

# **Fall 2010 Second Grade Parents Meeting**

## **October 8, 2010**

**Dr. Allan Gold, District Psychologist, Lexie Sifford, Principal, Debbie Johnston and Kristin Carson, 2nd Grade Teachers**

### **Purposes of grade level parent meetings:**

- to paint a developmental picture of what children are like at each age
- to facilitate parents' getting to know their child's friend's parents in order to enhance communication, assist in networking, so parents don't feel they are alone and to promote a partnership with each other and school
- to explore values: some are in conflict with each other and it is important to reflect on them.
- ask questions: academic, social, responsibilities, behaviors

### **What are kids like these days? What changes have we seen in our 2<sup>nd</sup> graders since last year? (observations from parents)**

- Questioning authority e.g.. parents says: "its time to get dressed", child answers: "why? You can't tell me that."
- Less innocent, more rational; can rationalize more effectively, can hold a conversation better
- More independent, able to do things for themselves
- More mature
- More negotiation. e.g.. parent says: "please brush your teeth" child answers: "in five minutes"; negotiating for departure time from a play date; another parent said their child says: "if you pay me".
- More selective about friends
- More aware of what others think of them; self conscious
- Sense of being "big" kids; can do more
- More coordinated physically
- More emotional (a girl parent said this)
- Needs to be physically active (a boy parent said this)
- More attentive, more aware of the world (can't turn on the news anymore)
- Less tolerant: "Mom you put goldfish in my snack" (parent stated this with a lot of attitude); more opinionated
- Parents more to blame (according to the kids)
- Ability to make multi-step plans
- More responsible: homework, library book return
- Very into rules and fairness

In general, kids are growing up faster than in previous generations.

## **5 areas of development to consider when thinking about children at any given time:**

- 1) Physical development
- 2) Cognitive development
- 3) Social development
- 4) Emotional development
- 5) Moral development-later in life

### **Physical**

Kids are more coordinated

More physically active

Increased interest in sports

Dr. Gold asked the group to raise their hands if your child says “I want to do it myself” (most raised their hands)

Home responsibilities: Dr. Gold asked the group to raise their hands if your child has home responsibilities (many hands went up). Kids need to do this because they are part of the family and:

It makes them feel grown up.

It helps us out. This frees time that a parent can spend with their child/family doing things.

#### **This is easier to start now (at this age) than later.**

Ideas on home responsibilities: feed pet, set table, clear table, remove toys from living room, make snack, vacuuming, make grocery list, bring grocery bags in the house (from the car/garage)

Idea: set aside Saturday morning for the entire family to do chores.

**Allowances:** teaches kids to manage money.

Dr Gold’s personal philosophy on amount: come up with a \$ amount that you think is appropriate for your child to have as spending money (for candy, toys etc) and triple it. The idea being that:

1/3 goes to charity

1/3 goes to savings

1/3 is used to for spending money

Dr. Gold’s personal philosophy is not to tie allowance to chores. Chores are a family responsibility and you don’t get paid for them. Again show kids the benefits of time freed by doing their chores and helping out their parents.

**A parent asked:** “What would you tie allowance to?” She ties her child’s allowance to chores. She described how her son was informed in a carpool by another child that she does nothing for her allowance.

Dr. Gold’s answer: Tie it to the responsibility of buying your own toys; as a way to learn about money.

Ms. Sifford commented: once a child announced loudly at car line that he gets all the money he wants and all the other kid’s eyes opened/looked like shrimp.

**A parent asked:** “Kids have a lot of activities: soccer, gymnastics etc. Can you give a child a list of 5 activities/chores he can pick from?”  
Dr. Gold’s answer: This goes into the area of values. We have conflicting issues here. We have responsibilities, stress level created from over-scheduling and then homework. If you set a pattern of busy-ness when homework really hits in later years they are going to have to learn to say NO. You are probably doing too much now. It is OK to cut back. Some parents feel that they need to build their child’s resume (via extra curricular activities) in order for them to get into the best college. Don’t build your child’s resume at 7! It is very tempting to over-schedule: it frees a parent’s time, resume building etc. Don’t buy into it, especially if you are getting stressed out. It is OK to say no.  
Over-scheduling can be a pitfall!  
Dr Gold gave the example of a 2<sup>nd</sup> grader who once said that Mon/Weds she has ballet, Tues/Thurs she has soccer but Friday is “**her day.**” He asked the group to consider what that statement meant.  
Examine the bigger picture if there is no time for chores.

## **Cognitive Development**

At 7 kids are completing going from egocentric to understanding the concrete world around them.

- They understand rules: but they are unchangeable
- They can sort objects and ideas into groups and put things in order
- This is the basis for academic learning
- They have an increased awareness of the world
- They are more rational
- There can be loss of innocence
- Increased self consciousness

Benefits: what they can accomplish academically, understanding and playing games, conversations you can have with them.

**Big Pitfall:** What they are exposed to?

TV/News: how much can they see?

In his 7<sup>th</sup> grade meeting there were two conflicting opinions about how protective parents should be. There is no right answer – some parents want to keep their kids innocent and untroubled for as long as possible; others recognize that they can’t control everything that kids are exposed to and would rather provide information themselves.

In 2<sup>nd</sup> grade our kids are the biggest kids but at Bel Aire they will be exposed to bigger kids and their knowledge. Kids can hide things well and they may not share what they hear/learn.

Dr. Gold’s personal philosophy: Keep kids innocent (at least at this age). **BUT**, don’t be naïve. Be prepared for them being exposed to video games, movies, news at friend’s houses.

When kids ask difficult questions throw them back at them to see what they say. Then, give them a bit of information.

Dr. Gold asked the group: show of hands “Who watches the news?” Be prepared for the questions. If a child asks about war, crime, etc. reassure them and remind them that Tiburon is a safe place.

**A parent asked:** “How about stranger danger? Amber alerts?”

Dr. Gold answered: Not too early to start talking about it. Be careful you don’t scare them. Some children are more shy with adults so they are unlikely to go with a stranger but you need to be more careful with those that feel more comfortable/outgoing with adults.

Kid Power: a parent mentioned it as a place/organization they had sent their child to. Kids are taught how to handle bullies, strangers. They had groups for all age ranges. One child went at 5.

## **Social Development**

“Girls are like women” capable of deep, intense relationships. Example: their BFF decides she wants to play with someone else: that often causes a lot of drama in the relationship.

### **How much should parents get involved in the social drama?**

Ms. Carson commented on how drama/conflict is resolved in her classroom:

- Make a diary-it helps to get it out
- Peace talks-it helps to have kids learn how to communicate with their peers; how to work it out without having to run to her and tattle. It allows them to get it out of their system too. If this isn’t enough then she asks “What do you need from me?” Her suggestion is to let the child guide the process.
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Ms. Sifford commented that the blessing of teachers is that they are not related to the children. They can be less emotional, unlike parents.

Dr. Gold commented that there are usually two sides to every story.

What is tattling and what isn’t? What is a bully?

Kids so far have been told to go to an adult and now they are gaining independence to deal with problems.

If someone feels uncomfortable or unsafe he should tell someone.

As a parent you should check with teachers if your kids tell you repeated stories of bullying. They can help.

**A parent asked:** “In light of recent suicides concerning cyber bullying does Reed have a policy to deal with this?”

Dr Gold answered: Cyberbullying is an effect of technology. Kids shouldn’t have cell phones until much later. (Several parents commented that they knew of kids with cell phones now.) 5<sup>th</sup> graders are taught not to use technology in a hurtful way. Parents

should ensure computer is somewhere you can see it and monitor it, and get their children used to being monitored, while they are still young. Kids are very clever. Make sure you look over their shoulder.

Ms. Carson added: bullying in this grade level is not of the technological kind. But kids need to understand the difference between a bossy kid and a bully.

Dr. Gold added: Part of growing up is dealing with the situation. Learning how to stick up for themselves. Teasing is not bullying. Body language and tone of voice are important too.

The task of kids in the social realm is to figure out who makes a good friend?  
Kids are being more selective about friends now. They can be asked questions to think about how they feel with different children. They begin to understand that a good friend is someone who is nice, shares, helps when you feel down.  
Ask them who are you around that makes you feel good?

Parents often wonder what to do with a friend you don't approve of?  
Parents have more control now than they will as our kids get older.  
If your child comes home from someone's house using bad language, being disrespectful, invite the other kid over to your house so you can analyze the situation. Remember to uphold your rules in your house, and if they are not followed the kid can go home - the play date is over.

**A parent asked:** "My daughter does not have a BFF. She appears to play with a different child everyday."

Dr. Gold answered: Enjoy! That's really a great social skill – to be able to move from friend to friend and group to group.

**A parent asked:** "What is a bully in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade?"

Dr. Gold answered: Someone who repeatedly threatens verbally or physically. If you are afraid to be around someone, that person is a bully. It's important not to overuse the term "bully." Most meanness at this age is short lived and easily controlled.

Dr. Gold mentioned that years ago some girls were choosing who was cool based on whether they wore Limited Too apparel or not. Even second graders are capable of social exclusion based on personality or possessions. That particular type of exclusion doesn't seem to be happening with this group of students.

## **Emotional Development**

- Gradual increase in impulse control
- Able to collect themselves after a "meltdown" within 10 minutes
- Should be able to lose in a game
- Pay attention for 20 minutes or so
- Weather disappointment
- May have greater anxiety
- Gradual development in control of emotions

**A parent asked:** “My daughter has developed a fear of the dark lately.”

Dr. Gold answered: there are 7 or 8 anxieties that kids have left behind that sometimes come back. Usually they get over it. An example: a child feared his house was going to fall down the hill in the middle of a storm. Other kids have fear of break-ins.

**A helpful technique:** Cognitive behavior modification: Understand that we all have inner voices. Some are healthy voices; they keep us safe, stop us from doing the wrong thing: e.g. brush your teeth, look both ways before crossing the street.

Unhealthy voices put ourselves down, make us worry, make us feel stupid: “you made a mistake, you’re stupid”, “I’m not good.”

Give names to the voices: unhealthy voices might be Ms. Perfect or Mr Worrywart. Personify the healthier counterpart: Ms. Good Enough, Mr. I’m Safe, for example. This way you can personify the negative messages and deal with them by drowning them out with more positive messages.

**A parent asked:** “My child’s coach is always yelling at the kids. What do you do?”

Dr. Gold answered: Some coaches are good some are bad. Find a new team! It is not acceptable. Children should not be exposed to that.

Ms. Sifford added: That’s what happens when you have parents as coaches. Sometimes it’s the parent coach screaming at their own child.

Video games: sometimes your child will go to a house where an older sibling will be playing inappropriate games. Call parents ahead of time and ask what games or movies your child will be exposed to. Choose whether you want that or not.

Learn the art of talking to other parents: do not too offensive, more self effacing. Try to soften the message by saying that you know there are always two sides to stories, but as a parent you would want to know what was going on, or maybe you can help kids work out problems. It all depends what the situation is and the information that you want to share. It’s ok to say that sharing information is difficult for you, but thought that the other parent would want to know.

Every child has different privileges. There is always someone that gets to do something first, which is the impetus to grow up. Follow your gut instinct – if you think an activity would be unsafe or your child isn’t emotionally ready or responsible enough to handle it, or it’s against your values, you have every right to say “no.”