



Early years curriculum materials

Fathers' night

**Planning for a special event
in a preparatory classroom**



**Queensland
Government**



**Queensland
Studies Authority**
Partnership and innovation

Background

This case study follows a week in a preparatory classroom. The teacher and children co-constructed a special event — Fathers' night. Many links can be made to the early learning areas. Some of the possible links to the early learning areas are shown in the margin notes, along with possible monitoring opportunities. Direct links to the learning statement overviews are highlighted in the planning and interacting column in bold. The focus for this case study is the way the teacher facilitates learning through purposeful learning experiences. Reflections made by the teacher are recorded in the right-hand column.

The appendixes contain many of the recipes referred to in the case study.

	<p>EYCG Monitoring & assessing and reflections & observations</p>
<p>Day 1</p>	
<p>Father's Day was approaching, so at the start of the day during whole-group time, the children and I discussed the possibility of doing something special for their fathers.</p> <p>A child raised the problem, <i>Dads work during the day, so a night-time party would be good.</i></p> <p>I asked the children to suggest what they could do for a night-time celebration.</p> <p>A child suggested, <i>We could have a theatre snack bar because Dads like to eat out and we like to cook.</i></p> <p>I drew a concept map of what was needed if the class were to have a theatre snack bar. The title "Theatre snack bar" was written in the middle of the whiteboard on an easel. Attached to lines going out from this title, I wrote the headings "Food", "Music and singing", "Room decorations", "Table settings", "Presents" and "Invitations".</p> <p>I looked at the concept map and said, <i>Now that we have our ideas, let's plan some more.</i></p> <p><i>What do our Dads like doing?</i> I then talked about my husband and how he liked cooking barbecues. I showed them the disposable apron I was going to decorate for him. <i>Does your Dad cook on the barbecue? Maybe he would like one.</i></p> <p>Under "Food" the children suggested sausage rolls, nuts and bolts, cheese twists and ginger beer. Under "Table settings", <i>I wrote place mats, place cards, menus, plates and table centre pieces.</i></p> <p>I then asked the children, <i>What should we do first? Do you think it would be important to send out invitations to the Dads first so that they would know when our Father's Night was happening?</i></p>	<p>Language learning & communication — Oral language</p> <p>Often contributes ideas and shares information in group settings, responding to others, usually when asked.</p> <p><i>Children's prior knowledge from Mother's Day cafe was handy for the brainstorming.</i></p> <p>Language learning & communication — Early literacy (reading & viewing)</p> <p>Reads and views for personal purposes.</p>

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The children agreed that an invitation would be a good idea. To develop the children's understanding of the invitation genre, I asked them to divide themselves into groups of four and gave them a set of texts of different types — a letter, a post card, a birthday card and an invitation. The group had to decide which item was an invitation. Once the children regrouped as a whole group, they discussed in depth the features of an invitation.

I asked the children, *How should we do the invitation? What sorts of things should we put on it?*

A child asked, *Could we do one on the computer like I did for my party?*

I suggested that the group move over to the computer and design one together. I modelled how to create an invitation and then the children took turns making suggestions for the design. The invitations were printed off and the children began indoor learning time, taking their invitations with them so that they could decorate them.



While some children were decorating their invitations, others took interest in making place cards for their father's theatre snack-bar table. They typed their father's name on the computer, printed it, cut it out using fancy scissors and then glued it onto the top end of some small cards. They then folded the place cards in half so that they would sit up on the table.

SC had a good knowledge of what goes on an invitation

Language learning & communication — Early literacy (writing & shaping)

Understands that shaping and writing are useful and purposeful activities.

GB/SC/SH/JP/GC were able to write "Dear Dad" without copying.

All others successfully copied "Dear" but were unable to write "Dad" without help.

AC/GW/RH/TP copied "Dear Dad" from a card.

SH/FA/NB great pencil grip.

AC/JP strong pencil grip not yet developed.

Language learning & communication — Early literacy (reading & viewing)

Reads and views for personal purposes.

Active learning processes — Imagining and responding

With some prompts, experiments with using different ways to imaginatively represent experiences, ideas and designs, usually with enjoyment.

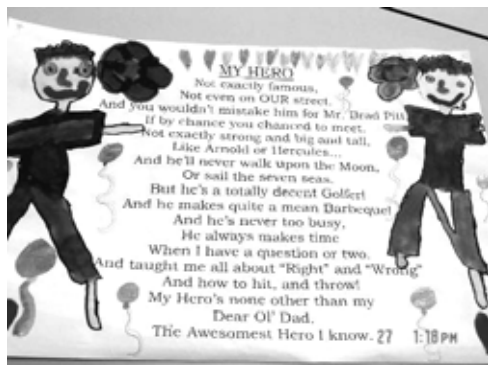
AC had trouble cutting around the name.

<p>At the end of the day I suggested, <i>It would be great if we could find out more about each other's Dads. Why don't we each bring in something special of our Dads to show to the other children? Maybe we could put it in the surprise bag and describe it and other children have to guess what it is!</i></p> <p>The children responded positively.</p> <p>I then suggested that the children could bring in a photograph of their father so that others could recognise him when he came to the theatre snack bar.</p> <p>I said, <i>Let's put up a roster saying whose turn it is to bring in something special of their Dad's.</i></p>	<p><i>EYCG</i> Monitoring & assessing and reflections & observations</p> <p><i>Some children found it challenging to find the letters in their father's name on the keyboard — next time make sure father's names are in the same text as keyboard stickers.</i></p> <p><i>AC/RH/KW/NM unsure of delete key, space bar and print.</i></p> <p><i>ZC Excellent computer skills.</i></p>
<p>Day 2</p>	
<p>The day started with photograph sharing. We used a two-pair share strategy (see Appendix 1). The children talked about pinning the photographs on the wall for others to see, but thought that it might be a problem as the photographs were too small for people to see. The children decided to draw portraits of their fathers. I discussed the layout of a "shoulders up" portrait, and the features and size to draw the features so that they would fill the page. To scaffold the children's portrait drawing, I modelled drawing a portrait by drawing my father. I then supplied coloured A4 sheets of paper and crayon sets. Children were asked to share sets between two. Children were given name cards with their father's name on it so that they could copy if they needed to.</p>	

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Before indoor time, in the afternoon, the first small group of children described their father's special item. They placed it in the surprise bag before describing it. The children described the item to their friends and gave clues and information about their father. Children in the class then asked the presenting children questions. At the end of the group discussion, I asked the children: *What can we say about... 's Dad?* The children were drawn to make inferences about the hidden objects.



I shared a poem, "My hero", with the group. We discussed the poem and I made a suggestion, *Maybe we could use this as a place mat.* I referred to the concept web and reminded the children that place mats were on the list of things to do. The children suggested that they could make the place mats colourful. *What else do we need to do?* The children suggested that the plates and table centrepieces needed to be prepared.

Some children began indoor learning time decorating the place mats using cotton buds and paint. I also provided paper plates and asked the children to decorate them for their father. *But, how will we know which Dad owns the plate?*

FA spoke clearly, in logical sequence. Was able to answer children's questions.

JP/GC asked great questions.

GB made a great attempt at inferring.

CT needed scaffolding through the talk.

Health & physical learning — Fine motor

Uses familiar equipment, materials, tools and objects with increasing coordination, strength and control.

<p>A child suggested, <i>We could make a pattern with their initials.</i> (The children had recently been making patterns with their own initials.)</p> <p>Some children began to decorate paper plates with their father's initials in a pattern, while others began threading egg cartons onto skewers with ribbon to make table centrepieces.</p> <p>Transitions were managed using the song "My special friend". This song would later play a part in the culminating event. At music time Henri Francis's song was introduced to the children. The children listened and decided on actions and movements.</p>	<p><i>EYCG</i> Monitoring & assessing and reflections & observations</p> <p><i>AC/RH/TP/ZC/GW too much focus on colour pattern and initials.</i></p> <p><i>Table centrepieces were great. All children were successful at tying the single knot in the ribbon after a few goes.</i></p> <p>Active learning processes — Imagining and responding</p> <p>With some prompts, experiments with ways to represent ideas, feelings and enjoyment through singing and playing simple musical instruments.</p>
<p>Day 3</p>	<p><i>It was best to interview at outside time, as there was less background noise. Good to do it with not many watching as the children use more original ideas — don't copy each other.</i></p> <p>Active learning processes — Investigating technology</p> <p>In discussions, identifies ways in which technology helps people in everyday life.</p>
<p>I introduced the idea of making a movie to show on the night. I suggested the "roving reporter" concept. The children then planned what was needed: hats for the interviewer, a microphone and camera. While the discussion was taking place a couple of children went off with the teacher aide to make a microphone and reporter's hat. The remaining children discussed the possible things that people would like to know about their father.</p> <p>The group devised a list of three things: 1. What was our Dad good at? 2. What did we like doing with our Dad? 3. What did our Dad like? The children then modelled being reporters and asking each other questions. The videoing was done during inside and outside time over the rest of the week.</p> <p>I extended group discussion further to include reflection on the concept web that had been created two days earlier. <i>What have we done? What is left to do? Is there anything we should change or add?</i></p> <p>I commented that room decorations still needed to be made. The group discussed making 3D faces of their fathers in the collage area. <i>How could we make the hair look different? What types of materials could we use? Could we paint the face?</i></p> <p>To encourage independence with this activity, I modelled how to make a 3D face by tracing around a circle shape, cutting it out, stapling, stuffing and adding features. The children would then complete this activity independently. I crossed out the things that were complete on the concept map, then asked the children, <i>What should we do first? Make the presents for the Dads or decorations for our room?</i></p> <p>Most of the children thought it would be a good idea to make the presents.</p>	

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We focused on the concept map again. They had been working on making ginger beer before the Father's Night concept web was developed. I reminded the children that they had suggested using the ginger beer as a food at the Father's Night and pointed out that drinks in bottles usually have labels on them. *What does a label look like? Should we make a label that tells the Dads what is inside the bottle?* The children contributed ideas for the label and their class voted on these: "Prep ginger beer"; "Dad's ginger beer"; and "[father's name] ginger beer".

The children agreed, *It would be a good idea to make a label for the ginger beer today.*

I also reminded the children about the disposable aprons that would make great presents for the fathers. *How could we decorate them?* A child suggested, *We could write "Dad" and "Daddy" on them.*



Early mathematical understandings — Early numeracy

Sorts collections by single attributes such as shape, colour or size of objects.

Focused on making explicit the strategies used for counting collections and identifying "how many" — the children enjoyed counting and measuring.

Language learning & communication — Early literacy (writing & shaping)

Understands that shaping and writing are useful and purposeful activities.

AC found copying the word "ginger beer" difficult. Dotted the word for him to trace.

JP watch pencil grip.

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 observations**

I asked, *What else would we like to give our Dads? Perhaps we could cut out pictures of things we think our Dads would like from catalogues and make a shopping list?*

During small-group time (see Appendix 1), I showed the children some product catalogues and began a discussion about the items they contained:



Look, mowers. You could choose a ride-on mower or a push mower. What's the difference between the two? What do you think your Dad would like from this catalogue?

Other learning experiences were also available as a small group — illustrating the Father's Night book; listening to a story tape; or writing a shopping list for Dad. (See Appendix 1, which shows how small-groups were organised for this project.) A parent/carer helped during these learning experiences.

During the afternoon session, the children again described some of their father's special items in the surprise bags.

Early mathematical understandings — Early numeracy

Identifies and describes attributes of objects as long, short, empty, full heavy, light.

CR having difficulty positioning picture on page.

CB erratic scissor control.

Language learning & communication — Oral language

Is extending vocabulary and sentence structures to explain, describe, imagine and recount events.

Day 4

The day began with the children using the inside–outside circle strategy to ask each other questions about their fathers (see Appendix 1 for an explanation of this strategy). Each time the circle moved around, the children had to recount what the previous child had said about their father. *J's Dad likes footy.* This also helped with developing the questioning strategies needed for the videoing.

<p>I introduced a new song "Father's Day" (to the tune of "This old man") to further engage the children in their upcoming event and the jobs left to do.</p> <p>After singing together, the group reviewed the concept map. <i>What have we done? What has to be done? Are there any other ideas or suggestions?</i></p> <p>We looked at "Food" on the concept web. Listed under the heading were cheese twists, nuts and bolts, sausage rolls and ginger beer.</p> <p><i>Should we make a menu for the Dads to read?</i></p> <p>I designed a menu on the computer and the children suggested that they could decorate it with patterns of the food listed on the menu. I suggested that the food could then be made in small groups during indoor time.</p> <p>Before beginning indoor time, we sang more of the songs that would be sung at Father's Night. The children also continued the surprise bag activity in the afternoon. The listeners continued to make inferences and the speakers continued to answer questions from their friends.</p> <p>During indoor time, the children made cheese twists independently after I had modelled how to make them.</p>	<p><i>EYCG</i> Monitoring & assessing and reflections & observations</p> <p>Active learning processes — Imagining and responding</p> <p>With some prompts, experiments with ways to represent ideas, feelings and enjoyment through singing and playing simple musical instruments</p> <p><i>The whole group got very good at reading the map. The children continued to discuss long words and beginning sounds.</i></p> <p>Early mathematical understandings — Early numeracy</p> <p>Identifies patterns in the environment.</p> <p><i>RH/AC/GW/CR/TP/ZC could not follow patterning. Next time I will give them a pattern to continue. They required support to complete.</i></p>
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A lot of time was spent on preparing the food. Filming for the movie was also taking place.

Health & physical learning — Making healthy choices

Shows awareness of the need for hygiene, nutrition and maintaining healthy lifestyle across a number of learning contexts.

Choice of recipes allowed lots of involvement and independence. Children enjoyed this. S made sure he had clean hands.

Day 5

We began the day with children describing their father's special item. The group then reflected on the concept map. *What else has to be done?*

The children suggested that the presents needed to be wrapped. *Maybe we could make some bubble painting paper to wrap the presents in?* I suggested. *What about cards to go with the presents?* The children then helped make suggestions for words that might go on and inside the cards. I then made word cards for the children to use. They discussed beginning sounds when referring to the words, along with what sorts of words you use to begin a letter — *Dear...*

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During inside learning time, the children made the wrapping paper and wrote their own messages in the cards. I had placed coloured card, fluoro pens, glitter glue and word sheets in the card-making area. The words children could use in their messages were placed randomly on the sheet. Children needed to really think about which words they needed.

The children also filled some pastry with sausage-roll mixture.

The children continued painting portraits of their fathers.



Transition time was based on a game about "super dads". The children started to draw features of a super dad and then passed the paper around the circle for others to add features to. The group discussed stereotypes and the sorts of things fathers did at their place.

Language learning & communication — Early literacy (writing & shaping)

Experiments with letters, words, symbols, drawings to write or shape simple texts (a card).

Word sheets should have different coloured backgrounds, for quick reference — so that I could refer children to the word on blue card.

SH/BR/GB/GC wrote own messages with very little reference to word cards. GW JR copied words. No attempt to look for words to model her idea.

Active learning processes — Imagining and responding

With some prompts, experiments with using different ways to imaginatively represent experiences, ideas and designs, usually with enjoyment.

Portraits were great on sprayed paper — gave 3D effect.

CR picture had no head, legs, or body.

Active learning processes — Thinking

Makes simple plans and chooses actions and materials, asking for help when needed.

All children used correct pencil grip.

Gave an opportunity for children to discuss how and why they are adding features.

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Day 6

The concept map was reviewed and items in the surprise bags described.

The fathers' portraits and 3D faces were finished. The children blew up balloons and wrote "Dad" all over them. They then decorated the balloon heads to look like their fathers. The children also wrapped the presents.

The interviews were finalised and everything finished and checked for culminating day.

At whole-group time the teacher aide and I modelled working together to decide on what tables to use and thinking about where to put them. The children made suggestions and we modelled how that suggestion might be carried out. We focused on cooperation and safety. We made "what to do when setting up" explicit — including modelling how to put on a tablecloth. This would allow the children to set up independently at Father's Night.

Other things that we discussed and modelled included how and where songs would be sung; order of proceedings for the evening; and how to greet their fathers and take them to their seats.

Children enjoyed rehearsing the event.

Day 7

As part of my preparations for the culminating day, I had consulted with the parents/carers, principal and P & C to schedule the event for 7:30 pm.



When the children arrived, they helped to set up the room, working in teams of four that they had chosen the previous day during roleplaying "setting up". It was planned that the fathers would then sit in tables of four. The children set up the tables and chairs.

Social & personal learning

When asked, takes on classroom roles.

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Tablecloths, place mats, place cards, menus, plates and table centrepieces were placed on the tables.



The children sorted the food and placed it into dishes with four items of each, ready for the waiters to bring around to the tables.



The children had afternoon tea and then played in the outdoor area. They also rehearsed what they would do when they were waiting on their fathers.

**Early mathematical
understandings — Early
numeracy**

Represents the quantities of small collections in different ways.

The night ran smoothly due to the modelling session the previous day. Roleplaying conflict helped. Children also used knowledge of Mother's Day preparations to help.

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The fathers arrived and children greeted them and showed them to their seats. Each child had a turn at being a waiter. The children brought ginger beer to their fathers.



The class came together to do a short concert. The children then came back to bring Dad his present and ask him to come to the movies. The fathers and the children sat down to watch the interviews on the big screen. They then showed their fathers their portfolios and sang "Show me the way to go home".

**Social & personal learning
— Personal learning**

Copes with unexpected changes to classroom routines, environments and people.

Fathers were very quiet at first, as most hadn't met before. Next time have some background music on.

Summary

This learning experience incorporated many learning areas from the *Early Years Curriculum Guidelines*. This case study has focused on how the teacher uses language learning and communication and early mathematical understandings to develop early literacy and numeracy understandings. Many links could be made to other early learning areas. The teacher used many modes of communication and a variety of literacy practices. Spoken language, written language, visual images, and multimodal texts were developed and used to encourage literacy understandings.

Special thanks to the Preparatory Year teacher, Mrs Felice Eastwood, teacher aide, Michelle Bobir, children and fathers of Camp Hill Infants State School's Preparatory Year class.



Certificate of appreciation from a proud father

Further reading

Jones, P. (ed.) 1996, *Talking to learn*, Primary English Teaching Association, Newtown, Australia.

Makin, L. & Jones Diaz, C. (eds) 2002, *Literacies in early childhood: changing views, challenging practice*, MacLennan & Petty, Sydney.

For interesting research information and more reading about involving parents/carers in young children's education, go to: *Father's matter!* (online).

<http://www.ed.gov/pubs/parents/fathers/notes/index.html> [accessed 9 December 2005].

To access an extensive list of websites pertaining to involvement of parents/carers in early childhood programs, go to: *Parent participation* (online). 2004,

http://www.ecwebguide.com/parent_participation.htm [accessed 30 November 2005].

Appendixes

Appendix 1: Strategies for group activities

Think, pair, share

Think of some things that you like to do with your father. Find a partner and share your idea.

Two-pair share

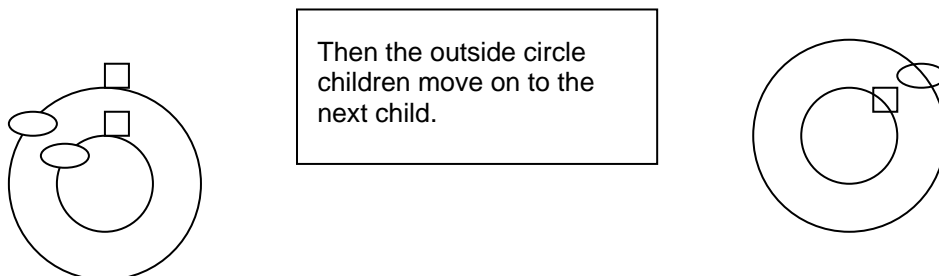
Find a partner. Share your picture of your father with your partner. Some things to talk about:

What your father was doing in the picture? What does your father look like?

Now with your partner find another pair to share your pictures with.

Inside–outside circle

Organise children so that they are in two circles — an inside circle and an outside circle. Each child has a partner. Each child tells their partner what their dad likes doing.



The children then tell their new partners what their last partners said.

Hot potato drawing

Children sit in a circle. Each child has a piece of paper. They draw one feature on the paper and then pass the paper to the next person in the circle to add another feature. Keep going until the paper is returned to the owner.

Group work for *Fathers' night*

Groups	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Group 1	Apron drawing	Magazine shopping	My Dad illustrations	Cooking nuts and bolts	Listening tape
Group 2	Listening tape	Apron drawing	Magazine shopping	My Dad illustrations	Cooking nuts and bolts
Group 3	Cooking nuts and bolts	Listening tape	Apron drawing	Magazine shopping	My Dad illustrations
Group 4	My Dad illustrations	Cooking nuts and bolts	Listening tape	Apron drawing	Magazine shopping
Group 5	Magazine shopping	My Dad illustrations	Cooking nuts and bolts	Listening tape	Apron drawing

Appendix 2: Recipes

Ginger beer

1 cup of sugar
1 tablespoon of ground ginger
2 lemons
5 cups of water

To make the ginger beer "plant"

Put all ingredients in a big jug.

Keep covered and allow to stand for 3 days.

Pour off nearly all the liquid — leave 2½ cups.

Each day, for 7 days, add 1 large teaspoon of sugar and 1 level teaspoon of ground ginger to the mixture.

To make the ginger beer

Add 5 cups of sugar

Add 5 cups of boiling water

Stir with a wooden spoon until sugar dissolves.

Add 1 large cup of strained lemon juice.

Add 2½ cups of ginger plant.

Stir thoroughly.

Add 1 dessertspoon of ground ginger.

Add 50 cups of water.

Stir well and cover. Stir again in 2 hours.

Stand for 24 hours without moving.

Strain all liquid through muslin and bottle, cap and drink any time after 3 days.

Nuts and bolts

- 1 small packet of Nutri-Grain
- 500 g salted peanuts
- 1 packet of cream of chicken soup
- 1 packet of French onion soup
- 1 dessertspoon curry powder
- 1 teaspoon dry mustard
- ½ cup oil

Warm oil. Mix all dry ingredients together into a large bowl. Pour in the warm oil and mix. Leave standing in a bowl for 1 hour, stirring every 10 minutes until all the oil is absorbed and the whole mixture is dry. Store in an airtight jar.

This recipe was broken up into individual serves so children could make one serve.

- 1 cup of Nutri-Grain
- 2 tablespoons of peanuts
- 1 teaspoon of cream of chicken soup
- 1 teaspoon of French onion soup
- 1 big pinch of curry powder
- 1 small pinch of dry mustard
- 1 teaspoon of oil

Stir in a bowl to the count of 20.

Pour in a small sandwich-sized plastic bag and shake to the count of 20.

Vegetarian sausage rolls

- 1 diced onion
- 3 beaten eggs
- ½ cup chopped walnuts
- ½ cup rolled oats
- 5 sheets frozen puff pastry
- ½ cup dry breadcrumbs
- 1 cup grated cheese
- 1 tablespoon soy sauce
- 1 tablespoon milk

Mix ingredients well. Place small amounts of filling onto pastry and roll. Brush with beaten egg. Cook at 200°C for 15–20 minutes.

Cheese twists

- Puff pastry sheets
- Grated cheese

Cut pastry into four. Give children one square each.

Children cut the square into strips with a pair of scissors.

Sprinkle cheese on the strips and twist two strips together.

Cook at a high temperature until brown.

Appendix 3: Poems and songs

Poem for the place mat

My hero
Not exactly famous
Not even on our street.
And you wouldn't mistake him for Mr Brad Pitt
If by chance you chanced to meet.
Not exactly strong and big and tall
Like Arnold or Hercules ...
And he'll never walk upon the moon
Or sail the seven seas.

But he's a totally decent golfer!
And he makes quite a mean barbecue!
And he's never too busy
He always makes time
When I have a question or two.
And taught me all about "Right" and "Wrong"
And how to hit and throw!
My hero's none other than my
Dear ol' Dad.
The awesomest hero I know.

Songs

My special friend (Sung to "Yankee doodle")

Daddy is my special friend
The two of us are buddies.
I always like the things we do.
I'm thankful for my daddy.

Father's Day (Sung to "This old man")

Father's Day, Father's Day
Is a very special day.
Here's a great big hug
And lots of kisses too.
Each one says that I love you.
Thank you, Dad
Thank you, Dad
Thanks for loving me.
Hugs and kisses, hugs and kisses,
Comes to you from me.

Thank you, Dad (Sung to "Jingle bells")

Thank you, Dad
Thank you, Dad
You are such a friend
On this day
I'd like to say
On you I can depend.

Show me the way to go home

Show me the way to go home
I'm tired and I wanna go to bed
I had a drink of ginger beer about an hour ago
And it went right to my head.
Show me the way to go home
I'm tired and I wanna go to sleep.
I had a drink of ginger beer about an hour ago
And it went right to my feet!

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Other short songs can be found on: *Preschool education* (online). 2005, <http://www.preschooleducation.com/sfather.shtml> [accessed 30 November 2005].

Peter Combe — “Spaghetti bolognaise phone calls Daddy”

Henry Francis — “The best of Henri Franciscus taking us to the carnival”.