

Fall 2013 Fourth Grade Level Parent Meeting
Dr. Allan Gold, Psychologist
October 22, 2013

Purpose of the grade level meetings:

- Important to get to know other parents in your child's class
- Important for school and parents to work together
- Important to know what is the developmental profile of a child at this age- there is a handout that describes this

Other handouts

- Profile of a fourth grader
- Vision of a Reed District graduate
- Important life skills for children
- Developmental assets
- Parenting tips: confronting misbehavior, promoting self-esteem, expressing emotions, handling anger
- Are you an "enabler"
- How to land your child in therapy
- Giving kids space to grow

Changes that you have seen in your child during the last year:
Parents contributed their personal observations here.

Areas of Developmental Change:

Physical Development:

At this age children develop physically at different rates. This can be problematic – especially with early developing girls. They can be very sensitive about their developing bodies at this age. Earlier developing boys who may be taller and more athletic have an advantage. If your child plays sports, team sports are appropriate at this age, because kids have the physical skill to handle sports (but insist on safety while playing).

Because they are physically more capable, it is important to give children home responsibilities (chores) at this age. They still may want to be helpful and they should contribute to the running of the household.

Should chores be tied to an allowance? Dr. Gold believes that at least some responsibilities around the house should be expected and not paid for. Allowances are very useful for having children learn to manage money. If parents are comfortable with allowing kids a certain amount for spending, then they can triple that amount for a weekly allowance with the provision that 1/3 is for spending, 1/3 for saving, and 1/3 for charity.

Cognitive Development:

Children this age will begin to be more aware of the outside world. They will be exposed to news and information and they will begin to try to understand events in ways that they haven't been able to before. The question arises as to how much information they should be allowed to hear and see. It is still important for parents to filter what they can, but know that they will hear things they may not be ready to hear. It is important to take the time to have conversations that will alleviate their anxiety as they process information that might be scary to them. Keep in mind the concepts of "probability" and distance. Many events that hit the news are very unlikely to happen and happen far away. Children need to be assured that our towns are very safe places and you are there to keep them safe.

Social development:

This is usually an easier time for girls than 2nd and 3rd grade. They are now aware that one can have more than one friend and can play together in groups without getting as hurt or jealous as even a year ago. That doesn't mean that there isn't girl drama, but they are more capable of expressing feelings and working out differences. Boys generally play in groups and have for a while, so there is not as much boy drama (though that can happen, too).

There will be increased awareness of who is "popular," and an increased desire to do what other kids are doing and wear the "right" clothes. This kind of conformity will increase over the next several years.

Children are spending a lot of time now and over the next many years figuring out who is a good friend. Parents are moving from the administrator role (telling kids what to do, when, etc.) to the consultant role: knowing your "client" (your child), being a good listener, asking good questions, helping brainstorm choices for actions in response to events, evaluating decisions. The consultant role begins to be very useful at this age as far as friends go. You can help your kids figure out how to deal with difficult social interactions. Part of your consultation may be sharing your own personal experiences. Contrary to what you might think, kids do listen to your stories.

There will be increasing pressure on parents for privileges. For example, what is the appropriate time to give your child a cell phone? If child is out of your sight – biking to school etc., maybe a phone for contact only. A phone with internet connection is not necessary at this age. The most challenging aspect of parenting these days is managing electronics. Dr. Gold stressed the importance of modeling from parents: don't be on the cell phone or the computer all the time and expect your kids to act any differently.

A challenging part of their social development is the increasing independence that they will want. It is important to give children independence in a structured way, that is, by setting conditions and parameters (e.g. calling you when the get

somewhere, being home on time) and then continuing the privilege if the child follows the rules and demonstrates responsibility and trustworthiness. If not, the privilege can be revoked or postponed until a later time.

Emotional development:

This is a pretty stable time. By now we expect children to manage their emotions, such as anger, disappointment, and frustration pretty well. That doesn't mean that 4th grader can't cry out of disappointment or frustration, but they should be able to recover, when given some time and privacy to do so.

Moral Development

Kids at this age will generally do things so that they won't get in trouble. There is another approach to discipline which incorporates empathy and making things right along with consequences. "Restorative Parenting," (which can be found online) focuses on asking children questions to reflect on how their behaviors affect others (including parents) and then figuring out how to restore the relationship with the other person. The message is that they can be empathic, they are not bad people, and they have the power to make things right again.

Recommended reading:

One of the parents recommended Madeline Levine's books, Price of Privilege and Teach Your Children Well, and Wendy Mogul's books, The Blessing of a Skinned Knee and The Blessing of a B Minus. Dr. Gold said that both authors have a great philosophy of parenting.

Books recommended by Dr. Gold for parents of boys:

Raising Cain

Real Boys