

‘Fall 2017 Third Grade Level Parent Meeting  
September 19, 2017  
Dr. Allan Gold, Psychologist

Purpose of these sessions: help you network, understand your kids and what’s normal at this age. It’s very important to be able to talk comfortably with other parents, discuss parenting issues, share ideas and experiences.

Dr. Gold provided lots of articles to read:

- Vision of Reed district graduate – post this someplace, like on the refrigerator. This is how we want kids to end up at the end of 8<sup>th</sup> grade.
- Life skills that we want to develop
- Profile of 3<sup>rd</sup> grader
- Developmental issues: Resolving conflict, misbehavior, managing anger, etc.
- Positives: courageous parenting, positive disciplining, giving space, teaching respect
- What not to do: not enable them, over protect
- Parental ethics
- Tech guidelines: safety, addiction, smart phone

How your kids have changed in the last year (observations from parents):

- More independent/less clingy
- More capable – physically
- More responsible
- Opinionated
- More rational /logical– understands thought
- More attitude
- Wants to be alone/take care of themselves (emotional)
- Filter is gone, more aware of the world

5 areas of change and growth:

1. **Physical Development** - at this age, they’re not pre-adolescent. There is a gradual pace of growth, but they are more physically capable.
  - a. Home responsibility – they should have chores: take out the garbage, set table, dishes away, feed dog. Very important to develop a sense of personal and family responsibility
  - b. They’re more ready for organized sports – helps understand rules. **But**, don’t overschedule at this age. They should like and enjoy sports, but that and other extracurricular activities shouldn’t occupy all their time. They need down time to relax from school, engage in imaginative play, and enhance their creativity.

2. **Cognitive Development** – From age 5-7 they develop ability to understand rules, get less egocentric, understand others point of view. There are many implications from having reached this new level of cognitive development:
  - a. School – can read, do math, etc. Able to understand academics.
  - b. More aware of world – they’re going to start hearing about news; parents have to be the buffer between what they’re hearing and how to interpret, give perspective. It’s not unusual for them to hear about a natural disaster, like the recent hurricanes. They get scared. When kids are exposed, let them ask questions and express concerns so you can reassure. They (and we sometimes) don’t have a sense of probability: When they see an event they think it happens all the time. We need to put events in perspective for them., both in terms of frequency and distance from where we live and likelihood that such things can/will happen here.
  - c. Keep them present oriented, focused on school, friends (generally they are present oriented anyway).
  - d.
3. **Emotional Development** – this is a time of positive gradual growth. They have more control of emotions, from attention span to dealing with anger. Note that some do take longer to manage their emotions. Dr. Gold does see a lot of growth from the start of third grade to the end of the year. Most, if not all students get much better at managing emotions.
4. **Social Development** - relationships – kids this age are less egocentric and focused on themselves; they realize people are different and have different opinions, etc. They are increasingly more impacted by what they think their peers think of them. They worry more about “if I do that will someone laugh at me.” They want to be liked. This drives social interactions:
  - a. Girls in particular have a tough time at this age. Friendships change and they aren’t good at talking about it. They still attach to one person and don’t know how to accept the growth of friendship circles. Parents need to help them understand that it’s not only okay, but good to expand friendships and it doesn’t mean that your “best” friend likes you any less if she (or he) wants to play with someone else sometimes.
  - b. There is a parent transition here: role changes from manager to consultant gradually. A manager does everything and makes the decisions. A consultant helps brainstorm, guides discussions, helps develop critical thinking, evaluates the results of decisions. The best place to practice being a consultant is around friendships. Help them think about what makes a good friend.
  - c. “Consistent” - good friends are nice to you all (or most of) the time, not only in certain situations.
  - d. Friendships aren’t always logical. If you don’t believe in the family values of a child, you don’t have to encourage the friendship.
  - e. Expect Drama!

- f. Kids have become more self-advocating at this age than historically. This takes time and listening. And you have to decide when to cut off the chatter and help with the problem solving, but kids like to be heard.

5. **Moral Development** - doesn't change much until adolescence. They don't do bad things because they don't want to get caught. Their motivation is not to get in trouble. That doesn't mean you can't teach the right thing to do, and this is an area where parents have a lot of control.

- a. They will lie at this age. They will lie to get out of things they don't want to do. If it's a health issue, you are not the consultant, you have to be the manager (brushing teeth etc.).
- b. If you catch them in a lie, it's a good time to talk about trust. As they get older they understand what it means for you to trust them. They may not understand at this age that trust is that when you've done something wrong you take responsibility and when you say you're going to do something you do it.

Restorative parenting article talks about when a kid does something wrong, how they can make it right. They have vulnerabilities at this age. You want to catch them at doing something good and conversely don't want them to equate doing something wrong with being a bad person. We want kids to internalize that they need to do the right thing.

Other issues:

Another emotional area, which is different from 20 years ago, is an increase in stress, anxiety and perfectionism. Kids beat themselves up if they make a mistake. What's important is the Growth Mindset. Rather than compare themselves up with someone who is better, help them think about what they can do now that they couldn't do before, even a couple months ago. Some struggle with 'tell me 3 things you like about yourself, as a person.' By middle school they are able to identify their personal traits (good friend). At this age, when you catch them being good ("that was nice that you helped your friend"), reinforce it. ("look how nicely you controlled yourself with your homework when you found something difficult.")

- **Allowances:** Dr .Gold feels that allowances are a very good thing as a tool for kids to manage money and become more responsible, as well as being a good citizen. They are old enough to learn to deal with money. Allowances should not be for doing regular home responsibilities. They don't need to get paid for being a good member of the family. Dr. Gold recommends that allowances be split 3 ways: give, save, spend: give one-third to charity, save one-third for the future for something "big," one-third for spending on what they want. For example, if you're comfortable giving them \$3 a week to spend (or save for their own wants), then triple the amount for the other two items (saving, charity). That way they can learn how to budget. For

what they want. There should be consequences to not helping around the house (e.g, take away electronics etc.). If they really refuse to do their home responsibilities, then you can use taking their spending share of the allowance as a consequence. They need to learn the concept that they have to earn privileges.

- They can be paid for extra tasks – (outside regular chores). Rake the leaves, help wash the car, you can let them earn a little extra money.
- **Electronics** – Dr. Gold REALLY worries about this. It is really a challenge. He believes that managing electronics is the most challenging aspect of parenting in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. See the Atlantic Magazine article about how smart phones are ruining a generation. Social media can ruin self-esteem and suck up their time. It is almost like drugs. Also see Technology Addiction article. Used to be a problem for 7-8 grade, now it's much younger.
  - There is so much to monitor and when you give them a smart phone they have access to everything.
  - You can get them a flip phone when they need contact. But that's late 4<sup>th</sup> grade.
  - Kids get more engaged when you take away their electronics
  - It's not going away, but we have to think about what role model we are for our kids. If we come home and sit on our phones or use them at dinner, the message is that this is more important than social interaction. And it happens so fast. This is an area where you have to maintain control, and you have to find families that have similar values to you. (it gets pretty frustrating in middle school, but now you can still control if and how much time they spend on electronics.)
  - Sign of potential addiction is how well they can manage it. Can they get off within a few minutes of your asking them, or does it turn into a long battle.
  - Guidelines:
    - It is often easier to set hard rules: ex. Not on a school night. Kids don't understand moderation and are not great at regulating themselves.
    - Some kids can stop (ex: just let me finish this level...and then they stop. But if it keeps going, good sign you need to go to: Not at All.
    - IF they can stop and regulate, it's okay to give a limited amount on a school night. If not, it is best to go cold turkey. They should never have electronic time before they complete their homework or nightly reading. Nor should they sit at the ipad or laptop at the expense of going outside to play, when it's nice out, etc.

- In later grades, when they get a phone, you need to think about what you need to know. You need their passwords. They should never have them in their room at night to interrupt sleep. Think about your child and you have to monitor and look at what they're doing.
- Communication is the most important thing. Communication with parents is a protective factor.
- As they get older they will be asking for more and more privileges. You'll have to give them more and more reasons why they can't do something. Articulate your values so they have a view of why you won't allow something. If you don't want your kids playing violent games, know why. Sooner or later they are going to find this stuff (pornography, violence).
- Values: safety, respect, human decency are very important. The message of violent video games is that violence is okay.

## Q&A

Q: What is the dynamics of the playground at this age?:

Our playground is generally pretty safe. Kid generally play games. They love the gaga pit. Physical altercation is quite rare. Boys tend to start hanging around in groups. They less sensitive about negative interactions, such as occasional teasing; let it go a little more easily than the girls. It is the ethos of our district to intervene when there is teasing, as long as we know about it. Kids this age are playful, open to making new friends.

Q: Where does teasing cross the line to bullying? A: "bullying" is an overused term these days. Bullying is repeated physical, verbal, or cyber teasing and harassment. Make sure kids know to tell the other kid when they don't like something, and when they need to get an adult to assist them. No one wants to be a tattletale. So telling when someone is chewing gum when they shouldn't, that's not their job to deal with. But if someone is repeatedly picking on them and they don't stop when asked nicely to stop and told strongly that they don't like it, it is more than okay to go get help; it is necessary and it is not tattling to protect yourself.

Q: Screen time... is there any school education about this? A: Dr. Gold doesn't know details but they do have Digital Citizenship. He will talk to Ms. Cala about educating student on the physical effects of screen time, particularly on brain development, to see if that can be incorporated into our digital curriculum.