

Fall 2013 Kindergarten Grade Level Parent Meeting
Dr. Allan Gold, Dr. Maya Van Putten, District Psychologists,
Marcia Gillespie, Kindergarten Team Leader
October 16, 2013

Reasons for Grade Level Parent Meetings:

- Parents need to start talking to other parents **now**. Begin to build the network of communication, so it is in place when issues begin to come up. Parents also provide an important support system for each other, along with teachers and the school support personnel. The meetings also help parents understand what is age appropriate at each age/grade level, so that parents can figure out what is normal and within the range of expected behaviors and what may be a cause for concern.
- How have your children changed in the last year (observations by parents)?
 - more independent (getting dressed, knowing what to expect)
 - more verbal (better able to express what they want)
 - more physical (both in playing by themselves/between friends more rough)
 - exhausted (more temper tantrums, gets frustrated)
 - more interested in friends
 - more coordinated

Five main areas where children are facing changes (throughout childhood):

Physical:

This is a time of gradual physical growth where they are more physical in their activities and are more coordinated. It is a good time to take advantage of their desire to show mastery by letting them help out at home. In fact all children this age should have some home responsibilities so that they can contribute to the working of the home. It is much easier to get a child to start at 4 or 5 than to suddenly insist at 12! Parents can assign “jobs” or let the children choose. Parents will need to be tolerant of imperfection and slow speed, but the messages are more important: you are capable of helping, you are contributing to the household, you are being responsible, we really appreciate your doing this.

Cognitive:

This is the beginning of a period of about three years where there are great cognitive changes in children. They are gradually transitioning from a very egocentric view of themselves and the world, to greater understanding of rules, of how the concrete world works, of understanding other points of view. Kindergarteners are still very egocentric; for example, they can only see their own point of view; when telling a story they won't recognize that you weren't there and don't know the context or details.

This increase in understanding of rules helps both academically and socially. They can learn the rules of reading and math and writing, as well as how to play games. They will gradually learn to see events from others' points of view, but this will take some time. The negative side of that increased awareness is that they start comparing themselves to others.

Their cognitive growth also allows them to express themselves much better, whether they are discussing their feelings or their wants.

Emotional:

At this age how to manage anger and frustration is the biggest challenge. Make it OK to make mistakes. We don't have to be perfect. Mom/ Dad will love you for your best effort, persistence, your willingness to work hard, not for the perfect paper. Children need to learn to take risks, try something new or difficult. It is common to see children this age crumple up drawings if their drawing doesn't match their vision of what it should look like. Help them identify the part they don't like and teach them how to make that part better.

We also expect children to be able to pay attention for ten to twenty minutes in school. This also requires emotional regulation and develops gradually.

It is very common that children are very well behaved in school and then, particularly for the first few months of the school year, come home and may be out of control. Remember they have worked hard all day on both academics and behavior and home is a safe place to "let go." Let them have some relaxation and a snack (or even a nap) when they get home. If they need to let out their frustration, show them how to do that in a respectful way that doesn't hurt things or people or animals (like running around outside, punching a pillow, etc).

Social:

This is a period of much social learning that will continue throughout life. At this stage children are beginning to learn what makes a good friend and how to be a good friend. There are many social skills that most children learn by observation and experience but that others need to be explicitly taught. For example, they need to learn how to ask someone to play, how to get someone's attention, how to respect people's space, read non-verbal cues, how to resolve conflicts, share, compromise, give compliments. They need playdates and interaction with other children in unstructured settings so that they can learn these skills. Much effort is devoted to helping kids develop these skills, express feelings and resolve conflicts in school. Kindergarten teachers use the Kimochee characters to help children learn strategies to deal with peers. These are very effective tools to use when children are angry or upset.

Moral:

Moral development is the slowest to develop of the five areas. Children at this age and for many years operate on the “I won’t do that because I don’t want to get into trouble” thinking. On the other hand it is never too early to begin to teach children empathy. When they do do something wrong, they need to start thinking about the effect of their actions on others. At this age the question: “how would you feel if someone did that to you” is probably the best approach, since they are still focused on themselves.

Questions:

What about allowances?:

Giving an allowance is good for learning about money and money management. When the time is right give enough that they can spend some, put some in bank (learn to save), give some to charity. A third might be apportioned for each of those, so figure out how much you’re comfortable with your child having for spending money and triple that amount. A rule of thumb is the same number of dollars a week as the child’s grade level. Allowances should not necessarily be tied to chores.

The question, then, is: are Kindergarteners ready for an allowance. They are really not aware of the value of money yet. That’s why it is important for them to have home responsibilities not tied to an allowance. Second grade is a good time to start an allowance, though some kids may have the necessary understanding of money a little earlier.

What about bullying?

5 and 6 year olds are learning boundaries, socially, emotionally and physically. Teasing does occur among children this age, but it is important not to brand children this age or casually use the word “bullying.” Bullying is intentional, repeated, threatening behavior that targets one or more students. There can be a fine line between mean teasing and bullying, and neither is appropriate, of course. Incidents of teasing are taken very seriously by all staff at Reed and we work hard to get students to realize the impact of their mean comments and to make amends. If you, as parents, feel your child is being teased, please let us know. If your child has made mean comments to others, please work with us so that we can help correct that behavior.

What about lying?

All children tell lies, especially to get out of trouble. There should be consequences for lying, and children should know that if they tell the truth about a situation, the consequences will not be as bad. Children this age are too young to understand the

concept of building trust, but they can understand that parents need to be able to believe what their children say. Children are very good at telling only part of a story, so don't assume that if your child is telling you about another child, that yours is completely innocent. Get information from teachers before acting or calling other parents. In any case, misbehavior and lying should be followed up with apologizing, making things right, and doing something nice to help change the situation.