

IDAHO DADS MATTER!

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Grandparenting Theory and Practice

...Instills His Philosophy at School and Home

AMERICAN FALLS—Randy Jensen enjoys spending quality time with his granddaughters golfing, going to the playground, and talking or reading. The superintendent of American Falls School District started



the *Read, Talk, Play* initiative with his educator-daughter Whitney Lankford to celebrate early literacy, and the program parallels his grandfatherly philosophy.

“It’s important for parents to read, talk and play with their kids every day,” he notes, and that’s why he makes sure five-year-old Tucker and Emery, 3, get to enjoy some stories from grandpa.

“Each one gets her own stories; some are stories of my childhood, and sometimes they are just made-up stories. I like to ask them what they’d like the story to be

about, how they want it to end, or what they want to happen next,” he explained.

Randy likes taking the girls to the community playground and pushing them on the swings, and he also joins Tucker on the school playground (as the superintendent he’s got access) for recess a couple times a month where he is immensely popular pushing the swings. “I start pushing her, and then pretty soon, I have 16 swings I’m pushing,” he said with a chuckle.

Asked what grandfatherly advice he might offer dads, Randy Jensen said this: “Do as many recreational activities as possible...spend time really reading, talking, and playing with your children and grandchildren. Dads make a huge difference. You know, strong father, strong kids.”

There’s a piece of artwork displayed prominently on Randy’s wall; it’s something his adult son, Jaxon, created as a first grader long ago. “It says, *‘I feel special because I play with my dad,’*” Randy said warmly. “I think dads underestimate the important role they play in their kids’ life.”

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– Randy Jensen