

6<sup>th</sup> Grade Parent Meeting  
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**In what ways have you seen your child change from 5<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> grade?**  
(observations by parents)

More independent  
More responsible  
More Organized  
More confident in social skills, interacting with adults & with new kids  
"Attitude"  
Humbled by middle school experience  
More awareness of outside world (e.g., politics)  
Fear about the outside world (have a sense of vulnerability)  
More awareness of their appearance  
Handling complexities (math & writing)  
Beginning to understand theories  
Emotionally erratic  
General Anxiety  
Anxiety about homework

Child development can be usefully considered as growth and change in four areas:

**Physical Changes:** You will see a lot of dramatic changes now ... the 3 years between 6<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade are an amazing process. Welcome to puberty!! Physical development has a major impact on rest of life ... friendships change, interests change etc.

**Cognitive changes:** This is the beginning of a period of time of great cognitive change... they go from dealing from concrete to abstract (starting to understand the rest of the world, not just what is but what can or could be)

On the other hand, they are very concerned with how others see them, and believe the whole world is focusing on them. This is called "adolescent egocentrism."

Their fears of the outside world stem from a combination of understanding and being aware of what happens with a lack of experience to put what they are exposed to in perspective. The media blasts anything that happens; parents need to be able to talk about and process what is going on with their kids.

**Social development:** there is lots of anxiety from trying to fit in . A child's in 6<sup>th</sup> grade often won't be their friends in 8<sup>th</sup> grade. This is the period of greatest conformity; Kids just don't want to be different ; they want to fit in.

**Emotional area:** hormones affect this as well. They are trying to separate themselves from parents but at the same time they still can act like little kids. They are managing their own social anxiety, feelings about the wider world, while also trying to manage the increased demands of school. This can create a good deal of stress and general worry. Sometimes they get overwhelmed by their feelings and what they may not be able to control and they take it out on parents.

The parents job is to make the communication happen! Talk with your kids. Encourage them to talk with you. Ask them open ended questions.

Make the time to have family dinners ; it is good to have some established time(s) when the family is together. What you establish now as family routines you will have something to fall back on when they start getting older to want to hang out with only friends.

### **Issues, Questions, and Concerns in Parenting 6<sup>th</sup> Graders:**

**Homework load:** Advice from Kit: if you have a particular issue in particular class speak to your student's teacher. Middle school teachers understand kids this age and are flexible. You need to have a family life. Homework is practice reinforcing the skills they are learning that day. They should not be doing homework past their bedtime. We want them to have family life and not focused all the time on homework. If they've worked diligently past two hours, it's ok to write a teacher a note that that was all your child could do. Do homework in public space (dining room table), because some students take more time than necessary doing work in their bedrooms, behind closed doors, where they can text message, IM, or play games.

**Feeling rushed day to day at school:** that's not unusual; that will change. They may just be getting used to getting from class to class on time. Talk to your child about feeling rushed or any anxiety that is being caused by school related issues. Remember to open that line of communication between you and your child.

**Conflict resolution:** Again communicate with your child. Parents move from the role of administrator or manager to the role of consultant. Especially if they're having a problem that doesn't involve you, be a good listener. When they've had a chance to express their feelings, then ask them what they want to do to resolve their conflicts. By now they do have a lot of skills to do that. Maybe they just need an ear. Tell them how you dealt with similar situations when you were in middle school. Believe it or not, they do listen. Encourage them to talk to one of us at school – we're very used to helping kids resolve differences and arguments.

**How do you make them listen to you:** Set up appropriate consequences when your child is not listening. Use I statements with your children. Bring up our school pillars in your family discussions. Don't talk too much, act, based on a system of consequences and rewards that you have set up before. Remember, you need to feed, clothe, shelter, and love them. Beyond that, you're not their slaves. If they are disrespectful, take your time unnecessarily, don't do their home responsibilities (chores), then you don't have to take them everywhere, buy them everything they want, and be at their beck and call. Show appreciation when they are helpful and cooperative; they still want to please you.

**Laptop boundaries:** Laptops should be in public place (in family room, kitchen, dining room table etc) set possible blocks. Again talk to your kids about how they are using their laptops; have that open communication. Be prepared to have open honest discussions if they get onto sites that you don't want them to see. We block sites at school, but at home with wireless, they may stumble on (or actively look for) on anything from hate sites to pornography. Before you have to deal with this, articulate your own values about why you don't want them exposed to these type of sites, so that you're not taken by surprise.

**Handling mortality of parents:** It is natural for them to worry about these things. By talking with them see if you can figure out where these fears are coming from (maybe a friend's parent is sick or was in an accident, or there was a dramatic event on the news). Talk about their internal voices which may not be helpful, that make them worry / Talk about simple techniques to stop themselves from thinking about something troubling – reading, calling a friend, watching T.V., playing a game? If this continues and becomes an obsession, then it can become a more serious problem.

Don't forget, kids pick up on your own anxieties, so try to keep your parental and adult worries under control, too!

**Attitude:** Need to establish very clear consequences for attitude ... if your child is being really disrespectful, then take things away. Whatever consequence system you set up you don't want do it in the heat of the moment, have a family meeting and you as parents and family decide on the consequences.

**Let them express feelings and LISTEN to them!**

**Note: There is Free Tutoring from the Tiburon –Belvedere Library**  
**Book Rec: Siblings without Rivalry: It's an old book, but still useful, if you've got warring children**

**Psychological Services website is directly linked on the opening window of the Del Mar website. There's lot of parent resources there; visit it.**