

Fifth Grade Parent Meeting
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Dr. Allan Gold, District Psychologist

Changes in our 5th Graders Since Last Year (Group brainstorm)

- Puberty may be beginning
- More emotion
- More conformity
- Social cliques more rigid
- More maturity – more willing to help
- Wanting more independence. Wanting to help cook. Go places with friends.
- More responsibility for homework
- Wanting more private time
- Less desire for play dates
- More willing to stand up for self
- More competition
- Ability to be more like friends (with daughter)
- More desire for “stuff” and then it’s becoming useless

5 Areas of Development – Task of kids in general is to master the following aspects of themselves:

Physical Development

- Beginning to enter puberty. Along with physical changes come intra- and inter-personal changes.
- Early physical development can be embarrassing – particularly for girls.
- Early developing boys can be an advantage
- By 6th or 7th grade things kind of even out
- For the late developers it can be hard
- Family life “sex ed” is at the end of the year. Cut and dry physiological approach
- Kids are now quite able to do things. They are physically able to help around the house. Important to teach them to contribute and responsibility vs. being “perfect”
- In sports they are getting quite competent

Cognitive Development

- Start of exciting time – the transition from the concrete to the abstract
- Understanding different points of view
- Much more critical
- Dilemma – how much of the world should I expose my child to? They are still very personal-focused and some may have a hard time realizing that some of the horrific things they might hear on the news, for example, are unlikely to happen to them.
- Being exposed to some current events is a good thing, such as, current events around politics, science and geography.
- If they watch the news you need to be prepared to filter and interpret

- They should be asking more complex questions
- We are fortunate that in our community it is not a bad thing to be smart

Social Development

- Kids that they are friends with at start of Del Mar is not necessarily the good friends they'll have by the end of 8th grade
- Social drama does not abate for a while
- Boys are pretty good at figuring out social lives. Doesn't mean there won't be scapegoating or teasing, but less of the jealous emotions. That happens much more with girls
- From mid 5th grade to mid 7th grade is the height of conformity
- By 8th grade they are much more accepting of individual differences – both girls and boys
- Cliques do develop and seem rigid but they are in a state of flux.
- Kids are working hard to figure out what the criteria are for being liked and what they need to do to fit in.
- When discussing popularity it's about helping them figure out how to define who they are. Help kids evaluate who they feel best with, what makes a good friend (is it just common interests? That's part of it for sure, but they also are beginning to understand the value of consistency. A real friend is going to be your friend in all setting – at home and at school.)
- They don't really want to be mean to each other but their interests change, so who they want to hang out with shifts
- One of hardest things for kids to negotiate is moving in and out of friendships
- Everyone is vulnerable in this area and will be for a while
- Work on self-confidence and self-advocacy and personal characteristics of resilience
- Parents now moving from role of administrator to role of consultant around social issues. Consultants ask good questions, help brainstorm, help choose an action or response to a situation and evaluate it.
- Let kids know you are there to talk even if they don't want to. Knowing you are there is important.
- School can be intense so sometimes kids just want to have independent alone time where they can decompress. This means that it's not unusual for there to be less desire for play dates
- Can be good to put in a time at dinner where the family shares "highs" and "lows". It gives them an opportunity to talk but also shows kids that adults have good things and challenges during the day, too
- Important to be active listener "You look really upset. You may not want to talk about it now, but I'm here to listen when you are ready."
- Not everyone goes through a tumultuous adolescence

Emotional Development

- Along with puberty comes emotionality.
- More up and down emotions
- Social interactions have a huge impact on emotions

- They have capability of controlling emotions pretty well; better now as fifth graders than they will in a year or two.
- Impulse control is much better
- Generally handle frustration and anger – doesn't mean they won't feel those things but they can handle it
- You may see them hold it together at school and then lose it at home. You may see the same kind of thing in 6th, 7th, 8th grade

Moral Development

- Behavior is linked to what children are exposed to. Example: Del Mar sexting incident
- Usually kids up to adolescence don't do things because they don't want to get in trouble
- They are approaching the age when they understand distinction between rules and moral imperatives (like not hurting others, not just because they're told not to).
- They are capable of expressing and demonstrating more empathy
- Restorative Practices – an alternative to punishment. Two-dimensional – control and support. Instead of just imposing just a consequence, ask what happened, what were you thinking when you did it, what was the impact of your action and what are you going to do to fix it?' There can definitely be consequences, but this gives them support to change and be better people. At Del Mar they go through "Restorative Justice," which helps develop empathy and a deeper sense of why it's wrong to do certain things.

Recommend reading "Teach Your Children Well" by Madeline Levine.

Questions, Issues, Concerns in Parenting our 5th Graders

Phones, smart phones? Age appropriateness?

If your kids have independence and are going places where you want to have contact with them, you can see the need for a phone. Do they need a smart phone? Do they need to be Googleing things? Playing games? It becomes a value issue – what's more important – protection? Security? Likability? Popularity? If kids are likable and friendly they are going to manage without it. At 10 and 11 years old we are asking kids to manage a very seductive and addicting tool. It does have advantages, but we are asking them to use self-discipline that they are not prepared from a developmental perspective to deal with. If you are going to do give them this tool, are you prepared to monitor it? You should already be monitoring what they do on the computer. It's easier to monitor a laptop than it is to monitor a cell phone. Good web site for understanding cyber-security is <http://www.internetchildsafety.net/main.html>, which is the site of the police officer who spoke at our school – Officer Steve DeWarns

There is a strong need for parents to set limits around electronics. They need to show they can turn it off and should not opt for video games/electronics over playing with friends.

Common Sense Media is a great resource for everything from games to movies.

Family life education process.

There is a parent meeting before it happens at the end of the school year. The family life lessons are presented by the classroom teachers in a coeducational, regular classroom setting.

What about privacy?

This is a common value conflict between their privacy and your right to know what they're doing. Some parents feel that as long as their children are living at home, there is no such thing as privacy. Others value respecting their child's privacy over the need to know everything that they're thinking and doing. Look for some kind of balance. If your child acts in a trustworthy way (is responsible about communication when out somewhere, does homework, has generally responsible friends, tells the truth most of the time, does home chores, communicates on the computer appropriately), then giving them some privacy isn't unreasonable. Repeated breaches in one or more of those areas, leading you to distrust them, may necessitate keeping closer track of what they're doing and thinking and thus, sacrificing some of their privacy.

What's the legal age to leave your kids home?

There isn't a legal age in California but it depends on the child. Age 12 has been a rule of thumb, but it really depends on the child. Some are certainly responsible and trustworthy at 10, others not for a long time. Leaving them does give them a sense of independence and a chance to prove they can handle being alone. They should know what expectations are for answering the door, phone, and what they should and should not be doing when alone. Use your intuition to help you decide if leaving them is asking for trouble, or ok. Good measures of their responsibility are those areas mentioned just above.

How do we promote self-esteem in our kids?

It is very important to begin to get kids outside of themselves. One of the ways to build self-esteem is to realize you can have a positive impact on the world. Kids at this age are able to do that. Another way you develop self-esteem is by meeting challenges you may not be sure you can overcome, working hard, surviving situations. Another important thing is gratitude. Teach them appreciation. It was suggested that parents search out web sites where you can find community service opportunities to do as a family .

A final suggestion

Many families are ignoring the importance of family time. This time is precious and we need to not overschedule so there is time for the family to have downtime together. We actively have to do what we know is right for our families and kids – this is not easy, but so important.