

Fall 5th Grade Parent Meeting
October 21, 2008
Dr. Allan Gold, District Psychologist

See Bel Aire website:

-click on "Parents Place" then Dr. Gold's papers; link to "How to Survive the 5th Grade"

-click on "Specialists" then the Dr. Gold link for the psychological services website with links to helpful resources including the California and National School Psychologist Associations. These notes are linked under "Parent Meetings."

What are changes noted in our 5th graders since last year:

- More concerned about appearance
- More independent with making social plans, managing homework
- "finally" enjoying reading
- More forgetfulness/irresponsibility
- Eye-rolling, talking back, attitude
- Clearer about likes/dislikes
- More stress—stretched too thin, need perfection
- Peer pressure
- Constantly on the phone, instant messaging
- More frustrated with self
- Like being school leaders

Today's ten-year old is now like when we were 14 in terms of sophistication.

It is helpful to think of our children's development in four different areas: physical, cognitive (thinking/intellectual), social, and emotional.

PHYSICAL CHANGES

- Puberty for girls 2 years before boys
- Some girls will get their period this year
- Earlier developing girls usually have tougher time than earlier developing boys
- Hormones kick in, interest in the opposite sex,
- Some friendships may change

COGNITIVE CHANGES

- Well grounded in concrete world right now.
- Now through next several years, kids begin to understand the abstract.
- Interest in news and world events grows
- Academic expectation for them is high

- At age 10 – you can kind of start treating them like adults, at least reasoning and logic mean more to them

How much should we share vs. hold back information? It's nice to now to be able to have intellectual interaction, but kids may need many things that they see or hear explained or interpreted for them.

SOCIAL CHANGES

- Rankings/popularity awareness
- They don't want to be different...want same clothes, to play same games, see same movies, etc.
- Pressure to be connected electronically
- Meanness among kids increases and they will need to learn to handle this

EMOTIONAL CHANGES

- Trying to handle all these pressures is tough and they can't always hold it all together, but they are generally quite capable of managing their emotions – frustration, disappointment, etc.
- They may begin to develop attitude, sarcasm, eye-rolling at this time
- They begin to value privacy more

Some parental guidelines at this age:

It is important for parents to figure out how much attitude they'll tolerate. . Respect is really important. While it takes a lot of energy to deal with 10 year olds, it is critical to establish rules of respect and limits to emotional outbursts (and blackmail) while they are still pre-adolescent.

Have your child contribute to the running of the household—chores important!!!

Note that the role of parents changes around ages 10 to 11 from administrator to consultant. When they were little, we were administrators and now we have become consultants: good listeners, helpers with brainstorming ideas about problem solving, helping choose plans of action, help evaluate their choices.

Kids need to clarify what makes a good friend. If you don't like your child's choice in a friend, say you can have them over but not go to their house (maybe their movie choices didn't work with your values, lack of respect or rudeness from your child after a visit...)

Sharing your own social challenges when you were a kid can be helpful to your child, they usually listen and absorb them.

These years are the trust building years—more trustworthy than the more independence and privilege they gain from you. They will certainly “blow it” and lose some privileges and it can be a learning opportunity. You need to feel safe about your child’s whereabouts...okay to say NO!

Issues, Concerns, Questions in Parenting 5th Graders:

What is okay for a 10-11 year old regarding “freedom”?

- A Walk to the grocery store (5-10 minutes away)
- Local movie with specific drop off and pick up instructions
- NOT Northgate Mall

Basic Tenants for “freedom”:

- Not alone
- Clear start and stop time
- Safety is primary concern
- Probably no more than 1 parent needed with a group of five kids i.e. Trick or Treating.

Cell Phones

- many kids want them, NOT all have them.
- If they have them, watch out for text messaging expense (and the lack of human interaction/face to face relationships this can lead to).
- They can be a good safety feature, especially at Del Mar
- A new study shows that cell phones/electronics are not all bad...parents are more connected at times with kids as a result

Note: there is no specific legal age that it is ok to leave a minor child (under 18) at home alone. The general consensus is that around age 12, kids are left alone for some period of time. It depends on the maturity of the child and their likelihood of doing some mischief, harm to themselves, or others, or the house. At age 10, again depending on the child, it is not unreasonable to leave a child at home alone when going on short errands or when not arriving home from work for maybe an hour after school is out. Always walk through safety procedures and evaluate the maturity of your child before running out and leaving your child home alone. If the child is afraid to be home alone, then don't leave!

Sex:

Kids are at different levels of understanding (i.e., where do babies come from?) Often when there are older siblings, the younger ones are more knowledgeable about sex.

Dr. Gold said to be proactive (not wait until Family Life at the end of 5th grade) **if** they're showing any curiosity about sex. If they ask questions, it's good policy to ask what they think or know or have heard and then correct misinformation and give a little more information. He recommended sex education books as tools for the parent(s) to go through with their child. Then the child can look the book over themselves and ask more questions.

Drugs & Alcohol:

A parent asked when to worry about drugs/alcohol. Dr. G. said some kids start as early as 6th grade. Parents need to be aware! Dr. G. said that the good news is kids in our District had shown a decline in drinking and drug use over the past few years.

Parties:

At 5th grade, kids start to have boy/girl parties. Dr. G said that is fine as long as these rules are followed.

1. There must be adequate supervision. Ratio of parent to kids is 1 parent per 6 kids.
2. Parent supervisors must be visible to the kids they are supervising and not be at the complete other end of the house, out of sight
3. There should be a time limit (2 hours is ample) and a structure for party (not just hanging out)
4. Parents should routinely speak to the host parents about the structure, length of party and who/how many will be supervising. You could even volunteer to help supervise.

Eye Rolling/Backtalk/Respect:

Parents are tired of nagging kids about responsibilities for school work, sports, etc. Dr. Gold agreed with a parent's advice about picking your battles. For most fifth graders, they should now be responsible for all their school work and extracurricular activities gear. You should inform your child's teacher that you are no longer going to nag about homework and it is now all up to the child. Work out with the teacher about consequences.

Next, have a talk with your child saying, "Son/daughter, I don't like the way we are interacting. I feel that I'm constantly nagging about homework and you are being disrespectful with your back talk and eye rolling. So, I'm not going to nag you anymore about homework and you are now responsible for all your school stuff. I'm here if you need me to help." You can then role play asking questions like, "What is the best time for you to do your homework?" or "Do you need any special materials for you homework?"

A parent offered a solution for the packing/forgetting of sports gear. He said “Son you are now solely responsible for getting your equipment/uniform in the car. You must pack up the correct gear and put it into my car the night before.” The clever parent then posted laminated packing lists for each sport the child plays, so that his son has a list of what to bring. The parent then said he showed his son a t-shirt he had made that said “I’m wearing this shirt because I forgot my uniform.” The shirt is kept in the parent’s car, but to date, the son has never forgotten his gear and has never had to wear the shirt.

TV/Screen Time: How much?

Dr. Gold said that ½ hour per school day is fine. An hour to an hour and a half is ok on weekends. If the family likes to do family movie nights on weekends, that’s ok too. Dr. Gold warned to be aware of child’s addiction to screen time. Some kids are so addicted to video games that they can’t do anything else. If kids won’t get off when they’re supposed to, then it may be easier to have a “no screen time on school nights” rule.

In closing, Dr. Gold said that he is not worried much about this year’s fifth grade class. He also gave participants the following handouts:

- Profile of a Fifth Grader
- Teaching Your Child to Resolve Conflicts Peacefully
- Some Tips for Communicating Better with Your Child
- Issues Faced by Affluent Families (from *The Price of Privilege*, by Madeline Levine, PhD)
- Teaching Your Child to Manage Anger
- Helping Children Express Emotions
- 40 Developmental Assets for Elementary-Age Children
- Are You An Enabler?
- Boosting Your Child’s Self Confidence
- Confronting Misbehavior

Most of these are on the Psychological Services website link.