

**Kindergarten Grade Level Parent Meeting**  
**Friday, October 5, 2012**  
**Dr. Allan Gold, District Psychologist**

Also in attendance: Sarah Wheeler, his assistant, Nora Ho, Principal. Sarah, his colleague Dr. Maya Van Putten, and Dr Gold all work at all three schools.

To access their information, go to: the Reed website/ teachers/ specialists/psychologists

**Handouts:**

- Vision of the Reed District Graduate. Put it on your refrigerator. As Psychologists, they focus on Balanced Individuals and Best Selves. Parents should ask themselves, “How am I helping my child develop these skills?”
- Advice from Eighth Grade parents.
- Developmental Assets (internal and external)
- Profile of a Kindergartener
- Cautionary: Can These Parents be Saved
- Two Books recommended: Price of Privilege and Teach Your Children Well, by Madeline Levine. These focus on creating a balanced and non-over-reactive style of parenting
- Parenting tips for various parenting issues: e.g. managing behavior, building self-esteem, expressing emotions, and others

**Purposes of Grade Level Parent Meetings:**

- Parenting is the most difficult task in the world. It is a much more complicated task than when we were growing up – we at school want to partner with parents to help with raising healthy, successful children.
- Where is my child in the range of normal...anything I should be concerned about?
- Networking and communicating between parents is very important. This is an opportunity to meet other parents.
- This is an opportunity to discuss values, which children often call into question and can be competing even within ourselves.

Dr. Gold asked the parents, “What changes have you observed since your kids were 4 years old?”

- More independent
- More self-sufficient
- More challenging
- More complex reasoning / asking challenging questions
- More aware of peers
- More aware of their own feelings / can articulate their feelings better

- Stronger ties with friends
- Five areas of development. Children are trying to achieve mastery over these areas:
  - Physical
  - Cognitive
  - Emotional
  - Behavioral
  - Moral
- At age 5, growth in some of these areas will be gradual while others will be rapid.
  - Physical Development (Gradual change) They are getting more competent physically. Great chance to start home responsibilities (chores). Because kids are parts of families, they should have responsibilities. Pair chores with appreciation and encouragement. (Setting table, putting toys away...connect that it gives you more time to spend with them.) As a parent, you need to deal with them not doing their job perfectly. This is also a good time to talk about values (perfectionism vs. responsibility....you need to be ok with imperfect.) Dr. Gold strongly believes that organized sports should start later. Teach them how to do sports now but do it in a fun, less organized way. Organized sports are more appropriate around 7 or 8 years old.
  - Cognitive (Rapid Change) A very exciting time of development. Kids are beginning to be able to sort and classify and order. They begin to understand rules and understand the concrete world. Most 5 yr olds are becoming less egocentric. Vocabulary is increasing by leaps and bounds. They are learning to understand patterns, which eventually helps them with rules of math, reading, and science.
  - Social (Partially gradual and partially dramatic) Beginning to figure out whom they want to be friends with and what makes a good friend. (They are very present-oriented so often one recent peer interaction has a big impact on their current feelings.) Parents can start asking questions like, "How does that person make you feel? Or "Why do you like being with that person?" Help them start to learn what they value in friendship. When they adopt behavior of another kid that you don't like... "That's not OK in our house." Girls: Jealousy comes up pretty quickly. Girls tend to bond pretty intensely, and it is inevitable that there will be a triangle. Boys tend to roam in packs. Jealousy doesn't come up as much with boys, though it can happen. As a parent you need to listen and problem solve. Some times they have to learn the hard way...that is what life is about. Parents need to let their kids be

unhappy and disappointed. It's what helps them become resilient. Parents these days are too quick to rescue these kids. Kids are very quick to pick up your emotions (disappointment, anxiety, etc.) Place your disappointment appropriately (by their not being kind, not because of mistakes in homework.)

- Emotional (Middle of the road) Temper tantrums are waning. They have put a lot of energy into the day so it is perfectly acceptable that they will be tired and sensitive by the time they are home. There are four areas of increased control to monitor (attention, impulse control, frustration, and anger). Schools are more made for girls, at this age in particular, so it is common to see girls developing self control and attention before boys do.
  
- Moral (not much change) Children generally act or don't act because they don't want to get in trouble. It is not until adolescence that their moral reasoning develops in a more nuanced way. However, it is not too early for them to develop empathy and to begin to reflect on how their actions impact others. "How would you feel if...?" should be a common question to address misbehavior. Your own "I-statements" can be helpful in getting them to understand that your feelings are impacted, as well. Focus on developing kindness, respect, and responsibility at this age.
  
- **Other Topics:**
  - **Technology:** The earlier you get control over your child's relationship with technology, the better. Sexting has become an issue in middle schools (which is illegal.) At this age, you need to worry about addiction to technology. Habits that they form now will stick. Families are often disconnected because of technology. Kids are digital natives (whereas parents are digital immigrants.) Look for addiction. That is, pay attention to their ability to stop what they are doing (on the computer, etc.) If a battle results, it is much better to say "no computers on the weekdays." Or explain to them that if they can't stop when asked, they are not yet responsible enough to handle technology. Dr Gold wants you to be very aware of the messages that kids are getting from the media (girls bodies, violence in games, etc). It is very important that parents monitor their kids' exposure. Have discussions about it. Have the computer in a public place. Kids this age do not need cell phones.
  
- **Questions/Issues of Parents in the meeting:**
  - How do you combat whining?
  - How to deal with talking back?

- Consequences & rewards
- Dr. Gold's Answers:
  - Check out "restorative practices" website <http://blog.iirp.edu/2012/01/time-to-think-using-restorative-questions/>: for dealing with kids behavior. Research is showing that punishment doesn't work. There is a Control / Support continuum. Engage them to think about what they did and what were they thinking of when they were doing it. Getting them to think about what the impact is on someone else (a friend or teacher, for example) or you. Example, "How do you think your whining impacts me?" When you whine I feel really annoyed (or disrespected)." How can you tell me how you're feeling without being disrespectful? Sometimes (often) kids need to be taught what is inappropriate about their actions; they will imitate what they see on T.V. (even cartoons), like eye-rolling, without realizing how disrespectful the actions are. Focus on the feeling you feel that is below anger (worry, concern, feeling disrespected.) Expressing anger doesn't often work...kids become parent deaf. Help them figure out how would it make them feel if they were in your shoes. Humor is a good technique with some kids for defusing situations.
- At school, he helps the students figure out, "How do we make it right?"
- Possible rewards: marbles in a jar, stickers. The key to rewarding needs to be fairly immediate or same day. Sometimes just recognition /praise can be reward enough. Rewards should not be for things that all kids can do, like being kind. It's ok to reward kids for putting forth effort for things that are difficult for them, including both academics and impulse control, at this age.
- You can get discipline ideas from [123 Magic](#) (Google it)
- Consequences. It's not too early to start thinking of what you do for them that you may not need to do. You have to feed, clothe, house, and love them. But you don't have to do other things for them. You don't need to give them toys, play dates, etc. if they act in ways that are disrespectful, unhelpful, and completely selfish. You are not their slaves. You don't need to give them everything they want. Consequences can include not getting something tangible or a privilege.