



Fathers Reading Every Day

<http://fcs.tamu.edu/families/parenting/fathering/fred/index.php>

EXTENDING KNOWLEDGE *Providing Solutions*

Relevance

- Learning to read and write are skills that are essential to a child's success in school and later life.
- According to many experts, the single most important activity that parents can do to help their children acquire essential literacy skills is to read aloud to them on a frequent basis.
- Reading aloud to children is a simple, yet powerful, activity that has been shown to improve children's literacy development across a variety of domains, including vocabulary growth, print awareness, enjoyment of reading, and writing abilities.
- Researchers have repeatedly shown that children who read well in the early grades are far more successful in later years; those who fall behind often stay behind when it comes to academic achievement.
- Children who are reading proficiently at an early age are more likely to perform better in school, and as a result, graduate from high school and/or pursue a post-secondary education.
- According to recent statistics, 60% of 3- to 5-year-olds have a family member who reads to them daily.
- In a recent survey of fathers' involvement in their children's learning conducted by the National Center for Fathering and the National Parent Teacher

Association, researchers discovered that 39% of fathers never read to their children. Statistics like these are unfortunate given what we now know about the importance of father involvement in the lives of children.

- It is well established that fathers play a critical role in their children's development. Fathers who are consistently and positively involved in the daily routines of their children are more likely to raise children who are self-confident, get along well with their peers, and perform better academically than children who grow up without a positive father presence in their lives.
- Fathers who find time to read with their children are taking advantage of one of the best opportunities to care for, connect with, and contribute to their children's future.

Response

Fathers Reading Every Day (FRED) is a family literacy program designed by the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service to increase parental involvement in children's early literacy development, with a specific focus on fathers. During the FRED program, fathers and father-figures of young children are presented with research-based information to help them begin daily reading activities with their children. The program is structured as follows:

- Fathers read to their children a minimum of 15 minutes a day for the first two weeks and a minimum of 30 minutes a day for the last two weeks.
- Fathers receive a participant packet that contains an introduction to the program, reading log, tips for reading aloud to their children, and recommended book lists.



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- Over the course of four weeks, fathers document the amount of time spent reading to their children and the number of books read.
- At the conclusion of FRED, fathers total up the number of books and the amount of time spent reading to their children.
- Fathers and their children are then invited to attend a party to celebrate their participation in FRED. At that time, they turn in their reading logs and complete an exit survey.
- FRED programs are held at public libraries, Head Start centers, elementary schools, churches, child care centers, and AgriLife Extension centers.



Results

Since its inception in 2002, over 20,000 fathers and children have participated in FRED nationally and internationally, including more than 10,000 from Texas. Results from a recent evaluation study involving more than 700 FRED participants show:

- Fathers averaged more than 9 hours of reading time with their children and read over 41 books together.
- Statistically significant differences from pre to post were noted in a number of areas, including 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, quality of time spent with their children, and level of satisfaction with the father-child relationship.
- The percentage of fathers reading to their children three or more times per week increased from 52% (pre-test) to 79% (post-test).
- Additionally, 57% of participating fathers reported an increase in the quality of time spent with their children; 59% reported an increase in their involvement in their children's education; and 56% reported an improved father-child relationship.

Fathers were asked to share their experiences with the program, including any benefits that they or their children derived from participating in FRED. The following quotes are illustrative of the responses given by fathers:



- “[The FRED program] increased the time I spent with my daughter and improved her vocabulary and reading.”
- “[FRED] helped me realize how much more involved I need to be with my son's education.”
- “[Reading together] challenged me to be more involved. It provided us with time alone, during which we grew closer together through reading a variety of stories/books that allowed us both to travel, explore, and go on adventures that expanded my child's vocabulary, imagination, and horizons.”

In 2009, the FRED program received a Best Practices Award from the Texas Association of Parent Educators (TAPE).

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