

Fall 2014 Fifth Grade Level Parent Meeting  
October 30, 2014  
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**Purpose of the meeting:**

Parenting in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is tough! We (school, home, and parents) need to work together, support each other. At this age, figuring out what is appropriate and what should be expected is important. Your kids won't tell you! You, as parents, need to communicate with each other. This is also a great age to start talking about values. Kids starting at this age will challenge ALL of your values. (Privacy is a great example of this. You may value privacy for your kids and yourself, but also you need to know what's going on in their lives. How do you resolve these issues?) These meetings give you a chance to think about important issues, hopefully before incidents happen, so you can be prepared

Book Recommendation: I'd Listen to My Parents if They'd Just Shut Up, by Andrew Wolf, Ph.D. This book is very helpful in preparing for interacting with teenagers.

**Changes in our fifth graders since last year (observations by parents):**

- More attitude
- Moodiness
- More manipulative
- More risk taking
- Interest in opposite sex
- Want more privacy
- More opinionated
- More insightful, philosophical
- More confident
- Hard to get info out of them/ quieter/ cards close to chest
- More anxiety, stress
- More responsibility

5 Areas of Development to consider in order to make sense of these observations and of what children are going through at each age:  
Physical, cognitive, social, emotional, moral

**Physical Development**

- Big range – VERY big range starting at this age
- Some girls are or will be getting periods this year (others not for several years)
- Also still have little girls and little boys at this grade
- Some boys are already more physically mature

- For boys- early development is status...they are bigger, stronger, more athletic
- For girls- early development can be embarrassing
- Physical changes can affect social relationships quite dramatically
- Physical development is related to home responsibilities, because they are quite capable of contributing to the workings of the home. Because they are more physically capable, they should take responsibility as part of the household. Do it now! Don't tie it to allowance. Kids have 2 zones of responsibility: schoolwork and home responsibilities. These responsibilities allow them to prove whether they are capable of having the privileges they will want in the not too distant future.
- An allowance philosophy- Start with how much money you're comfortable with their spending weekly. Multiply by three and have them allocate 1/3 for saving, 1/3 for charity and 1/3 for spending on their own toys, etc. It's also fine to pay extra for extra work, like raking leaves, washing the car. Although home responsibilities need not be linked to an allowance. Allowances can be reduced if chores are not completed. There can be other consequences, as well, such as not doing everything your child wants whenever they ask.

### **Cognitive Development**

- They are beginning to be able to deal with abstract concepts
- They are becoming aware of the news, but they need help processing the news. They don't have a good sense of probability. It is difficult to understand whether they are at risk; they may overgeneralize and not realize that an event is far away or very rare. They still need assurance that they are safe. Be aware that kids hear about the news from their peers even if you prefer not to share it with them.
- Kids begin to understand what adulthood is about- good and bad; some kids at this age will explicitly say that they don't want to grow up. Others relish the increase freedom and responsibility and manage it well.
- The most difficult part of parenting these days is monitoring what happens on the computer - both what they do on it and how much time they spend. How well do the kids manage getting on or off the computer - 5 minute warning. If that becomes very hard, then you need to address the issue of possible addiction. Computer activity can change behavior.
- Do kids understand moderation? No very well. Sometimes (often) it's easier to have a hard and fast rule - no computer time during the week, rather than get into arguments if they won't get off.
- A positive effect of their cognitive development is that you can begin to have great discussions: what did you learn today? current events conversations, exposure to cultural activities, internet research, take their questions seriously

### **Social Development**

- The peer group becoming more important

- Toughest time socially is mid 5<sup>th</sup> to mid 7<sup>th</sup>
- They are trying to separate from their “inner baby,” which means that you will start to be pushed out of their lives
- Roses & Thorns (Ups and Downs, Highs and Lows) at the dinner table can help draw kids out – parents and kids can share the good things that happen during the day and the not good things – which provides the basis for very interesting conversations.
- Social life is tough particularly for girls at this age. There is lots of flux in friendships. Most kids don’t want to be mean to each other, but they don’t know how to extract themselves from relationships, particularly as their interests begin to change and they outgrow one another.
- Parents begin to transition at this time from administrator to consultant. Go from telling your kids what to do TO asking questions, listening, providing help with problem solving.
- Popularity becomes a more salient issue at this age. You can help you child figure out who makes a good friend FOR THEM, not just based on popularity (which itself could be based on looks, athletic ability, money, clothes, or hopefully, being nice)
- Start watching out for meanness, especially on the internet. Don’t let kids have cell phones and iPads in their rooms. Make sure that you know their passwords and check their communications regularly. It’s a big job, but kids start to misuse the internet starting about now.

### **Emotional Development**

- Kids this age are not that emotional relative to 12 and 13 year olds
- Can control their temper
- They are learning to deal with disappointment
- Starting to feel that they have to do well, can lead to anxiety
- Over focus on the positive, help them appreciate what they like and are good at

### **Moral Development**

- Up to now, their actions are based purely on repercussions –not wanting to get in trouble
- Make a distinction between a rule -which makes a system run smoothly- and a Moral Imperative – which is usually based on not hurting others
- Restorative parenting – get kids to think about the consequences of their behavior on other people, how they would feel if what they did happened to them, and have them do something to repair the bad behavior. This way they won’t feel like they are “bad kids” and they will have a way to make their mistake or misbehavior right
- Attitude/respect – can have really good discussions about how you feel when they are being disrespectful. They should be able to understand that you have feelings, too.

- Point out to them that when they do something kind or helpful for someone else, they are making an important difference in that person's life.

**Exercise: Making the Vision of the Reed District Graduate “real.”**

Parents were asked to review two of the main visions, Motivated Learner and Balanced Individual/Best Self and identify specific behaviors or comments that indicate that their children are making progress towards these goals.

**Motivated Learner**

*Responsibility:*

→Doing chores & homework; remembering teacher feedback; making their own breakfast

*Taking risks:*

→Running for school office; entering spelling bee/school play/math club; admit that they'll try to do better next time when failing to complete a task

*Take pride in accomplishments:*

→Enthusiastically showing parents completed tests/homework; being excited about accomplishments; asking others if they could use help

*Understanding that learning is a lifelong process:*

→Desire to show their parents how to use new technology; motivation to look something up on line when interested

**Balanced Individual/Best Self?**

*Demonstrates self knowledge, honor, integrity:*

→Giving positive feedback to rivals; owning up to misbehavior (note: ALL kids lie – now is the time when we expect them to take responsibility for their actions without making excuses or blaming others – if they can do this, they are showing integrity);

*Exhibit confidence & assurance:*

→Feel comfortable around various types of people; standing up for someone being mistreated

*Persevere and stay resilient in the face of stress, adversity & conflict:*

→Get through homework despite not knowing how to solve one specific question; aware of examples from sports where a player suffers a crushing defeat but then comes back to make a positive impact later

*Make positive choices for their own well being:*

→Remembering to shower & brush teeth; choosing appropriate snacks; biking to/from school

*Believe in the power of the individual to make an impact:*

→Giving back (charity, volunteering); acting out of care for others or the environment; peer tutoring