

Reed Fall Kindergarten Grade Level Parent Meeting Notes
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Dr. Maya Van Putten, Dr. Allan Gold, District Psychologists
Mrs. Barri Swett, Kindergarten Teacher

Introductions. Review of handouts available.

More introductory talk:

Child development is sometimes best understood by thinking about 4 categories, Cognitive, Social, Emotional, and Physical. We will structure our talk around these 4 areas, as well as answer questions throughout.

1. Parenting in the 21st Century is complicated.
 - a. Want to establish a partnership between school and home so we can work together and begin a dialogue
2. What is “normal” for kids?
 - a. A range of development
 - b. As you figure this out, build relationships between and among parents.
 - i. “everyone else gets to do it”. Discuss this with other parents.
 - ii. Better not to parent in isolation. Form relationships with other parents now.
3. Children will challenge every value you’ve ever had.
 - a. As you parent your children, think about: “Is this consistent with what I believe?”
 - b. Issues of popularity, individuality, etc., come up regularly...
 - c. Potential conflicts between wants and values in parenting are common

Changes parents have seen in the last year, in their now kindergarteners, since last fall:

- Eat independently
- Make bed
- Able to separate from mom
- More social; plays more quickly with others
- More aware of other kids and what they do
- Stories are longer and more elaborate
- Knows game instructions
- Verbalizes his thinking
- More attention to details
- More “What if” talks
- More sensitive to others’ comments

We are seeing more rapid progress in development/maturity in recent years. e.g., 7 year olds are like 10 year olds used to be. 12 year olds are like teenagers. This list is a little bit advanced but is mostly on target.

1. PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

- Bodies growing fast
- Need lots of time for free play

- Don't recommend a lot of after school activities or organized sports, especially in early K.
- Tired at end of day; bodies and minds are asked to do a lot during the day
- Tempting to do lots of activities, but wait until 2nd half of year to do more.
- Psychologist recommends maximum of 1 structured activity after school, at most ages, but especially in K. Some kids can do 2 each week. After that, families and children can both become stressed. Think about what works for your child and family.
- Large motor skills are more developed than fine motor skills. Running, jumping, etc.
- Writing is hard for them. They are developing the needed muscles in their hands, and written work is often sloppy. This is OK.
- Eye muscles are maturing.
- Because kindergarteners are more physically capable, simple chores can and should take place at home (put toys away, set table, etc.) Pair these with the understanding that helping is part of being in a family. You can also add that it gives you more time to spend with them. Accept that the job might not be done perfectly. Praise effort over exact perfection.
- Reed psychologists generally believe that true organized sports should begin later (7 or 8), when children are better able to manage them, understand rules, etc. If sports are undertaken now, they should focus on fun and exercise, and not on winning and perfection.

Regarding: electronics and physical development for kindergarten students:

- Great babysitters, but be careful
- Changes brain structure
- Kids are becoming addicted to computer use earlier and earlier in age
- Recommend no more than 15 minutes/day for kindergarten. 30 minutes maximum.
- They are trying to build self control in all areas, so make sure they can control their desire to play on the computer
- When on the device, are not concurrently developing physical skills or social skills.
- Imaginative free play is more important!

2. COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT

- Kindergarteners are right now in the middle of an exciting period of cognitive developmental growth that occurs between the ages of 5-7.
- Learning to sort, classify, and order.
- Often can only see one way of doing things.
 - Very concrete in their understanding
- Really imaginative
 - Many believe toys are still alive
- Reversals of letters and numbers are common. Don't worry about it!
- Still very ego-centric
 - Children often don't realize their parent wasn't present at an event.

- e.g., retelling a story from recess – they don't supply the details and assume you were there
- Beginning to understand rules.
 - 4th graders start to realize they can change the rules.
- How exposed should children be to what is going on in the world?
 - More complicated with older siblings in the family
 - Young children often really want to know very few details about national events. Provide a little information if they ask. Or ask them what they think and then correct their perception.
- Children really remember few events outside their family before age 5.

3. SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

- Children beginning to understand rules
 - Want to follow rules and “be good” right now. Later in the year, might experiment with being naughty.
- At age 5, students need consistent rules and reinforcement; they respond well to clear and simple expectations.
- Beginning to make friends. May not have a best friend. This is fine!
- Girls and boys are different.
 - Girls connect more deeply and emotionally.
 - Are prone to jealousy, triangles, drama, and this will deepen and continue for years.
 - Boys tend to hang out in groups/packs and play active games that are less relational in nature.
- Parallel play is on the wane for kindergarten students.
 - Kindergarten children are beginning to play “together”
 - We are looking for more cooperation including in imaginative play
- At Reed, we are proactive about teaching social skills. The kindergarten classrooms address this daily, through various means. Kindergarten teachers use Kimochis to teach social skills, empathy, kindness, etc. The skills children need to learn at this age include:
 - Ask to play
 - Say something nice to a peer
 - Entering into a group
 - Learning to read each other's faces/ expressions/ body language
 - Negotiation, problem-solving skills
 - Important to develop ability to compromise
 - Important for parents to not plant ideas when asking questions:
 - Rather than: Do you fear going to recess?
 - Instead ask, “How do you feel about recess?”
 - Multi-age recess is important and positive for kindergarten students as it mirrors real-life and this has benefitted children.

4. EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- Kindergarten children are actively learning how to manage frustration, anger, and disappointment, and to express their feelings. They vary in their ability to do this now. By the beginning of first grade, we expect this skill to be much more firm.
- How can we tell how our kids are doing with these feelings?
- In class, Kindergarten teachers use Kimochis to identify feelings and learn to manage their emotions.
- Temper tantrums are waning at home by age 5, although you may still see some, particularly after school when they are tired from the long day. They are especially common after school in the first few months of school, over surprising, often silly, things. Remind yourself to be kind and patient. It is not the time to discipline harshly, but rather to reflect feelings (You seem sad/worried/ come sit on mommy's lap) and offer physical comfort. They need empathetic discipline now as they test limits.
- It is essential for children to experience negative emotions like frustration, anger, and disappointment, so they can learn to manage the bumps of life, develop resiliency, strengthen their "disappointment muscle." We are seeing very high levels of anxiety and depression in high school and college, particularly in wealthy families. We can do something now to prevent this in our young children.
 - Avoid "snow plow" parenting! This is trying to protect our children from all negative feelings, and removing all obstacles from their path. This is hurtful for children because it deprives them of the ability to develop coping skills.
 - Let children wrestle with difficulties before stepping in. Let them experience boredom, sadness, frustration, etc. Do not always intervene and help or solve the problem for them. It is not our job as parents to entertain our children all the time. God books on this topic include The Blessings of a Skinned Knee and the Blessings of a B- by Wendy Mogul, Raising Happiness by Christine Carter, and The Price of Privilege by Madeline Levine.
 - See handout "Are you an enabler?"
- Another causal reason behind the negative trend in mental health we are seeing is high-octane pressure for achievement.
 - Instead, emphasize hard work and effort over product. Praise persistence over grades and goals. This is culturally challenging, but beneficial.
- Children need to develop skills to deal with adversity. Must start now.
- Take opportunities to help your child begin to start identifying what makes a good friend.
 - Is he/she a good friend? Do you play with him/her often? These skills really will not develop until much later, but you can begin now.
- When your child shares a negative experience, important to listen and reflect his/her feelings. Often that is enough.
- Do not always need to have "an answer." Can role play or re-do the situation together. But sometimes listening is enough.
- Tattling

- What is appropriate “telling” and what is not. They are working to learn this now.
- Students that need to “tell” the teacher something are encouraged and should not be prevented by other children; this is enforced by teachers.

Next, we reviewed in what ways kindergarten students can begin to work towards the vision of a Reed school graduate. Working in small groups, the parent reviewed the Vision of a Reed School Graduate, and then the groups listed and discussed examples of ways their children might begin to develop some of these qualities now. It is good to begin thinking about this now.

Thank you all for coming!