

Fall 2010 8th Grade Parent Meeting

Thursday, October 21, 2010

Dr. Allan Gold, District Psychologist, Dr. Alan Vann Gardner, Principal

Dr. Vann Gardner shared the Del Mar staff's "Vision of a Del Mar Graduate". The goal is that by the time students graduate, they will be "21st century global citizens with enlightened minds, inspired hearts, and strong resolve to positively impact the world." The vision includes five main areas: Motivated Learner, Engaged Citizen, Creative Problem Solver, Effective Communicator and _____ (adjective yet undetermined) Self.

Dr. Gold And Dr. Vann Gardner then asked the parents in attendance for their responses to this vision of a Del Mar graduate:

How are our kids progressing toward this vision?

Parents shared the following challenges they see facing their kids and themselves as parents:

- Need to get kids to think long term.
- Parent's goals are not always the same as the child's goals.
- Level of competition & comparison is ratcheting up and affects sense of self.
- Balance - too much homework vs. taking responsibility.
- Kids need to understand why balance is important.
- Parents would like more direct feedback from teachers.

What is the parent role in getting our kids where we want them to go?

- Encourage self-advocacy and follow-up with teachers.
- Keep goals in perspective - everything isn't equally important.
- Try to understand what 8th grade is now compared to when we were in 8th grade.
- Step back, let kids fail, but give them guidelines.
- Promote community service and make global citizenship meaningful.
- Let kids be more carefree.
- Be a good role model by taking care of your own mental and physical health.
- Listen to their passions; recreate (as in recreation) together in healthy ways.
- Show kids there are other ways and places to live life.
- Talk to each other and encourage open communication.
- Present your own values, but realize kids might challenge them.

Dr. Gold next presented the activity of “painting” the picture of what our eighth graders are like now by reflecting on:

How our 8th graders have changed since last year

- Some want a lot more responsibility (time, money), and some want less responsibility.
- More confident.
- Broader range of experimentation.
- A lot more pressure (grades, sports, high school plans).
- More globally aware.
- More focus on social networks.
- More aware of themselves (looks, personality).
- Taller!
- More back-talking/disrespect.
- Entitled.
- More sensitive.
- Less open to suggestions from parents & siblings.
- Think they know everything.
- Nervous about next year.
- Contradicting/rejecting.
- More negotiating.

Five Areas of Development

Dr. Gold spoke about how 8th graders are developing and how all of these areas are in flux during adolescence:

1. Physical

The kids are mostly in puberty, which affects their emotional development. Different rates of development create social difficulties. Parent role is reassurance – tell kids they’ll get there eventually. Who they are as a person is more important than what they look like.

2. Cognitive

The kids are beginning to know themselves, and have a great understanding of themselves. They are thinking abstractly and globally. Parents should harness this youthful idealism and encourage kids to get involved with the community.

3. Social

Lots of turmoil and temptations. High school is in view. Kids are wondering how they fit in versus how they do what they know is right. Parents need to think about how to communicate their values while recognizing that kids will experiment themselves. Social

networking complicates things and makes it harder for parents to monitor. As a result, there is a lot of “fear-based” parenting.

4. Emotional

There is vacillation between global sense and retreating to their own world. It's an overwhelming age. Kids are given a lot of information. Don't judge somebody as an 8th grader and expect that's how they'll be as an adult!

5. Moral

Strive for balance - we have to look at ourselves and what we are communicating. We need to take family time and recreation seriously, and keep the broader picture in mind. Parents should help kids see the broader picture so that they recognize that grades aren't the most important thing...life will take different twists and turns. Parents and kids should not have “tunnel vision” and push toward one goal, because somewhere along the way things will happen that will take kids in a different direction for school, career, jobs and it's important to be open to these opportunities as they arise.