



Gateway CAP Fatherhood Times

Your Paternal Information Resource

*"To a child, play is never just play;
it is how love, trust, and confidence grow."*
— Gateway CAP Male Initiative

DEAR DAD: THE MOST IMPORTANT WORK MAY LOOK LIKE PLAY

When adults think about play, we often think about passing time or keeping children busy.

Children experience it very differently.

To a young child, *play is one of the primary ways they learn about the world and the people in it.*

When you build a tower together...

When you kick a ball across the yard...

When you laugh during a game of hide-and-seek...

Your child is learning much more than how to play.

They are learning that *spending time together* is important.

That mistakes are okay.

That challenges can be fun.

That they are loved simply because you are there with them.

For *expectant fathers*, play begins before your baby is born. Talking, singing, and imagining the future together begins *building connection long before the first smile.*

For babies and toddlers, *play strengthens trust, curiosity, and language.*

For preschoolers, play becomes an opportunity to *solve problems, cooperate, imagine, and develop confidence.*

Children rarely remember every toy they owned.

They remember how they felt when someone played with them.

Those moments become the foundation of lasting relationships.

— Gateway CAP Male Initiative Team



(Photo courtesy of Rivers Edge Head Start)

July 2026
Volume 9 Issue 4

July Theme:

Play:

The Language of
Connection

Fatherhood Reflection: Connection Before Correction

Children are naturally curious.

They ask questions.

They make messes.

They test limits.

Sometimes our first instinct is to correct.

But before children are ready to accept guidance, they first need to feel connected.

Play creates that connection.

It tells a child:

"You enjoy being with me."

"You notice me."

"I matter."

Those messages build trust.

And trust makes teaching easier.

Sometimes the greatest lesson a father teaches isn't during discipline.

It's during laughter.

Try This This Month: Be Fully Present

Try This This Month: Let Your Child Lead.

For Expectant & Early Head Start Fathers (Prenatal–3)

- Sing songs during daily routines.
- Read the same favorite book together.
- Explore different textures, sounds, and objects.
- Get down on the floor and follow your child's lead.

For Head Start Fathers (3–5)

- Build something together using blocks or household items.
- Play pretend and let your child create the story.
- Visit a park and explore together.
- Ask, "What would you like us to play today?"

For these few minutes...

Put away the phone.

Forget the chores.

Simply enjoy being together.

Your child won't remember everything you said.

They will remember how it felt to have your full attention.



(Courtesy of Rivers Edge Head Start)

This Month at Gateway: Growing Together Through Play

Summer offers families more opportunities to slow down, explore, and spend meaningful time together.

Gateway CAP encourages fathers, grandfathers, uncles, and other positive male figures to take advantage of these everyday moments to build stronger relationships with the children in their lives.

Whether you're reading a book, taking a walk, kicking a ball, or simply talking during dinner, every shared experience is another opportunity to strengthen connection.

Gateway CAP also continues to offer Fatherhood Council gatherings where fathers can connect, learn from one another, and continue growing as parents and leaders within their families.

JULY FATHERHOOD COUNCIL – IN PERSON (PHILADELPHIA)

- **Wednesday, July 22, 2026 – 7:00 PM**
- **Wednesday, August 5, 2026 – 7:00 PM**

Meeting location for both events: **4221 Aspen St., Philadelphia, PA 19104**

More info: Quahsim Gredic – 215-934-1057

- **Wednesday, August 5, 2026 6:00 PM (ET)**
Zoom Meeting Link:
<https://gatewaycap-org.zoom.us/j/88434103325>
Meeting ID: 884 3410 3325
Passcode: FATHERHOOD

These sessions are open to **expectant fathers, Early Head Start fathers, Head Start fathers, and male caregivers of the community.**

Why This Matters

Play is much more than entertainment.

It is one of the earliest ways children build trust, develop confidence, and strengthen relationships.

When fathers make time to play, children learn that they are valued, capable, and worthy of attention.

These everyday moments help build emotional security, encourage healthy development, and create memories that often last a lifetime.

Because every laugh, every game, and every shared moment is another way of saying,
"I'm here with you."

Because this isn't just Head Start for your child. **It's Head Start for you, too.**
gatewaycap.org/maleinitiative

JULY DADS GATEWAY FATHERHOOD COUNCIL – VIRTUAL (ZOOM)

Facilitated by Michael Cupeles

These virtual sessions offer fathers a space to connect, share, and grow, no travel required.

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