

Reed Fall First Grade Level Parent Meeting
October 14, 2014

Dr. Maya Van Putten, Dr. Allan Gold, District Psychologists
Elaine Hoover, First Grade Teacher

Introductions.

Purpose of these meetings: To work with parents as a team, to help parents develop relationships with each other, to promote communication, to establish norms, draw parallels, and discuss values.

How are your 1st graders different compared to last fall? Parents provided answers.

- More aware of peers
- More expressive/sassy
- More easily influenced/siblings
- More emotional
- More pressure...social and academic
- More aware of appearance
- More mature interests
- More privacy
- More independent, self-starting and goal oriented
- More competitive

Dr. Gold: Many items above more similar to 11 year-olds than 6 year-olds, and this is a little disturbing, as it suggests earlier maturity.

- Comment on the privacy issue
 - Alone time is okay, physical privacy too. But beware of not monitoring them now and then trying to start monitoring later. Later on it will be very important to know what kids are doing on computers.
 - Establish family norms early for what is private and what is not. This can be complicated, but as parents you have a right to know much of what your child is doing.
- Sassy behavior needs to be stopped early as it is disrespectful. Kids this age copy what they hear and may not understand that tone of voice is very important in how messages are communicated. Parents don't have to do what kids want if comments are made in a sassy tone of voice.

Child development is sometimes best understood by thinking about 5 categories, Cognitive, Social, Emotional, Physical and Moral. We will structure our talk around these 5 areas, as well as answer questions throughout.

1. Physical

- This is a time of relatively gradual physical change, though they are beginning to be able to do much more physically
- Because they want to help and are able to handle some home responsibilities, it is a very good time to make sure that all children have some chores. Parents just need to have a tolerance for imperfection, because children won't be as quick or thorough or neat as an adult might like. Gaining responsibility is worth it, however.
- Sports. Though children this age are getting physically more able, they should not be engaged in highly organized competitive sports.
 - Not highly structured
 - Emphasis on exercise, skill building and fun with peers.
 - Learning is life long. Have fun!
 - Message: The more you practice the better you will get.
 - Praise effort not end product.
- Eyes are maturing so reading is easier now and this eye growth will continue. Copying for board is still quite hard.
- Tire easily, but still like and need a lot of physical activity at 6.
- More prone to sickness and colds (6)
- Stamina Building: Can do quiet work for longer period of time. 15-20 minutes now, 30 minutes by end of the year.
- More chewing of things (at 6)

2. Cognitive

- They are learning to understand the concrete world. They are right in the middle of a time of rapid cognitive growth for children, that spans ages 5-7. Moving from being egocentric to being able to think a bit more complexly.
 - Understand rules better
 - Fairness based; "that's not fair" is a common 1st grade theme.
 - Understanding cause and effect
 - At 7: space, time and quantity skills develop more
- Ambitious but can get frustrated by new challenges. At 6, can often take on projects that are too big and become frustrated.
- Learn well through poems, riddle and songs (6 especially).
- Love new ideas and asking questions.
- At 6, love doing lots of work, but less concerned about the quality of the work. This will change more around age 7. 7 year olds like more to take their time and to finish what they start.
- Perfectionism can be a challenge around age 7. They might be bothered by mistakes and want to make work perfect. Discuss this with them and praise effort.
- Their listening and speaking skills are improving.
- 7 year olds can really enjoy repeating tasks and reviewing learning. Encourage this.

- Some awareness of current events, but it is generally encouraged that parents limit exposure to news.
 - Parents need to filter, process and explain
 - Provide developmentally appropriate responses, keep it short
 - Kids will over-generalize; make them feel safe and quell anxiety
 - Respond by asking them what they think, then correct misinformation simply.
 - Emphasis on gratitude in helping them to feel fortunate and happy.
- Allowance: Start around 2nd or 3rd grade so kids learn about money
 - Not paid for chores- generally it's recommended that children do chores because doing so is part of helping and being a part of a family.
 - Ex for later: \$6 a week: \$2 to spend, \$2 to save and \$2 to charity

3. Social

- They begin to see another point of view – this can lead to lying and request for privacy
 - All kids lie. Most lie to get out of trouble or make themselves look better. Become concerned if you see an ongoing pattern of lying that has negative effects.
 - Lying to get someone else in trouble – this is more concerning outside sibling realm
 - White lies can be explained around 3rd grade. Children are quite black and white now and this concept is hard to understand.
- 6 year olds are talkative and noisy.
- 6 year olds are competitive and are not always good sports. They can be bossy or critical. You can help them learn to lose by modeling it yourself and playing games with them.
- Friendships
 - May have a best friend, may not. Both are OK.
 - At 7, kids may change friendships quickly and may say no one played with them. Don't be alarmed unless it repeats. Discuss with teacher for feedback if hear regularly.
- A big, related conflict for kids this age is learning to differentiate between standing up for yourself versus tattling. The tattling makes sense because of their generally rule bound tendency at this age, but it is good to help them think about that not everything needs to be reported to an adult. However, if the child feel unsafe or very uncomfortable, it can be good to ask an adult for help.
 - Kids in first grade are just beginning to figure out what makes a good friend. They are becoming more discriminating. However, it is still not uncommon for children to be drawn repeatedly back to other children who are often unkind to them. This tendency typically improves in 2nd grade, when children are often better able to decide that friendships that have involved meanness should maybe be given a break for awhile. For now, encourage them to think about this and talk about it together.

- Girls: Especially challenged at this age by learning to play with more than one person at a time. Stealing friends. They lack vocabulary to say that they just want to play with someone else. Work on language with your child.
 - Cliques: Form in 4th grade
 - Different friends for different activities is normal
 - Beginning figuring out what makes a good friend. Use reflective listening to help them navigate. They may go back to peers who are unkind now and this is unfortunately developmentally typical.
- Parent Concern: Playground is boy dominated. Girls can't get in.
- Tantrums may still be common at home at 6, but this will improve closer to 7.
- A big challenge for parents at this age is how much to get involved in solving your child's problems. Sometimes adult help is needed, but also keep in mind that school provides a lot of strategies to help children develop the skills to work out their own problems. If a child has a social problem, be a good listener, and ask questions. You can ask, What did you do? What else could you have done? You might need to model and practice it together. Also keep in mind that sometimes it is a good idea to let them try to solve it themselves.

4. Emotional

- Learning to manage emotions at school. We expect 1st graders to mostly be able to do this.
- Learning to express feelings. We expect 1st graders to mostly be able to do this.
- Easily discouraged and upset when criticized.
- The importance of Negative Emotions in inoculating children against future difficulties: The Disappointment Muscle! It needs to grow now!
 - Research: More anxiety and depression in high school. 1/3 of high school students are depressed, 10% on medication. Colleges mental health systems overrun.
 - We as parents can help prevent this by helping teach kids to have negative emotions and experiences. Develop coping skills. Exercise disappointment muscle.
 - Boredom
 - Anger
 - Sadness
 - Frustration- all are essential for children to experience in small doses so they learn how to manage these feelings now.
 - Books on this topic:
 - Blessings of a Skimmed Knee
 - Raising Happiness
 - The Price of Privilege

- The Seven Habits of Happy Kids
- Another reason behind this negative mental health trend has to do with high octane pressure for achievement. To combat this, praise effort and persistence, don't focus on product.
 - Kids are more responsive to disappointment than anger.
 - If disappointed, be as specific as possible

5. Moral

- Very rule bound still. Moral reasoning at this age is still largely black and white and is based on wanting to avoid getting in trouble.
 - Explain that rules make things run smoothly
 - Distinguish rules that help keep people safe
 - Develop empathy: Ask kids how they would feel, give them the chance to make it right. Use Restorative Parenting Practices.
 - Del Mar example of how restorative discipline is used later: Work out a contract with other kids to get suspension revoked, do something for the community, encourage change in behavior

Next, we reviewed the Vision of a Reed School Graduate and broke into small groups to discuss ways that our first graders might begin to develop in the direction of this vision. Two of the vision categories were focused on: 1. Motivated Learners and 2. Balanced individual/Best Self.

Appropriate Reed Graduate Vision Expectations for First Graders

Motivated Learner

1. *Demonstrate responsibility, self-direction, and independence*
Dressing self, hygiene, brushing teeth (with few reminders). Sometimes doing chores on own. Promote routine. Knowing after school schedule, how to get home. Willing to do things by themselves.
2. *Take risks, are not afraid to make mistakes and learn from them*
Sounding out the word and reading word wrong aloud. Trying a new skill. (Academic emphasis on process. Get kids to compare themselves with themselves...emphasis on how much they have learned.) Don't want to hear kids say that they are stupid...hopeful statements.
3. *Take pride in accomplishments*
Showing accomplishments to friends, hanging work on the wall, teaching a skill to someone else.
4. *Understanding learning is a lifelong process*
A bit abstract for first graders

Balanced Individuals / Best Self

1. *Demonstrate self-knowledge, integrity, good judgment, and honor*
Showing respect, telling the truth, caring for other peoples' feelings, apologizing, complimenting
2. *Exhibit self-assurance, confidence, and social acceptance*
Go into new situations, express "I can do it"
3. *Peservere and are resilient amidst adversity, stress, disappointment, and conflict.*
Figuring out Legos without giving up, practicing new skills, not dwelling for more than an hour on minor disappointments
4. **Make positive choices for personal and physical well being**
Making healthy choice lunch options, putting on helmet and pads before sports

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION about 1st Graders shared by teacher Elaine Hoover:

Some of this was discussed during the meeting. Additional information/additional notes regarding English Language Arts and Math are provided below.

First Grade General Notes:

- Feel like they are part of a "big kid" school. They have a desk, pencil box, back pack, etc. They feel more independent and are trying out social skills they have learned in preschools and kindergarten in more mature ways.
- True magic of first grade is learning to love to read. It doesn't happen all at once, but often during first grade they "crack the code" and read words and enjoy it. It is an amazing thing and when it happens, you can see it as a parent or educator.

English Language Arts:

- Traditionally first grade is thought of as the level where children learn to read. Not all children will become fluent readers by the end of the year and that is ok, but most will make solid steps towards fluid reading.
- Materials vary from rhymes, to classroom news, to patterned stories and beginner nonfiction and fiction books. By the end of the year most are reading grade level chapter books and some even more advanced books.
- First graders love-love-love true stories of long ago, even though they don't have a good sense of time. They love historical stories or stories told to them.

- First graders are always looking for patterns. During word work and word attack, we look at spelling patterns and discover parts of words that they can use to figure out other words.
- Listen for sounds in words so they can write the sound they hear and (again) look for patterns and parts to write words.
- First graders use their best guess spelling as they work out their understandings of written language.
- Read good fit books or easier helps improve fluency, confidence and comprehension. Fluency becomes a big part of first grade.
- The books we send home are picked to support what is going on in class. If you read and reread these books, you will see improvement. The leveled books have specific word choice in them, sight word, spelling patterns, etc.
- Moving into a larger percent of nonfiction reading. Kids love nonfiction! Need to understand nonfiction text features.
- Read to your child – introduces vocab, modeling fluency, intonation

Math

- Beginning to grasp more abstract mathematical concepts.
- Still learn best by working with physical objects and real world examples. Use concrete materials (counting cubes, pattern blocks, rods, etc.)
- They are working on the foundation skills that will help them later when doing math
 - Number sense, +/- math facts, skip counting
 - 2 & 3 d shapes