

Fall 2013 Fifth Grade Level Parent Meeting
Dr. Allan Gold, Psychologist
October 29, 2013

Handouts:

Profile of a fifth grader

Vision of a Reed Schools Graduate

Developmental assets

Important life skills

Restorative parenting- different approach to bad behavior, ownership of actions, impact, correction

Parenting tips: anger, resolving conflicts

Are you an enabler?

How not to talk to your child and other "don'ts."

On Psychological Services website: "What's New" link to Psychology Today article on the risks for rich kids

Changes in our 5th graders since last year: (observations from parents)

- More aware of what others think of them
- Physical changes, pimples/sweat
- Seeking more independence
- Awareness of opposite sex
- Parents are more embarrassing
- Explosive reactions
- Volatile friendships
- Popularity
- Less interest in school, reading
- Increased stress
- Better at being manipulative
- More talking back
- More "group think"
- More clear about identify
- More aware of time growing up

A general observation by Dr. Gold is that over the past ten years or so, growth has been accelerated. Kids are entering adolescence or, at least, adolescent like behaviors at a younger age.

There are five areas of development to consider:

Physical development:

Some general observations:

- Girls often mature earlier than boys and that certainly can start at 5th grade
- Interest in opposite gender starts
- They are starting to act like teenagers
- There are wide variations in physical development
- Physical changes can cause interests to change (e.g. music, clothes, activities, interest in opposite sex) which may cause changes in social relationships
- Kids are not good at disengaging in old set of friends for new set of friends; this can be awkward
- Late or early development can be challenging or advantageous– the early developing girl may be very self-conscious for a year or so. The early developing boy generally has some status – height, greater athletic ability. The late developing child of either gender can also feel self-conscious, but that won't happen until late in middle school.

Cognitive Development:

Some general observations:

- They are beginning to think abstractly
- More aware of what others think of them but also more aware of the world
- More aware of growing up and the challenges of adolescence and even adulthood
- Smart kids will grapple with thinking about the future
- Parents have to regulate and help process information; discussion of war, issues in news
- Their fear comes from lack of power or lack of control
- Parents can also reassure kids, we are here to keep them safe
- How much should parents filter? It is still advisable to keep very gruesome things away from kids, but don't over shelter them; they will get exposed to information, whether you try to protect them or not
- Parents can and should engage in meaningful discussions with your children from now on

Social Development:

Some general observations:

- This area is changing more quickly than it has in the past

- This is a good time for parents to switch roles from administrator (time management, enforcing rules, managing homework) to consultant (understanding your “client,” being a good listener, asking questions, helping to problem solve, evaluating actions). Your child’s social problems are an excellent area to try out the consultant role, since the problems are not yours. Help your child figure out what makes a good friend, for example, you can talk to them about consistency and trust in friendships
- Recommend that kids should not tell their deepest secrets to friends
- Provide strategies on how to deal with friendships but don’t manage their friendships
- Tell your own personal stories of your struggles at their age; they will listen to you

Use of social media – phones and computers, while a greater issue in middle school needs to be faced now.

Again, some important points to consider:

There is no reason for kids to have smart phones now

There is a risk to using electronics to excess and to the point of excluding face-to-face social interactions, e.g. through communicating with only texting

Be aware of ask.fm – anonymous texting, impact of hurtful comments

The next few years are the most vulnerable ages for bullying, cyber bullying

Parents need to closely monitor

Parents are role models with their use of electronics

Parents need to discuss where to set limits with electronics

Addiction to electronic games is quite possible and usually with boys. We can control them with limits but the goal is for them to get to a point where they can self-regulate. Recognize that self-regulation is challenging for all kids at this age and particularly difficult with a very attractive, exciting, entertainment device

Parents need strength of set limits / still need to parent

There should be ongoing discussions of both internet safety (what to say or not on the internet, what pictures to post, how accurately or misleadingly people represent themselves including your children) and cyberethics (appropriate language, the impact of what gets posted [including suicide], the permanence of comments)

Greater independence is an important developmental issue now.

Some points to consider:

- Each opportunity for independence is a test of your child’s current level of responsibility and trustworthiness
- They need opportunities to try out privileges (you need to gradually loosen the apron strings), but in a very clear and structured way. There should be

clear requirements for demonstrating responsible behavior, e.g. calling home when they arrive someplace. Being home on time

- Kids should have jobs at home (without pay) to contribute to household. Completing their responsibilities without your nagging is a good sign of responsibility. Obviously, taking charge of their own school/homework is very important and another area that provides evidence of maturity and responsibility
- Good idea to give some jobs that they earn money (i.e. walk neighbor's dog, still early for babysitting – usually about age 12) They can learn money management, but you can still set limits on what they can buy

Parents need to be empowered and not let into peer pressure, from other parents or kids. Within a family the two parents (if two are doing the co-parenting) need to come together on how to address issues or else kids will take advantage of differences between parents.

Emotional Development:

Some general observations:

- Their self-regulation is better than when they enter puberty
- They are much more aware of their feelings and can articulate them
- Parents need to be good listeners and empathic (try to get them to express their “softer” emotions –hurt, confusion, disappointment, etc. rather than just anger)
- Try to get at the cause of the emotion
- Parents should reflect on their own emotions and express them with “I” statements

Moral Development:

Some general observations:

- Until now, children operate on “I won’t do that because I’ll get in trouble if I get caught.”
- However, they are quite capable of empathy and are able to put themselves in another’s shoes.
- Kids can be manipulative and say what they think adults want to hear, but you should try to get them to think about the impact of their words or actions, what they will do differently, and how they can make up for something hurtful or inappropriate that they have done.
- Kids need to learn to stick up for themselves with peers when they are teased. Parents should have conversations with kids on strategies.
- Encourage kids to express their hurt feelings to an adult; kids this age don’t want to tattle, but parents can emphasize the difference between tattling –

- telling on someone just to get them in trouble and telling an adult when you are feeling uncomfortable, unsafe, or hurt (either physically or feelings).
- It is important for parents to discuss with their kids not “buying into the insult,” to make sure that self-esteem is preserved. It’s hard for kids not to take insults to heart. One can use the slogan, “Hurt people, hurt people” – kids in pain can say hurtful things, and they may have other problems that we don’t know about and are taking out their pain on other kids.