

Fall 2013 Third Grade Level Parent Meeting  
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October 15, 2013

**Purposes for Grade level Parent Meetings:**

These are opportunities to meet your children's peer's families in order to become familiar with the community, to open communication amongst parents, and to ask questions and share information about our children.

The specific issues may be different for different children and parents, but we all want to be best parents we can be.

It is important to get a sense of what is developmentally appropriate at each grade level. A common question: Is this normal? Children change rapidly and it is useful to try to make sense of those changes

**Handouts:**

Profile of a 3<sup>rd</sup> Grader

Vision of a Reed Graduate – Post on your refrigerator!

List of developmental assets

Info on Restorative Parenting

Building self confidence

Managing anger

Communication

Are you an enabler?

How not to talk to your kids

How to land your kids in therapy

**Changes in our 3<sup>rd</sup> Graders since last fall (observations from parents):**

- Moodier
- More talking back
- More independent
- More responsible
- More studious
- Making more connections with how the world works
- More self aware of the impact of actions
- More modest
- More self-aware
- More confident
- More competitive
- Greater interest in friends
- More drama

There is an acceleration in changes as children are exposed to more now than they used to be.

Development can be thought of in five areas:

Physical

Intellectual/cognitive

Social

Emotional

Moral

Sometimes these are rapid changes and other more gradual. The more areas that are changing rapidly, the more challenges for both kids and parents. Adolescence is the most challenging time, but most of these areas are in a state of gradual change during the Bel Aire years.

### **Physical Changes:**

Physical changes have biggest impact when hormones kick in. Physical development can have an impact on independence & dependability.

Now they are capable of helping out around the house. They want to show what they are able to do – take advantage of that – it's good for all of you! But, parents have to be willing to tolerate imperfection & be patient with the slower pace of completing tasks. It is very important that children this age have some home responsibilities (chores) to contribute to the working of the household. They are part of a family and need to help the home work smoothly.

### **Cognitive Changes:**

They have just come from a 3-year period where there is a lot of cognitive development

- They've grown in terms of self awareness
- They can learn rules, see consequences of behavior
- Can begin to have interesting conversations with children now
- Can begin to understand other people's feelings & positions
- Become more competitive, self-judgmental and hard on themselves
- May show interest in current events

Some issues connected with cognitive changes and suggestions for handling them:

#### *Negative self-judgment and comparison:*

- Introduce the idea of comparing themselves to themselves, instead of their peers. Point out what they can do now that they couldn't do a few months ago
- Emphasize that everyone learns differently, at a different pace
- Focus on practice and effort w/out immediate gratification

- Point out the results of their efforts

#### *Greater awareness of the world:*

- As kids become aware of the world, they can become scared.
- We want them to be involved, but it is often hard for them to make sense of what they see and hear. They may have bad dreams, anxiety, worries.
- They tend to be more in captured by visual news than just the verbal (radio), so you may want to be proactive by filtering the information they are exposed to. You don't want them to be intrigued with the wrong or sensationalized information.
- Put events into perspective in terms of probability & distance; that can help reduce anxious feelings (e.g. that happened very far away from here and doesn't happen very often any way. Tiburon/Corte Madera is a very safe place and we (parents) are here to keep you safe.)

#### **Social Changes:**

- Interest in peers will continue to increase
- Kids will figure out "cool" & "popular" kids by end of the year
- Mid 2<sup>nd</sup>, end 3<sup>rd</sup> grade is some most difficult for girls. They haven't quite figured out that they can be friends with more than one child
- The challenge is in managing these emotions of jealousy & exclusion
- They are learning to find ways to express feelings of hurt and annoyance

#### Some suggestions:

Parents can have two major roles, administrator and consultant. Administrators are in control, make rules and enforce them. Up until now the primary parental role is Administrator. But there is a gradual transition to the parent as Consultant. A consultant gets information about his/her client, is a good listener, asks questions, helps with brainstorming options for actions, and helps with evaluating the effectiveness of choices.

#### This gradual evolution in parenting begins gradually:

- This role presents itself first with issues with friends
- Develop a sense of trust that you care about their feelings; Pave the way so that when really difficult things happen, they will still talk to you
- Girls are generally most willing to share these emotions
- Relate your own experiences
- Apply patience in these instances to understand if these are issues or just passing moments
- These children do want to be independent and don't necessarily want intervention

- Teachers can often be very informing as to how the child is functioning in class as well as their

*Some suggestions for talking and sharing emotions in boys:*

- For boys, try reflecting their emotions and let them know you are available to talk
- Recognize that boys may be just letting hurts and difficulties go, not necessarily sweeping them under the rug
- Raising Cain & Real Boys are good books to help understand male psychology
- From Raising Cain: "When talking to a boy about feelings, don't think you need to make eye contact. Allow them to look around, fidget, etc., as this is their way to get in touch with these emotions"

*What about structured vs. non-structured activities?*

- Kids need some free time/down time
- Unstructured time is important
- They need to learn to entertain themselves
- Biggest challenge of parenting in 21st century is electronics – watch out for addiction and avoidance of face-to-face social interaction
- Play dates teach kids social skills such as: How do you solve a conflict? How do you share? Can they read non-verbal cues? Do they know how to enter a group?

*What about clubs at school?*

Principal Patti Purcell explained that:

- Some clubs have kids rotating in and out; others are open to anyone. For example, Student Council, and movie making, take two students from each class each trimester
- We don't publish enrichment choices to parents because we want it to be kids' choice
- There are three active games daily
- Other clubs include: Lunch Bunch, Library Club

It is set up so that every kid in the class can do a club by end of year. Let your child's teacher know if s/he is having a difficult time managing information about clubs. All 3<sup>rd</sup> grade teachers did review what activities are available with their classes. A few more involved clubs are reserved for 5<sup>th</sup> Grade, e.g. the TV show.

**Emotional Changes:**

- Expect that they can control their emotions most of the time by this age
- Vocabulary around these emotions becomes more nuanced

- We expect them to be able to maintain their attention
- If they angry, we expect them to hold it together vs. having a meltdown or a tantrum
- They should be learning how to handle frustration and challenges, but perfectionism can become an emotional issue for many kids in our school and community. They need modeling from parents showing that it is ok to make mistakes and for parents not to “lose it” and berate themselves for their mistakes.
- Much of this comes from their awareness of everyone else and not wanting to be “less than” or different than their peers – but being too hard on oneself can lead to not trying new things and lowered self-esteem.
- Begin to talk to your child about how they can relieve stress & what works for them

*Some suggestions for dealing with anger or misbehavior and listening to kids' emotions:*

- It is best to discuss misbehaviors away from the heat of the moment
- Ask if they are aware of how their behavior was different than usual
- There is a fine line between talking “too much” where they tune out & communicating appropriately
- Tell them twice to do something or stop something and then give them a logical consequence that is predetermined in a conversation about specific behaviors at an earlier time.
- Don't fall into a trap of over-accommodating them
- Try to identify what feelings underlie the anger – for example, hurt, confusion, feeling left out, frustrated, disappointed. The same is true for parents when having discussions about behavior - kids would rather have parents angry at them than disappointed; identify those underlying feelings and communicate them
- Silence can be effective, too

### **Moral Development Changes:**

- This area doesn't change for awhile
- Their reasoning is generally limited to “I don't want to get in trouble, so I won't do that.”
- But it is not too early to start to get them to understand the effect of their actions on other people
- Restorative: How are you going to make it better?
- Help them to find a constructive way to express frustration & anger that is not disrespectful and hurtful to others
- Kids' job is to push limits, parents' job is to not make it easy on them
- Let them know when “they are not old enough to do x yet.”
- You have to weigh the importance of an activity when setting limits

- It is most important that a child owns his/her actions, feels remorse, makes amends and doesn't repeat the same action.