

Fall 2011 Fifth Grade Level Parent Meeting
Dr. Allan Gold, District Psychologist
October 18, 2011

Introductions and review of Vision of Reed District Graduate and review of handouts.

Creating a Developmental Profile of 5th Graders – Question: How have your children changed since a year ago?

- Increased confidence/mastery.
- Challenges in self-confidence
- Greater desire for independence
- More back talk/ assertive
- More talk about other kids kissing/ boyfriend/ girlfriend discussions
- Body changes, increased physical development and disparity among peers related to puberty.
- Still clinging to childish ideas (for example, ideas of Santa/ tooth fairy)
- Cell phones and texting interests
- More awareness of different families and how they do things/ what they have.

Changes are discussed in terms of the 5 areas of development, physical, cognitive, social, emotional and moral.

Physical: Some are starting puberty now or will shortly. Children of this age experience increased physical confidence. Take advantage of this by encouraging them to have chores that contribute to family life. This may be the last opportunity to have kids assume some responsibilities around the house. This is also an opportunity for them to demonstrate the trust and responsibility that you should require before granting them the privileges and freedoms that they will be asking for in the coming years.

Physical changes and the entrance into puberty also bring changes of interest, sophistication, and social shifts.

Social: Dating is still not OK that this point, even though there is a normal increase in interest in the opposite sex. Technology poses additional challenges here. Keep your home computers in a public place, talk with your kids and keep a watchful eye on them. Consider blocking websites/ filtering them. Some kids at this age feel pretty comfortable asking their parents about sexual questions; others are still shy and awkward about that. The more open you can be to their questions, the more they will ask. Be prepared to begin talking about this and fielding questions. Be true to your values. A lengthy, lovely discussion ensued about explicit song lyrics and how to manage them at home. Several moms use humor effectively; for example, by inserting a silly word when singing along to replace a less desirable word.

Cognitive: They are beginning to be able to understand the wider world. Up until this time, they had a fairly concrete understanding of the world; this is changing. It's not unusual for 10 year olds to want to regress a bit because they discover now that the world can be overwhelming and scary. Parents will continue to see the switch back and forth between childhood and adolescence in the coming years. They are more and more exposed to news and current events and will need parents to interpret, filter, explain, and put events into perspective. Kids this age are just beginning to recognize the wider world and to start to understand abstract concepts. This growth in cognitive development is exciting and can lead to very interesting discussions.

Emotional: As puberty starts kids may actually show more emotional fluctuation and less control than when they were a year or two younger. They generally managed to control themselves very well at this age both at home and at school, but it is not unusual for kids to get upset about the increasingly complex social dynamics and heightened academic expectations. Parents need to make the gradual shift from "manager" to "consultant," being a good listener, asking good questions, helping kids figure out how they want to handle difficult situations.

Moral: Be true to your values. This is a time when this is increasingly important. Violent material/video games do desensitize children. Be clear about what your concerns are and talk about it with your children. Awareness of drugs also begins now. Dr. Gold mentioned a program called Being Adept and encouraged parents to look at their website, to arm themselves with information about how drugs affect the body. This is a program that may be implemented in the district.

Questions:

- Q: How much sleep do children need now? A: 9 hours.

- Q: How much time should they be spending on homework? A: Approximately 1 hour plus reading time. This may vary according to days, types of assignments, and, of course, individual students. Spending more than two hours is probably too much and teachers should be alerted.

- Q: How much time is OK for screen time? A: Depends on the kids. If it's a fight every day when you turn it off, consider saying none all week on weekdays, to reduce battles. Other kids can manage some screen time each day without difficulty. A discussion ensued about video games and how they are designed to be addictive. Children can earn the privilege of using technology with greater frequency, by doing chores independently, etc. One mother recommended a program called My Mobile Watch Dog that allows parents to monitor every text message their child encounters. She said her child knows they have this program, and that it helps her to feel more comfortable with allowing her child to use texting technology. Common Sense Media.com is another useful resource. A parent asked about when a parent is crossing the

line in terms of privacy and email reading, etc. A discussion of whether a child has a right to privacy followed. Most parents indicated that they do not believe their child has a right to privacy now. But it was discussed that it is challenging to draw the line here.

- Q: How do you handle the disillusionment related to Santa and the Easter Bunny, etc? A: Most children adjust easily to this understanding. Children are beginning to understand that their parents are imperfect and flawed human beings, but they probably won't hold cultural myths against you. Parents can indicate that these are fun stories for everyone that kids like to believe in, but that these myths are different than lying.