



Building parent-school partnerships

WORDS Michael Grose

What kids learn from fathers

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Kids learn important lessons from their dads

A Galaxy Research study found that three quarters of Australian dads nominated their father as the person from whom they learned their most important life skills.

Shaving, riding bikes, driving and changing tyres are the skills that men attributed to their dads.

At first glance these may not appear too startling but dig a little deeper and you find that they attribute vital lifelong success characteristics to their dads.

High work ethic, honesty, supportiveness and loyalty were all values that men directly attributed to their dads.

The results of the study show that dad is the 'doing' guy. Mothers tend to interact with their kids differently. They are more verbal, more astute at developing interpersonal skills and more likely to reveal what is on their mind.

The language of fatherhood is about activity – dads teach many of their important lessons through activity.

Learning to be a good sport, to share and to work toward a goal are lessons that dads teach their kids in very hands-on ways.

The study also showed that it was through activity that men formed their relationships with their dads.

Playing, tinkering, building and pulling things apart are the modus operandi of many dads.

What do dads teach girls?

Dads teach girls fundamental lessons about interacting with males. As my girls were growing up I wanted them to expect to be treated well and respectfully by males (both present and future) as well as having the confidence to be assertive.

That meant that I needed to **treat my daughters kindly**, while allowing them to **speak up to me (in the nicest possible way) when needed**.

Numerous studies have linked fathers with the healthy development of girls, including self-esteem and confidence.

Certainly dads should complement their daughters genuinely and persistently in adolescence when body image doubts are very common. But they also need to let their daughters grow away.

This is a challenge as dads tend to be protective of their daughters and hard on their sons.

It's lucky then that most mums are protective and super-supportive of their boys! The yin and yang that mothering and fathering provides is a fabulous balance for kids.

Boys grow into their dads

Little boys want to be like their dads. They attribute superman-like qualities to their fathers. Dads need to make the most of this while they can because their sons become teenagers and try hard to reveal their feet of clay.

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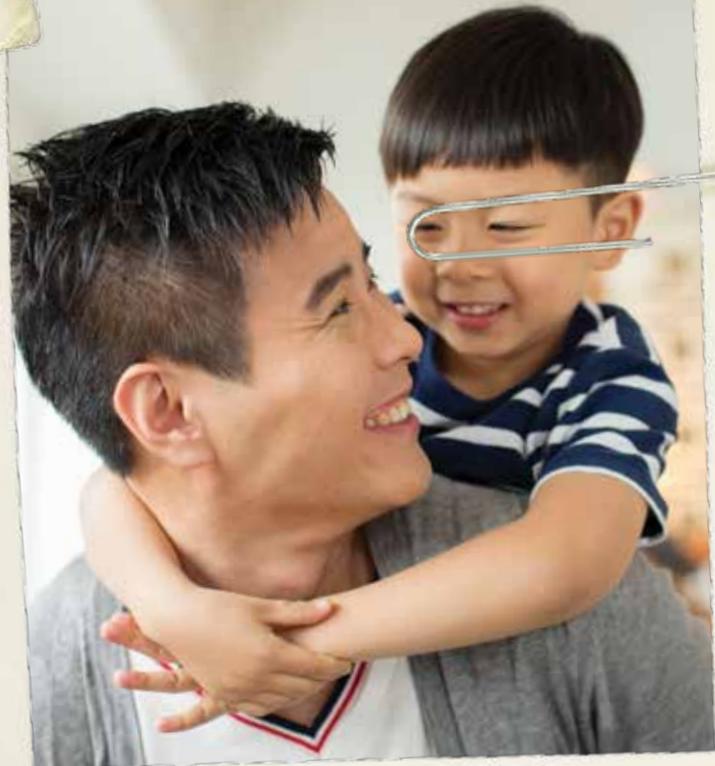
... What kids learn from fathers ...

The GOOD NEWS is that the Galaxy Survey showed that most men still want to be 'like their dad.' That boyhood dream doesn't diminish in adulthood. That's lucky as most men become like their fathers, hopefully better versions!

- A better version of a father appears to be one who is involved with his kids but also one who can balance and **support the parenting style of his partner.**
- A better version is one who plays with his kids but also one who disciplines too. **He balances softness with firmness.**
- A better version is not being a quasi mother or a gender-neutral parent but confident enough to learn from his partner while **retaining the maleness of fathering.**
- A better version is one who talks openly to his partner and **engages in a dialogue about parenting.**
- A better version is one who **remembers what it was like being a kid** and bringing that into parenting as much as possible when you are with them.

And fathers need partners who support them in their parenting efforts, actively share the parenting enterprise, and recognise that **DADS DO IT DIFFERENTLY.**

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