

Because We're Dads: Reaching and Mobilizing Father's to Promote Gender Equality

Five Things Dads Can do to Advance Gender Equality (Pre-school – early elementary age)

Gender equality is everyone's issue. All of us have a gender and all of us are impacted by gender inequality (although to different degrees and the impact is different). Furthermore, gender equality benefits all of us. We all have a role to play. Dads have particular opportunities and roles to help achieve gender equality. While recognizing that dads also benefit in significant ways as a result of gender in-equality:

- most dads are relieved of the “2nd shift”,
- the standard for being perceived as a “good dad” is much lower than the standard for being perceived as a “good mom”,
- our society continues to place higher values on dads (particularly white, middle-aged and middle class dads) than on moms, etc.);

Dads also benefit from gender equality:

- Better leave opportunities for being at home,
- Being supported to stay home and developing our caring capacities,
- Increased health and wellness benefits.

Here are five things dads can do to help promote gender equality with your children:

1) Massage your child's feet while they are nursing. Nursing is an incredible bonding experience between moms and children. But dads do not have to be removed from this experience. Massaging your child's feet (or any kind of similar touching) has many of the same bio-chemical benefits for dads and their child as nursing does between moms and their child. A powerful side benefit is that this *also* strengthens the bond between dads and moms. Being actively engaged and involved is a powerful way that dads can help promote gender equality.

2) Read to them. We know the value to reading to our children, and how bonding it is for kids and dads. While reading to them, notice the genders and the gender-stereotypes of the characters (really, do the trucks of *Good night Trucks* all need to be male?). It's pretty easy (and impactful) to switch up the gender pronouns of the stories we read to our kids. Make sure you use “he” for expressing of caring and care-giving as well as “she” for expressions of assertiveness and fixing things.

(See below for some good books to read for this age)

3) Play Legos. Legos are a great toy: interactive, creative, flexible. They are also very gendered. It's easy, however, to replace the “girl” heads and features with the “boy” bodies and help your children to develop story lines and play opportunities that break down gender stereotypes.

4) Give Baths. Bath time is a great opportunity to be playful, but also to engage in conversations with your young child. In addition, having you, as a dad in this role models behaviors, in powerful ways, the role men have in active caregiving. Have fun, and engage in age-appropriate conversations about how your child is coming to understand and express themselves as boy or girl.

5) Get into the Pre-School/School Dads are disproportionately absent from most pre-schools and elementary schools. Having not only your child, but other children see you active in the school models the responsibility that both parents have for attending to the educational care of our children. Explore how the school manages the gendering of children and encourage the school to support children to be who they are regardless of gender. Get active not only in the organizational aspects of the school, but also in your child's schooling – volunteer in their class if you can, have lunch on a regular basis with your child, etc.

There are lot of other ways that Dads can be active in raising our children to promote gender equality. Join the "[Because We're Dads](#)" campaign to connect with other dads, and to access additional resources and tools. You can also check with your local domestic violence agency to see if they offer their own version of "Because We're Dads." [Click here to find your local domestic violence agency.](#)

Follow Because We're Dads on Facebook, or [access the website \(tools and resources are added regularly\)](#)

Book Suggestions:

- *Drum Dream Girl* by Margarita Engel, Illustrated by Rafael López
- *Be Boy Buzz* by bell hooks, Illustrated by Chris Raschka
- *No Difference Between Us: Teach children gender equality, respect, choice, self-esteem, empathy, tolerance, and acceptance* by Janeen Sanders, Illustrated by Amanda Gulliver
- *Sparkle Boy* by Lesléa Newman, Illustrated by Maria Mola
- *The Paper Bag Princess* by Robert Munsch, Illustrated by Michael Martchenko