

Fall 2011 Second Grade Level Parent Meeting
Dr. Allan Gold, District Psychologist
October 21, 2011

Goals of the meeting:

1. Ask/answer questions about social and emotional development of your children
2. Communication/networking between parents
3. Parenting questions (academic, home, etc)
4. Values – what is really important to you?

New handouts:

1. Vision of the Reed Union School District Graduate – developed at Del Mar originally, adopted by all schools and the School Board. The tricky part is how to measure these areas.
2. Article from the *Atlantic Monthly*, “How to Land Your Kid in Therapy”.
3. Advice from 8th Grade Parents

Parents’ Observations: How have the children changed in the last year?

- More emotional control
- More independence
- Better able to control behaviors like silliness in social situations
- Moodier (girls)
- More persistent
- Talking back – testing the limits
- Body-consciousness, needing more privacy
- Greater processing of outside experiences
- Better aware of how others are perceiving them
- More confidence and adventurousness
- Beginning to make better decisions – understanding consequences better
- Coalescing friendships
- Forming opinions of others, ranking
- Wanting less sleep

Dr. Gold’s comments – trends over last 10-15 years is that some issues of older kids are now filtering down to younger students.

Five Areas of Development:

1. Physical – right now, this is a period of gradual change; children are getting bigger and more capable. Kids are trying to master these changes. Children **should** have some home responsibilities, because they are capable of and want to show what they can do. Parents should acknowledge how it helps the family.

They are getting ready for competitive sports, but try to focus on skill-building and fun. They are more aware and curious about their physical bodies.

2. Cognitive – reaching the end of a big transition. They have been very egocentric, but now they are able to understand order and rules. Educationally, they are beginning to understand rules of reading, math, science, etc. They are beginning to be able to make better decisions, state their own opinions. They are now aware that kids are able to perceive and evaluate them, and sort each other into groups dependent on how others see them.
3. Social – friendships are less transient; attachments are more solid. Girls' social interactions can be a rollercoaster ride from now until about 4th grade – they are very sensitive and take their attachments very seriously. Be prepared for tears and feelings of rejection. Part of what you need to do for your children at this age is be a good listener. Task: Help them begin to think about what/who makes a good friend? They are beginning to get the sense about how friends won't be mean to you...some friends are not very consistent. Try to get your child to think about how they feel with a friend.
4. Emotional – They are establishing much more emotional control, know how to handle the daily rhythm of school, better able to control their actions. Increased control will continue until adolescence. They have more stability and easier recovery from disappointments. Attention spans are longer; work can be maintained for 20-10 minutes. Always remember that KIDS NEED LIMITS. They need to be called on it when they step over the limits, such as dealing with anger or frustration by breaking things, hitting, or being blatantly disrespectful to you or anyone else.
5. Moral – Kids at this age still don't do things because they don't want to get in trouble. We want them to learn: empathy, caring, remorse. During discussions, ask children, "How would you feel if..."

Parent Questions/Issues/Concerns:

- What are healthy boundaries for a 2nd grader? (Body – privates)
Appropriate response – "it's your privates, play with it all you want".
Concern is that he might do it outside the home. When they do inappropriate things, they may get reinforcement by peer response and feedback. Try to ignore it, see if he can get NO reaction. He has to learn what's socially appropriate. Each area has a boundary...Task for kids is Discrimination: Where can I do what?

- What is appropriate sleep for a 2nd grader?
Kids need 9-10 hours of sleep. Most bedtimes are 7:30-8:30. If you think they are not getting enough sleep, think about how they are in the morning. Some kids, like adults need more or less sleep than the average. If they seem to need less, the best compromise is to get them settled down, eliminate distractions, and read to them. They should be in bed, at least, and quiet.
- How do we deal with their mistakes in schoolwork/tests?
How you model dealing with your own mistakes is going to make a difference, remember they are always watching and learning. Model thoughtful recovery from mistakes – how to correct mistakes and move forward. Emphasize that we all learn from mistakes and that when they make a mistake you really appreciate the opportunity to find out how they're thinking and to show them what they might have overlooked or missed in instruction so that they can understand the correct way to think about or perform a skill.
- How do we deal with our kids' stories and situations of "bullying"
Give them the tools to deal with these tough situations: Teach them to pay attention to how their body feels when they are feeling uncomfortable, scared, or nervous (e.g. butterflies, goose bumps, heat pounding, etc.). Have a plan: What are you going to do if... It's hard to stand up to the bully, get a friend to stand up with you. Be an ally, tell an adult, give encouraging words to the ally – acknowledge how hard it is to stand up, it's courageous. It's not tattling if someone else is getting hurt or you see something wrong. Encourage them to get adult help, use an assertive voice to "stop!"
- How would you approach a parent if there is an issue?
Don't want them to start on the defensive..."I think our kids had an issue today, always two sides, what have you heard? Here's what I've heard. Do you think we can help them work it out?"
- What do we do about friends who may have negative influence on our kids?
Feedback from your child is very important – Tell them your observations of his/her behavior on his/her return from the playdate. The immediate response is to say "we can't allow you to go to that child's house again." If you want to give them a chance to be friends, have that child over to your house for a playdate. If he/she doesn't behave in the way you allow at your house – tell them and call parents to have him picked up.
- How much independence should they have?
Depends on your child and their responsibility level. For walking down the street, crossing at the stop sign – practice the skills with

them, watch to make sure they do them, once they show consistency in the skills – you may want to try a gradual release for the action. If they mess up, then pull the privilege and try again... Ultimately, you will have to live with yourself on the privilege and independence you are giving them. Should boys this age go to the men's restroom in a public place, when they're with their moms? This is a tough one – sometime between now and when they are nine, they'll refuse to go to the women's restroom. Rehearse with them before going not to talk to anyone, just go and return quickly. Stay outside the door, of course. Work with them on recognizing uncomfortable feelings and getting away from the situation if they feel uncomfortable. Parents have to manage their own anxiety throughout this period of gradually letting go of their children. Bad things happening are very rare. It's more common for kids to be overprotected these days and not develop the confidence that they can handle themselves.

- Self-esteem issues (“I’m so stupid,” “no one likes me”)
Could be a disarming button, getting a reaction from parents. If you feel manipulated and there is no evidence that the child is doing poorly in school or has no friends, then probably these statements are “button pushers.” This could also be a sign of perfectionism, where the child won't allow him/herself to make mistakes. In that case state clearly that you don't expect him/her to be perfect and ask what would make him/her feel better.