

Fall 2011 Sixth Grade Level Parent Meeting
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Parents are less involved at Del Mar than in elementary school, but it is a very important time to be connected with other parents to share information and be comfortable with contacting each other regarding information and any issues that may arise.

First Exercise: Parents were handed out the “Vision of the Reed Union School District” graduate. This “Vision” was created by administrators and teachers, with input from parents and students and was adopted earlier this year by all of the schools and the Board of Trustees. Attending parents were asked to review the document and think not only about their own child’s progress on the five general areas, but also how progress might be assessed through measurable behaviors.

Parents suggested the following as observable measures:

- Advocacy – students are going to teachers independently
- Students are showing interest in the well being of other kids
- Students are sticking up for each other
- Students are welcoming new kids into the District
- Students are asking questions and delving into topics
- Students are feeling ok about not always being right
- All involved in the District are encouraging a collaborative process

Regarding the Vision, the District is continuously looking for input. They encourage forums to share the information and work to build upon concepts created.

Second exercise: Parents were asked how their children have changed since a year ago. The following were changes mentioned by the parent group:

- Wants complete independence and responsibility
- Likes dancing with opposite sex
- Interested in online learning and playing
- More organized

- Bridging child to teen; sometimes act very mature; other times dependent
- More interested in opinions of peers
- Friendships deepening, more commitment
- Wants to do everything
- Improved communication
- Physical changes
- Pride in appearance
- More emotional mood swings

To make sense of these changes it is useful to consider the five important areas of development: physical, cognitive, social, emotional, moral. At this time of children's lives all of these are in flux.

Physical – some kids are changing rapidly, others haven't started their growth spurts and puberty yet. Physical development can affect all of the other areas such as leading to changes in social interests and friends, cognitive understandings, and managing emotions.

Cognitive – this is a period where children begin to develop the more advanced ability to reason abstractly and to be able to envision more than just their concrete world. They can begin to imagine ideals, have a much broader sense of the world and what could be. This can also be frightening to some children, who see that the world is much more complex than they had thought and not always within their control. The Del Mar curriculum is designed to match and challenge this increased ability. Teachers are able to challenge those students more able to delve into abstract ideas and will adapt assignments for students who are more concrete. 6th graders are more exposed to news and are learning to make sense of their place in the world and sense how adults interpret the world.

Social – Kids are still attached to their parents but are much more influenced by peers. There is a lot of drama. They are more sensitive, which can work in their favor or cause more issues. Friendships are quite normally fluid at this time. Kids are not very adept at disconnecting from old friendships, though they are well aware of not wanting to hurt their peers. This is a complicated time for both kids and parents and parents need to learn to be very good listeners and

questioners (i.e. consultants), rather than try to solve all of their children's social problems and concerns.

Emotional – Hormones are flying. Self control can be out the window. It is important at this time to make sure each student has one adult on campus and one adult off campus who they can trust and who can help guide them through difficult times. It is important that parents find a way to separate themselves from their children's emotional ups and downs. They should still set limits on disrespectful behavior, but should not take every comment or shift in mood as a crisis.

Moral – Students' sense of a moral code starting for the first time. 6th graders are rule bound but are also defying the rules. They are developing empathy and an awareness of values. It is an important time for parents to strongly state family values.

Third exercise: Six 8th Grade Students engaged in a “round table” discussion regarding their experiences at Del Mar and at two conferences they recently attended– Challenge Success and Wisdom 2.0:

Their thoughts about ***stress***:

- Parents should respect that students feel a lot of stress at Del Mar
- Parents shouldn't push kids too hard toward tutors or to get stellar grades
- There should be a homework/activity balance – sleep suffers. Teens need 9.2 hours of sleep for optimal functioning
- Calm time is important for Del Mar students – time to yourself often suffers with busy schedules

Their thoughts about ***learning***:

- Students and teachers are striving to help kids truly learn material vs. memorizing. This is done through collaboration and an invitation to make mistakes. Students are welcome to converse about assignments and can retake tests in order to encourage learning the subject matter
- Instead of pushing their children to study, ask them if they need help and trust them that they are doing their schoolwork.
- Parents can support students and teachers by viewing teachers' online calendars

- Parents who try to teach subjects at home can conflict with the way they are being taught at school, which may confuse students and hinder learning