

Fall 2018 Fifth Grade Level Parent Meeting
October 9, 2018
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1. Purposes of Grade Level Parent Meetings:
 - a. We are partners in raising kids in the 21st century. It is so much more challenging now than in earlier years. School and home must work together for a successful, happy experience for our children.
 - b. Find out what's normal for kids at this age. There's always a range, but there are general commonalities to be aware of.
 - c. It is increasingly important for parents to get to know their children's friends' parents because we won't know everything they do. They will want more privileges, and it's really helpful for parents to get a sense of what other parents are doing (calibrate), and children will get more private and we'll find out things from other parents.
 - d. Getting used to thinking about and discussing values with each other.

2. Handouts
 - a. Vision of Reed District graduate
 - b. Profile of 5th graders
 - c. Parenting articles (boosting self esteem, respect, homework, time outs)
 - d. Restorative parenting
 - e. Not to do's (How Not to Land Your Kid in Therapy, How Not to be an Enabler)
 - f. Technology usage (addictions, setting limits)

3. Changes in our 5th graders since last year (parent observations)
 - a. More independent: doing their own homework, getting to/from school, getting own after-school snacks
 - b. More aware of world and global issues, questioning things they hear about
 - c. Absence of wanting help with personal/friend issues, bottling up emotions (boy), holding in emotions (e.g., crying) especially at school
 - d. Want to be independent but has a hard time getting there (e.g., be proactive about homework)
 - e. Pre-puberty, they don't want it to happen, they have a fear about it
 - f. Crushes on opposite sex
 - g. Stories more elaborate, story telling is bigger and bigger, more detailed
 - h. (son) is quieter, parent probes and doesn't get as much
 - i. Unexplained emotions (girl), being emotional but not understanding why
 - j. (boy) when expressive, instead of being overly emotional, can express himself more and is more controlled, more modulated
 - k. more interested in personal appearance

- l. more peer awareness of who's cool, who's not
 - m. A lot more protest and objections, "why am I supposed to....X?", more push-back
4. Developmental Themes: how do we make sense out of these observations?
Use framework with 5 aspects:
- a. **Physical Development:** up to now, there are gradual changes. However, puberty is coming and that impacts everything: social, emotional, cognitive development. Some girls will get their periods this year, some boys will have a growth spurt. It's usually a little harder for early developing girls, because they may be embarrassed at their physical changes. Early developing boys have an advantage, taller, more athletic. At the end of fifth grade there are Family Life Education instruction sessions which teach all about adolescence and puberty and provide opportunities for kids to ask their questions and get adult, consistent answers. Along with these changes, come:
 - i. They are able to be more independent
 - ii. Chores/home responsibilities are really important, it's the last time "you'll get them to do anything" (much harder at age 12) and they are physically capable: dishwasher, set table, take care of dog, laundry, take out garbage.
 - iii. Sports: not for everyone, can be very competitive particularly around here, we also live in a competitive society, should be FUN and SKILL BUILDING.
 - iv. Separately: consider how structured is their life; consider how "scheduled" they are, kids still need downtime (with no technology), to be creative, to be with their friends. Their stress level can get too high if there are too many, especially considering homework this year and middle school.
 - v. Puberty – very big physical change, will compare themselves to others, help them over come the fears,. It's normal to be afraid of change, family life unit goal is to normalize the process for everyone; respect their questions, don't overreact, ask them questions back, keep communication open.
 - b. **Cognitive Development:**
 - i. This a time of the beginning of significant changes; They will develop much greater ability to understand ideas.
 - ii. They understand the concrete world and can start thinking more abstractly.
 - iii. World event: They are more aware of everything, how do we handle that? Political realm is pretty safe to discuss, and parental values are clear. Kids should learn not to believe everything they hear.

- iv. Very positive aspects: we have more interesting dinner table conversation and can talk to them as young adults.
- v. News: if they have older siblings, or their friends have older siblings, they will be more exposed to news. Much news is negative (murders); they don't have a sense of probability or perspective (e.g. limousine crash in NY), children take in the information and get scared. They talk about death more (kids will sometimes). Don't let them ruminate about these things; Parents need to be the buffers by explaining that events are rare or maybe far away (like wars) and that Tiburon/Corte Madera are really safe places.
- vi. They will come home and talk about films other children have seen that are not age-appropriate. Also, violent video games.
- vii. Values are increasingly important now, especially at this age. As parents, our job is to say "I don't want you watching this," but to use your values to explain why, not just say "because I'm your mom/dad and I told you so." Sex in films may be less of a concern to you than violence, for example.
- viii. It's perfectly OK to ask other parents in advance of playdates/sleepovers, about their limits on videos, movies, even if they have guns in the house.
- ix. We will get push-back; they may not agree with our family values, but you should still explain why you don't want them to do X. There will be many teachable moments for our kids, for them to learn about values. Be prepared, by thinking in advance about personal and family values. "That's a great question, let's talk about it..."
- x. They will start asking us, "what did you do as a kid?". This gets to the issue of privacy. These can be very challenging questions. Be more transparent if you can and still maintain a boundary of personal privacy.
- xi. The Del Mar program "Being Adept" for 6-8th graders explains the impact of substance use and abuse on brain development, try to have them abstain until age 15-17.
- xii. You can also ask "how come you want to know?".
- xiii. Del Mar optional program TEA (Teach Equity and Acceptance), meets every Friday with any 6-8th grader who wants to come. Tea and cookies are served but the main goal is to discuss, understand and accept differences (physical, mental/emotional, religious, ethnic, etc.), privilege, bias, anti-Semitism, racism, homophobia, ageism, etc.
- xiv. Ultimately, we want our kids to learn to think critically and their cognitive development increasingly makes that possible.

c. Social Development

- i. There will be a lot of changes coming in this area.
- ii. They are continuing to compare themselves with others, even more self critically
- iii. Consider the parent roles as Administrator (directive, tell what to do) vs. Consultant (learn about them, ask good questions, brainstorm, provide possible choices, evaluate, assess, advise, discuss, strategize). The social realm is a very good place to be the Parent /Consultant. It may take time to really listen and tease out details. It's important for them to understand they can come to you to help navigate social situations (learn what the situation is, empower them to try to solve themselves)
- iv. They don't want to hurt each other's feelings
- v. They can be thinking about "who makes a good friend" and may struggle with this (script for kids for each other "if you would do more of X and less of Y, I think we could be better friends") "how do you feel when you're with this person?"
 1. Help them give feedback to each other
 2. They really want to be independent with social relationships
 3. Kids should be aware of trust and consistency – that their good friends treat them the same in a one-to-one playdate and at school with a lot of other kids (not nice at home and ignoring or mean at school)
- vi. Dating & Crushes: what is OK for boy-girl relationships at this age; do you let 2 10 year olds go to the movies by themselves? (no one raised hand); parents sit in back row; would be ok (7th grade) they usually go in groups now (vs. when we were young) things are fluid at this age. They need to figure out how to treat someone they like, why they like them. Parents can still be the Administrator and say no to them going out by themselves alone.
- vii. Kids this age can and do go out by themselves to some places
- viii. Social relationships are complex, and are fluid, and they are awkward at getting out of friendships.
- ix. Kids will develop at different rates (physically and socially) which will increasingly impact who they are friends with.
- x. Most concerning is kids who don't like themselves, being hard on themselves
- xi. Changes since past: kids now have a more fragile sense of self-esteem, more anxiety, more stress.
- xii. There is more awareness of popular kids at this age, what it takes to be popular, and a desire to be friends with the popular kids, even if there is no commonality, consistency, or trust. The Parent/Consultant can help kids figure out that being with

- “popular” kids is not the only goal in building friendships, but to feel good about themselves when they are with friends.
- xiii. **TECHNOLOGY:** this is so critical now in social relationships and development. Are they yet on social media? (Supposed to be age 13).
 - xiv. Family’s values are also important here (see above section)
 - xv. There is a new movement “Wait until 8th,” - not to get kids smart phones until 8th grade. Some (and an increasing number of) Reed District parents are talking about this and actually committing to this.
 - xvi. We, as parents, are often anxious: “I need to know where you are,” so get them a flip phone (not smartphone) instead.
 - xvii. It is not recommended, but some 5th graders are starting to use social media now.
 - xviii. Cyber bullying among kids is very toxic
 - xix. Boys tend to play video games/social online vs. other social media usage.
 - xx. Some parents do not allow electronic time at all during the school week; others allow a half hour or so (see below for comments on trust, self-control, and addiction) to determine if tech play time is appropriate.
 - xxi. How does a child build their trust with you?
 1. Consistency, follow-through (e.g., homework), home chores, money (allowance), and can loosen apron strings as they demonstrate ability to follow through.
 2. An allowance should not be tied to doing any specific chore; it’s for helping. Figure out how much you’re comfortable with them having per week and multiply by 3 then allocate to them as: 1/3 for Savings; 1/3 for Charity; 1/3 to Spend or Save as they decide. You can watch how they manage their money, which also develops trust.
 3. Privileges: PlayStation is not a “right” it’s a “privilege” that needs to be earned, and can be lost for bad behavior. It can/sometimes also be earned back.
 4. Kids in general are not good at self-control (neither are adults). When it’s time to stop, they can stop and do; that helps them earn trust with parents, and demonstrates maturity.
 5. Technology addiction is real: a warning sign is if they can’t stop when time is up, there is repeated push-back arguing and fights. Technology is built to be addictive and have “hooks”
 - xxii. As parents, talk to others to see/calibrate what they are doing as far as technology is concerned

- xxiii. Check out the Reed Union School District site under Parents > Resources >Technology for more information.
- xxiv. Realize that you will need to monitor your kids use of the phone, what they post, what they're looking up on their ipads or laptops. It's a BIG job!

d. Emotional Development

- i. They have more control over their emotions now, at least until puberty. They don't want to melt down or cry at school; the social expectation at this age is that they will control themselves (e.g., anger, frustration)
- ii. Puberty hormones can lead to unexplained emotions (may be "sad")
- iii. Generationally, kids these days have less patience, are looking for more instant gratification than in the past.
- iv. Stress increases at this age, and even more in middle school (homework, tests), how do they calm themselves down?
 - 1. How to relieve stress: physical activity, draw, write, play with pet, listen to music,
- v. Anxiety increases at this age, a lot comes from parent expectations
- vi. Del Mar and other middle schools are changing from A-F grading to another system. That may or may not reduce anxiety about grades and performance.
- vii. Let them know that it's OK to make a mistake; admit your own mistakes and know that you are powerful role models. Kids are watching what you do (how you handle your own disappointments).
- viii. Kids (and adults) have internal voices: bad voices make us feel like we can't do something, we have to be perfect, we have to worry about everything, while good voices help us accept ourselves, encourage effort, allow for mistakes, help us put things in perspective, control our worrying.
- ix. Growth mindset: instead of comparing yourself with others, compare yourself with yourself. Think of what you can do now that you couldn't before.
- x. Relieve social/academic stress when they withdraw: tell your own stories, "I know you don't want to listen to me; express your concerns "I'm watching you and I'm really worried/concerned/confused about you" ..."I feel like you don't want to talk about it...I really want to help you...think about it...let's find some time to talk about it...I love you...I'm here to help"
- xi. Consider Hard feelings (anger) vs. Soft feelings (worry, concern, hurt). Both kids and parents are more likely to listen to an expression of soft feelings than they are to listen to anger.

So try to identify the underlying feeling (e.g., fear, worry, hurt, confusion) vs. the response (e.g., anger)

- xii. Keep communication open, especially if they aren't very talkative with you (more often with boys and girls)
- xiii. Be a good listener
- xiv. Bedtime is a good time when they may be willing to share their day.
- xv. At the dinner table, start with "up" and "down" for the day, sharing your own, and that may open them up

e. Moral Development

- i. See above "values" sections, as well
- ii. They are still at an age where they don't do things because they don't want to get into trouble (vs. based on moral compass)
- iii. They need to learn the difference between Rules and Moral Imperatives (the golden rule). Rules are just to make society run smoothly – no gum chewing in class, rules for games so everyone plays the same vs. treating everyone with respect, how you want to be treated.
- iv. They will still lie, to get out of a consequence or responsibility.
- v. Kids do have empathy at this age. They are starting to realize the impact of their words and actions on people and can be more careful and thoughtful about their word choice. However, that can all go out the window with technology and cyberbullying.
- vi. Current events and news these days make it even more difficult to promote teaching respect to kids, when all they see from leaders, sports figures, cartoons, TV is disrespect, lack of control, etc. Meanness is more endemic and pervasive in society now. We need to counter that and clearly articulate our family's value system.
- vii. Restorative Parenting (also restorative justice) is an effective way to deal with kids' misbehavior. It's not just about punishment. Kids need to figure out the impact of their behavior on another person (friend or you as parent), which has 2 parts
 - 1. You made a mistake
 - 2. How are you going to make it right
 - a. More than just "I'm sorry" ..."I am not going to do it again"
 - b. Do something special for you (write a letter, chore around house)
 - c. This part restores their self-esteem and they realize that they're not a bad person, but just made a mistake.