exhibit those traits.
- Fathers nurturing is positively correlated to both boys and girls ability to form successful friendships and peer relationships
- Fathers nurturing is also positively correlated to children's learning and abilities from infancy on into the school-age years

- Fathers and mothers interact differently, so children receive unique input from each. Families in one Yale study, where fathers were the primary caregivers (Pruett, 1992) had children who were active and robust in infancy, were able to quiet themselves and enjoyed the stimulation of the outer world, and at age two "seemed to expect that play would be rich, exciting, and reciprocated."

- Each father develops a unique kind of Paternal Competence, based on the kind of nurturing he wants to give and receive, and his own image of what it means to be a "good father."

There are, of course, other studies highlighting the negative effects of unpredictable, uninvolved, and absent fathers. And the results are dramatic: starting in toddlerhood children seek out male attention from father figures to replace an absent father, they are more defiant with their mothers when their fathers are gone for significant periods, and more aggressive at an early age. Boys may struggle to regulate their own emotions, and girls may find it challenging to develop positive relationships with male adults, and on and on...

So, how can the modern dads in our community be as effective and impactful as they want to be, and how can we support them? Sears suggests that parenting partners really talk about their parenting philosophies and styles, so that they can get on the same page. Supporting Mom, when she is the primary caregiver, is crucial, but so is finding your own confidence as a dad. Giving Dad the opportunity to be the primary caregiver for significant periods of time helped a man to mature as a father, and as a husband, says Sears. "Fatherhood is one big give-athon," he writes. "The earlier we learn to give, the greater the joy in becoming a father." Besides he adds (with I imagine, a wink), "You may be surprised at how good your wife will be to you if you have been good to her baby."

It's not rocket science. Dads do matter.

February 1, 2008



Dear NSCC Parent Cooperative Preschool Supporter;

Parent education is an integral component of the co-op experience. Val Donato, Parent Education Program Coordinator, has been instrumental in developing and expanding the program at North Seattle Community College. A brief biography of Val's accomplishments is included with this letter.

Parent educators continue to need additional education opportunities to keep the parent education experience alive for all of those who participate. There is currently no award program at NSCC to support parent educators in their pursuit of professional development activities such as the purchase of books or attendance at workshops, and very limited resources to provide for professional development for the faculty.

At this time when Val is planning to cut back her cooperative preschool teaching time next year and just do program coordination and online classes, we feel this is a great time to honor her for the more than 30 years of dedication to the college and parent education by setting up an endowment fund to provide an annual award to parent educators in their pursuit of continuing education. In order to provide a \$500.00 annual award for professional development at least \$10,000 must be obtained.

Please send your tax deductible donation to:

North Seattle Community College Education Fund

Write "Val Donato" on the memo line of your check

9600 College Way North

Seattle, WA 98103

Or donate through the secure site: <http://coops.northseattle.edu/fundraising/valaward.html>

More information is available at 206 327 3604 or nscceducationfund@sccd.ctc.edu.

Sincerely,

PAC Fundraising Committee:

Angie Dietrich, Phaleen Hanson, and Lisa Moody

Donato Award Planning Committee:

Dr. Robert Fineman, Health and Human Services Dean

Matthew Ayer, NSCC Education Fund Associate Director

Becky Callahan, Parent Education Instructor

Cesily Crowser, Parent Education Instructor

Betty Williams, Parent Education Instructor

Join Victory Heights PM 3-5s Co-op Preschool



The Victory Heights PM 3-5s program is currently enrolling for the 2008-2009 school year. We are located at the Victory Heights Recreation Center at the intersection of NE 107th Street and 19th Avenue NE. Our site includes a quiet neighborhood park with a large grass field and modern playground equipment. Before and after class each day many parents and children gather at this playground to catch up with each other, arrange play dates and carpools, as well as enjoy the weather, neighborhood, and community.

Our teacher, Suzie Barrow, is a former Co-op parent, and mother of four. She has been teaching preschool for six years, and brings with her many more years of experience in working with children. Suzie has a

hands-on approach to learning, through play and socialization. She loves to foster creativity and self-expression through art and music. She has a natural enthusiasm for life and learning, and carries that over in the classroom, where children are encouraged to explore the world around them.

The PM 3-5s preschool program is geared towards kids who are entering kindergarten the following year. It provides many opportunities for creative and imaginative play. The children engage in open-ended art projects, lots of pretend play, block construction, sensory table play, story-telling and dramatization, concrete investigation of science and math concepts, and various types of manipulative activities. We encourage the children to share ideas, thoughts, and concerns in small and large groups. This builds confidence, self-esteem, and group cohesiveness. We provide a safe place where kids can learn about their world through play, while building lasting friendships.

The PM 3-5s class schedule is Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays 12:30-3:30. Parents are expected to help in the class one day a week as well as serve a committee position (such as class photographer, field trip coordinator, or class treasurer). The parent who attends class also earns credit in Parent Education at North Seattle Community College.

If you'd like to enroll in Victory Heights PM 3-5s preschool please contact Jen Marberry, parent coordinator, at (206) 274-8172 or jenphat@hotmail.com.

Job Openings

Teacher, University-Ravenna Pre-3's co-op preschool is looking for a teacher to start in Fall 2008. Class times are Tuesdays and Fridays from 9:30 11:30am. Contact Ann Delestine at anndelestine@yahoo.com.

Teacher, Broadview 3-5s co-op preschool is looking for a teacher to start in Fall 2008. Classes meet on Monday and Wednesday mornings and Thursday afternoons.

Part-Time Parent Ed Instructor, NSCC Cooperative Preschools. Starts Fall 2008.

NSCC Co-op Preschool Open Registration

Saturday, March 22nd

Invite your friends with kids to come check out the coop system! Information Fair 10-11 a.m., with registration starting at 11 a.m.. (But please leave the children home if you can. The registration process can involve long waits and the site is not the safest for small children.)

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