



WSA Washington State Association of Head Start & ECEAP

*Serving ECEAP, Head Start, Migrant Head Start,
Tribal Head Start and Early Head Start
Programs and Families*



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New Study Finds That Head Start Helps Reconnect Absent Dads With Their Children

With Father's Day fast approaching we wanted to share with you some exciting new research from a Wharton business and economics professor that suggests that Head Start helps to get absent fathers back engaged with their children.

Over the years Head Start has made the engagement of fathers a major priority—first by launching the Fatherhood Initiative and more recently through the Office of Head Start's new Head Start Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework. The goal is simple: help parents get more involved with their children.

We are delighted that this first of its kind research is validating the work of Head Start and proving that what programs are doing to engage fathers is paying off.

In, "[Children's Schooling and Parents' Behavior: Evidence from the Head Start Impact Study](#)," Alexander Gelber found that:

- Parents with children who attended Head Start read to their sons and daughters more often and for longer periods than families with children who were not part of the program.
- They were also more likely to take their children to visit a museum or historic site and set rules for things like how often their sons and daughters were allowed to watch TV.
- Fathers who didn't live with their children spent more days visiting them, even after the children were no longer part of Head Start.
- Absent fathers of children who had been enrolled in Head Start, but were no longer participating, still spent about one day more a month with them on average than fathers of children who did not gain access to the program.

Father Engagement in Washington State

Head Start programs in Washington work to engage fathers in the lives of their children. They encourage them to volunteer in the classroom and ask them to take part in making decisions about the direction of the program through the parent policy councils. Head Start staff work with dads to create opportunities for them to be with their children, teach them skills about how to be better parents, and help them find jobs and motivate them to go back to school. Here are a few examples of the work our programs are doing with dads in Washington State:

- ✓ At the Spokane County Head Start program family advocates worked with a dad whose wife passed away. Dealing with the sudden loss the father now found himself the primary caregiver. The staff at the Head Start program made sure that his daughter was well taken care of and provided support to the dad as well. As a result of their work the dad is actively engaged with his daughter's education, reads to his daughter at home, and is doing everything he can to make sure his daughter is ready for kindergarten. He also enrolled in community college and works full time.
- ✓ At the North Snohomish County Early Head Start program dads participate in an annual "Custom Car Show." The dads worked for weeks with their kids to build cars out of old boxes and recyclables. Families also received the book "Not a Box" which reinforced how important it is for infants and toddlers to use their imagination.
- ✓ At the Lewis County Head Start program one amazing dad volunteered to build bird houses with the children. The dad went on to volunteer more than 100 hours at the program and his child is now doing extremely well in kindergarten.
- ✓ At the Lower Columbia Head Start program the work they have done to engage fathers has won them national recognition. Last year James McBride, a dad with a child at their Head Start program, won the National Head Start Association's Father of the Year Award. To see the full story please go to http://tdn.com/news/local/article_c2769286-4793-11e0-8a2f-001cc4c03286.html. Another father Robb Atherton at this same program started a dad's group with the support of Head Start staff where fathers, particularly those with substance abuse issues in the past, and their kids come together for a dads discussion group followed by an activity shared with dads and kids.

Interested in Talking with a Head Start Dad?

If you would like to connect with a local program or Head Start dad in your area please give us a call at (253) 486-9077 or email Joel@wsaheadstarteceap.com.

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*The **Washington State Association of Head Start/ECEAP (WSA)** is a statewide organization composed of representatives from ECEAP, Head Start, Early Head Start, Migrant/Seasonal Head Start, and Native American Head Start. The association has been in existence since the late 1960's, and was incorporated as a non-profit organization in 1986. The organization advocates for Head Start and for ECEAP in Olympia and in Washington, DC. You can visit our web site at www.wsaheadstarteceap.com.*