

Fall 2017 Fifth Grade Level Parent Meeting  
September 27, 2017  
Dr. Allan Gold, District Psychologist

Why do we have these grade level meetings?

- Raising children is a partnership between school and families
- Networking – meeting other parents
- What is the norm developmentally?

Handouts

Vision of Reed Union School district graduate

Profile of 5<sup>th</sup> grader

How to manage certain behaviors

Raising a moral child

Teaching children to respect

Restorative parenting

Parental ethics

How to talk to your children

How not to land your kid in therapy

How not to be an enabler

Technology and 5<sup>th</sup> graders

-several different handouts about the effects of technology on children

Brainstorming session:

What are the changes in our 5<sup>th</sup> graders since last year?

Parent responses:

- More secretive
- More independent
- More interested in current events
- More self-aware
- More mature, including bodily changes
- More moody
- More strong willed, opinionated
- More worried about what others think
- More confident in finding own voice
- More responsible (big sister)

We will focus on different areas of development in 5<sup>th</sup> graders:

**Physical Development** – there is a wide range among children in physical development at this age. Children are very capable at this age, which is in line with their need for independence. Chores are important at this age. They may become more resistant to doing chores next year.

5<sup>th</sup> graders are capable at participating in organized sports.

It is important to emphasize a “growth mindset” at this stage, that kids compare themselves with themselves not those around them, so that they can observe their own improvement and learning.

Early maturers: This can be particularly challenging for girls who develop earlier than peers. Not quite as challenging for boys who develop earlier at this stage. Early developing girls can be embarrassed, while tall early developing boys generally are seen as more mature, and may be physically more able.

Dinner is a good time to de-brief about the day. Dinner is a good time to notice what the children did correctly during the day. Kids self-esteem is fragile at this stage. Parents begin to move from “managers” to “consultants” at this stage in different areas. It is particularly helpful for parents to be consultants regarding friends at this stage.

**Cognitive Development** - At this stage of cognitive development kids are able to understand the concrete world and are just beginning to be able to think more abstractly. This includes thinking about the future, understanding other points of view, seeing themselves in relation to other cultures, and other times. Dinner table conversation can be quite interesting and fun for parents from now on.

But with this increasing self-awareness and interest in world around them, including current events, it is necessary to do some “buffering” for students as some of the shocking info that we are all bombarded with every day is brand new to them. Help them also understand that there are many sides to any conflict. Help children to understand that every issue isn’t “black and white” but there are shades of grey. Help children to see the shades of grey. How do we buffer world events? Children don’t have the life experience to have sense of probability- that many events are rare or take place far away. We need to reassure children that there is a plan in place if a natural disaster should strike. There are kids this age who don’t want to grow up when they see the world around them. They (and sometimes we) need help refocusing on the present.

**Social Development** - They are good communicators at this stage. They are sensitive to others’ feelings. You can be helpful as a consultant at this stage. Help children establish values regarding friendships at this stage. For example, they need to understand that a good friend is consistent – not nice on a home playdate, but mean or ignoring at school. Dr. Gold sees children at this stage beginning to try to resolve social issues independently. They also self-advocate by asking him for help when they can’t resolve a problem. If a child seems involved in a “toxic” relationship at school, reach out to teacher first and she will enlist Dr. Gold if necessary.

It is important to have family interactions that are face to face and to role model interpersonal relationships.

**Emotional Development** - Children are generally able to self-regulate at this stage (except maybe with electronics). Watch for perfectionism, stress and anxiety at this stage. They are self-aware and compare themselves to others. Technology can make this worse: e.g., instagram posts. It is important to talk to children about all of this as they process things that they see around them.

Some children at this stage are already thinking about college. They pick up on our anxiety about the world around us.

We need to teach children to manage disappointment. Dr. Gold asked parents to give an example of healthy handling of disappointment. A parent shared an example where there was no room on volleyball team, so their daughter chose to go to practices with team and be the “mascot.” Working towards resilience is a very important goal.

**Moral Development** – This is a time of slow growth in moral development. Kids still lie to get out of responsibilities or to not get in trouble. Nevertheless, they are quite capable of empathy and understand the importance of trust. At this age kids will be asking for more and more privileges – going places independently, more electronics. The crucial moral development issue is trust.

What does that mean? Are they communicative? When they recognize that a peer makes a poor decision do they talk to you about it? Do they demonstrate accountability – homework, chores, respect? How does your child respond to limits regarding technology? Is your child able to self-regulate? Do they do what they say their going to do? If your answer to these questions is “no,” then they are likely not ready for the privileges that they ask for.

**Important issues:**

Technology - Technology has created new issues such as things like pornography are more accessible. Dr. Gold used to face this issue in middle school but now is forced to face it here at Bel Aire. It is so important that parents identify their personal values so that if/when the yare confronted with unexpected discoveries or behaviors: violent video games, cyberbullying, pornography, they are very clear with their kids about what their values are and how those activities are very contrary to their own values.

Dr. Gold asked if children had smart phones. A few parents raised hands. This was helpful as many parents in the room were under the impression (from their children) that everyone in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade had a cell phone. This is a challenging issue for everyone. He referenced an Atlantic Monthly article that is one of the handouts to read regarding this issue.

When you do give your child a smart phone a contract is helpful. Remind them it is a privilege not a right. Dr. Gold spends a lot of time at Del Mar working with the children to communicate face to face. Texts are very easily misinterpreted. Smart phones take a lot of monitoring.

One of the parents asked, “when do I give my child a phone?” His answer was that this is a very individual decision. Not everyone at Del Mar has a phone even though it seems like they do. Giving a child a smart phone is highly dependent on whether you trust your child (see comments about trust, above).

**Extracurricular activities** - Children need to learn to say no and to manage their time. Children need “downtime.” Everyone needs time to think and to be creative. It is important not to overschedule children.

**Living in Marin** - One parent asked how does living in Marin influence development. Dr. Gold talked about entitlement, the sense that kids (and parents) get that whatever they want, they can have. Of course, there are many positive things about our community, but also disadvantages. One disadvantage is that kids consider those things that are really privileges as rights. He talked about seven year old boy who was “depressed” because he didn’t have a pool and electronic device. Dr. Gold helped him to understand that not everyone, in fact many many people in the world do not have even basic needs met. That includes people not all that far geographically from us and also in our own community. It is very important to give kids some perspective about the world around them in relation to the small, privileged community that we live in. Kids need to be empowered to make a difference in the world. This is a perfect time to teach kids the importance of community engagement and thinking outside of themselves. Kids feel good about themselves when they help others. Even small community service activities can make a big difference, and the older they get the more opportunities there are – visiting old peoples’ homes, caring for animals, volunteering at after school care for younger children.

Dr. Gold believes that a weekly allowance to help kids learn to manage money is useful. Parents can give an amount they’re ok with for the child to either spend or save for themselves, and triple that amount. One-third for their own spending, one-third for saving for big items, and one-third for charity, so that they can see their money making a difference in someone else’s life.