

**Fall Third Grade Parent Meeting
September 29, 2008
Dr. Allan Gold, District Psychologist**

RUSD Psychological Services now has a website. Parents can access the site on the Bel Aire website under Specialists, Reed website under Parent Education and the Del Mar website from the main page. The website explains the services provided by Dr. Gold and David Kover at Reed, Bel Aire, and Del Mar. The site is also a great resource for parents looking for articles and links.

Who are our 8 years olds/3rd Graders? What changes have parents seen since last year?

Attending parents comments:

- Peer influences stronger
- Seemingly, more independence around peers, still warm and cuddly at home
- More responsible at school (homework)
- Obnoxious
- More aware of right and wrong
- New and more complex friendship dynamics
- Developing clarity about whom to play with
- Better able to own their own problems
- Oldest child wants to parent younger siblings
- More physically coordinated
- Stronger sense of self-opinions
- More meanness to deal with
- More choices
- More friendship troubles

Dr. Gold puts changes into four categories: physical, cognitive, social and emotional.

This is a time of steady growth and mastery.

I. Physical

Children at this age are physically able to be helpful. Children want to feel that they can contribute to the household. This is a good time to give them responsibilities and chores at home; don't wait until they're 12.

II. Cognitive

Great change is going on in what a 3rd grader can understand. They understand the concrete world. Games are played by the rules and rules can be changed if discussed and agreed upon. They understand classifying and sorting. This is the age when collections often start. They are more aware of the world, peer influences, what others think of them. Self concept is differentiated (ex: I'm good at x, but not y). This will continue to grow throughout the Bel Aire years.

III. Social

Increasingly complex. Girls are particularly vulnerable to the ups and downs of changing friendships and they do not have the experience yet to weather this without hurt feelings. Parents need to decide – Intervene? Or, help child to figure out? Dr. Gold recommends the latter. Help your child get his/her feelings out and work with your child on strategies to cope with the changes. In the case that a child is being “picked on” or “rejected”, parents should make their teacher aware of the situation. A child will need to learn who is a “good” friend. Generally, it should be those who have the same interests and are nice to them.

IV. Emotional

Children in 3rd grade are much better at handling their emotions. They have good attention span and understand working hard. They take on responsibility willingly. They can manage their frustrations without temper tantrums (crying not common). Most are able to admit their wrongs, some still have excuses.

This is an age of mastery – what are parents doing to enhance the four skills above?

What kind of choices are their children making? Mastery skills kids want: Negotiating, Friends, Likeability

Parents can help by:

Encouraging activities at recess

Sleepovers - encourages politeness, new set of rules to follow

Helping child deal with emotions

Encourage participation in the activities at recess

Dr. Gold Asked for Questions, Concerns, and/or Issues on Parenting our 3rd Graders

Allowances – what is a good age to start an allowance?

Allowance is a good idea at this age. It helps a child get an understanding of money. Children can be taught to use an allowance for savings, spending, and charity. The sooner they learn to handle money, the better. A child will have to save for a movie, candy, etc and not have that immediate gratification. How much? Some say age or grade = the amount per week. Should allowance be tied to chores? A child should have some responsibilities not tied to money.

Homework – when and how much should parents intervene or supervise. Where should homework be done?

Set a precedent that your child does homework where you can keep an eye on them. Later on if they are behind closed doors, they will be tempted to play on their computers. Some kids at this age like the company, so you can do your “homework” sitting nearby.

Oversight? Independence.

Some kids are not ready to do homework all on their own. They need the basics: place, time, and materials, but parents can increase the social aspect of doing homework. Parents can do their own “homework” – paying bills, filling out forms, etc. while their child works on their homework.

Parents shouldn't be battling over homework. Homework is the child's responsibility. Most kids “get” homework by the end of third grade, if not sooner. A parent can't be the policeman forever and a parent shouldn't jeopardize their relationship with their child by battling over homework. If battles are going on, inform the teacher. Work with the teacher toward common expectations for your involvement and appropriate adjustments, accommodations or consequences so that the child can work toward more successful homework completion. If children really resist homework, there may be a good reason, such as that the work is too difficult. The teacher is crucial in sorting this out.

Correcting homework/ Inaccuracies

The teacher will generally guide parents with their expectations. Some teachers like uncorrected homework so they can see where a child needs help. Some feel a parent correcting the homework with a child, helps the child understand their mistakes. If a parent feels that their child doesn't “get” a lesson they should email their teacher with concerns.

Extra-curriculum and homework.

Approximately 45 minutes a night should be enough time for 3rd graders to finish their packet by Friday. If a child can't get the homework done each week, then they may be overbooked. Having extra activities on 1-2 days a week is enough. Set limits for your child. Children need down time, and they need to put school first.

Rules of the playground

The yard duty aides are there to solve problems. Kids can get physical on the playground and the aides are there to make sure that everyone is safe. Especially when third graders play with fifth graders kids can get bumped or even hurt by accident. If an issue on the playground is not being dealt with then a parent should turn to the teacher. There is a letting go piece for parents at Bel Aire. They can't protect their child from everything and they need to have faith that they will be okay at school.

Guidance in Social Realm: Child only doing one thing? How much control do we have? How much responsibility does a parent have to push them into activities?

Encourage mastery. Parents are responsible to expose children to many things. Art, theater, music, sports, etc. But it should be exposure not forcing. At school a parent doesn't have much control over their child's activity choices at lunch, for example.

Screen time/"Computer Kids"

Leisure screen time – TV, computer games, social sites (webkinz, club penquin). Parents need to set limits. Children truly can get addicted to the computer. Nip it in the bud now! ½ hr to 1 hour a day is not bad. Doing research on the internet, is okay and shouldn't count as screen time.

Managing media is very hard for parents these days. Parents grapple with values, if they don't let a child see a movie, then child isn't "cool". It becomes a social issue. Parents need to communicate values and information to their child. This is where the location of computer in home is important. Kids will eventually be exposed to sex, pornography, violence, or other content that parents don't want them to see, through computers, talk from other children, movies, etc. Parents need to think about their own values and reasons why they don't want their kids to see or hear these things, so that they are well equipped to deal with them when they occur. Kids will have questions about what they see or hear, even if they aren't very comfortable asking the. Dr. Gold suggests answering a child's questions simply, or giving them a little bit of correct information or your opinions. Children will ask more questions if they really want more information.

Contact Lori Mustille to learn how to block websites on home computers. A parent recommended "Webroot" software.

Social problems

Children do look to parents for guidance. Try to encourage your child to talk about problems that come up: "I'm here for you if you need help" or "when I was in 3rd grade this happened to me..." "How do you want me to help?" Then, listen and use reflective listening: "sounds like you were hurt" or "sounds like that made you feel bad" etc. Some children are more private. Listening when driving is a good way to find out what's going on at school. If they're willing to share their problems and feelings, you can brainstorm with the child to solve the problem. Don't rush to solve a problem; some will work themselves out. Sometimes it's just a bad day and they want someone to listen.

A child who is attached to one friend, can have their feelings hurt when that friend doesn't play with him/her. Encourage many friends so a child will have others to play with, even when their "best" friend plays with some one else.

Bel Aire has "Friendship Groups" for students who have difficulty meeting new friends or lack social skills. They are gender specific. At this age boys and girls usually want to play with same sex playmates.

"Families" at Bel Aire consist of 3rd, 4th and 5th graders to help break down the age differences. The older children are hopefully learning to take care of the younger children and not looki at them as someone to pick on.

