

Reed Fall Second Grade Level Parent Meeting/Parent Academy Notes
October 28, 2014
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Welcome to the fall second grade level fall parent meeting/Parent Academy!

Dr. Gold & Dr. Van Putten, Reed District school psychologists, introduced themselves (Dr. Gold is a psychologist at both Del Mar & Bel Aire, and Dr. Van Putten is the psychologist at Reed).

Purpose of the meeting:

- Parenting in the 21st century is a more difficult job than in the past
- We offer these meetings to:
 - Promote partnership at school and home
 - To get parents comfortable communicating with each other
- As children get older there will be more reasons to communicate with other parents. It is good to start now.
- Another purpose is to help parents consider what is normal at this age, in behaviors, actions, and thoughts
- As children get more complex and their behaviors more challenging, it is positive to come together and think about our values as a school and families.
- During this meeting, we intend to paint a developmental portrait of a 7-year old student. We will discuss development in five main areas, Physical, Cognitive, Emotional Social, Moral.
- We will end our session by looking together at the vision of a Reed School District Graduate and identifying and discussing the 2nd grade characteristics that show our students are moving in that direction.

Logistics:

- Visit the Reed website under Specialists/Parents; it has many resources and notes from all of our meetings and presentations.

How your children have changed from a year ago?

Parents offered the following suggestions:

- More independent, less clingy
- More responsible regarding homework, getting dressed, showers etc.
- Taking more initiative and being proud about that.
- More easily embarrassed and thinking about what others think
- More self filtering
- More reasoning regarding arguments
- Wanting more privacy or secrecy. (Dr. Gold – this is an important part of growing up– there is often a value conflict regarding privacy; for example, the use of the internet raises privacy questions. Be sure to be in charge now. What is private and what is not is very important. Given what kids do and say on the internet, parents need to make absolutely sure that they establish

the rules of web privacy/non-privacy as they age. Once the Pandora's box is opened, it is not easily closed. Set rules now.)

- Bad words are more prevalent
- Communication – More and less sharing about what is going on in the school with mom.
- Creating boundaries – kids putting notes on the door like 'Keep Out' and wanting to decorate their room on their own.

Child development is best examined in 5 areas. We will structure our talk to discuss child development in terms of, Physical, Emotional, Social, Moral and Cognitive development.

1. Physical Development in 2nd Graders:

- Not a dramatic time of physical growth. They are just growing gradually. Because they are more capable physically, home responsibilities are encouraged. Home responsibilities at this age include: setting the table, making the bed, cleaning up rooms. Kids need to understand that their parents are not their slaves. They need to know they have responsibilities. Allowance should be \$1 per grade, approximately, tripled, each week. Dr. Gold recommends putting aside 1/3 for spending, 1/3 for savings and 1/3 for donating to a cause. Try not to tie allowance to responsibilities, i.e.; don't have allowance be the reward for chores. Encourage children to think about chores as being an important part of being in a family. Think of it as a family chore that we do together so our lives are better. Extra special jobs are OK for extra allowance (weeding garden, scrubbing sidewalk, etc).

- A parent recommended Raising Financially Fit Kids as a great book to examine this topic.
- Parents discussed and were somewhat divided regarding the use of an allowance. Some give it, some do not. One parent suggested a camp items fund, to help her children keep better track of camp items. If you keep track all of your camp stuff (water bottles, etc), you keep the \$20 in the fund – if you lose stuff, you pay out of the \$20 to replace the items lost.

- Physical development and its relationship to sports was discussed. Second grade is still too early for real team sports. It should still be fun at this point. The conflicting value is Fun vs. Winning, popularity, preparation for future sports. Parent peer pressure is heavy. There is enough competition in our culture and in school. Physically, kids are getting there and cognitively they are learning a lot through fun sports. The team sports can be too competitive/aggressive at this age. Even parents need to think about the feedback they give – the positive and negative. Think about when you are not complimenting. Parents should say "I love watching you play", "great enthusiasm" "nice hustle", rather than solely, "Nice goal!".

The idea for waiting for team sports is very difficult in the community we live in. There is a lot of pressure to begin sports and activities very early.

- 2nd graders are physically capable of doing quiet work for longer periods of time now.

- Copying from the board is still challenging, because of the way their vision ability is still maturing. They often still focus their eyes on a small, close area.

2. Cognitive Development in 2nd Graders

- At age 7, they are approaching the end of a dramatic, rapid period of cognitive development.

- They are really beginning to be able to understand order and rules.

- 7 year olds are better at understanding more abstract ideas such as time, space and quantity. Truly abstract thinking comes later – right now it's still concrete, although their abilities are evolving.

- 7 year olds learn new words and meanings quickly. They enjoy writing stories.

- 7 year olds listen well in the classroom and speak precisely.

- 7 year olds like to work slowly and finish what they start.

- 7 year olds enjoy repeating tasks and reviewing learning.

- A parent asked, Does the whining go away?

A: Try to nip the whining in the bud. Say, try that again. Mimic – this is what you said – then model how to say it without whining. They need to understand a talking voice, a whining voice and an angry voice. Praise them when they don't whine when you expected them to.

- The other cognitive thing that happens at this age is that some children become more aware of the things around them – like the news. This is a value issue that you must decide on as a family, in terms of how you manage it. Do I protect them from the outside world – or let them be exposed? Help them process the information, especially if they have older siblings. Reassure them that we are here and we will keep them safe. They will ask questions. Keep in mind, most children don't need a long, detailed answer. You can also ask, what have you heard? Give short answers. Don't give more information than they ask for. Be prepared and give a little bit of information.

- A parent asked a question about executive functioning. What is it? Executive functioning is based on the frontal lobes of the brain. It is like the manager or conductor. Executive functions include: setting priorities, making good choices, time managing, planning, managing impulses, organizing. Research shows this ability is still developing until about 28-30 years old! 2nd graders are just learning to develop this skill. They have a poor sense of time. The ability to remember homework and time needs a lot of 'scaffolding' (outside[parental and school] support). Can they follow 2 step instructions? Sometimes. Another parent asked, What is typical for memory capacity for a child at this age? Some children have memory difficulties, but this is not usually the case. Often memory difficulties are due to parent deafness to requests, lack of comprehension, or distraction. If they don't remember what they read – check with their teacher. If they read a book that is too hard for them, they also retain very little. They need to read books at their correct reading level to comprehend them. Kids should be able to visualize the book like a movie. Talk to them and ask if they see the picture. It's a skill for reading comprehension. If they don't – talk to their teacher.

3. Social Development in 2nd Graders

- Many children have close or best friends at this age. However if they don't, this is not something to worry about.
- 7 year olds can prefer playing and working with one friend or might prefer to play alone.
- 7 year olds might change friendships quickly and feel like "nobody likes me".
- Most 7 year olds will still play with peers of the other gender, but this will change. By 8, they typically prefer peers of their own gender.
- 7 year olds need the security of rules, routines and physical boundaries.
- There will likely be some friendship drama now and in the years coming – especially for girls. It starts mid-second grade. For girls, there are often challenges with social triangles, exclusion. This can also be a boy issue – though boys play in packs more often and in a way that is more physical and less relational. There can be lots of sadness with this idea of 'my' friend was stolen, etc. Be prepared to be a good reflective listener. Regarding this topic, a parent recommended a book. Katherine Natasha wrote a book called Two. It is a play on numbers and relationships. We can still be friends when it's more than 2 or the two change players.
- Good rule of thumb – be a good listener. When kids do talk try to listen to their social problems. You may still want to talk to other parents – but this should be going away. Always say to other parents that you realize that there are two sides to each story. Your need to mediate will diminish. Being a good listener can be hard as their stories are long and convoluted. Ask how they want to solve it. They need to develop this skill. Much of the time, they just want to be heard and have someone understand. Don't always try to fix things.

4. Emotional Development in 2nd Graders

- As psychologists, we see seven year olds that are touchy, grumpy and slightly depressed. This a very moody age.
- Still, in general we expect 2nd graders to understand and mostly bounce back from setbacks. Anger, frustration and disappointment are the three big ones. Remember the kids are working so hard in school and putting out a lot of energy. They may be moody at home. We want to begin to see some resilience and ability to manage disappointment.
- Dr. Van Putten: Allow kids to wrestle and deal with disappointment, sadness, boredom, frustration etc. If they develop the skill to manage these negative emotions, they will be able to deal with them and cope with larger difficulties that will emerge later. This helps them to develop resilience in the future. There is an alarming trend where we are seeing very high levels of depression and anxiety in high school. This has broad causal roots in our society, and particularly in how we teach children to manage challenging emotions. Sometimes we do too much to protect our kids from negative feelings.
- A parent asked, during a recent night of spelling homework, my kid shut down and cried. How do you deal with melt downs?

A: Give them time to deal with the emotions. Give them a break, an expression of confidence. You can come back to what is hard. Praise effort! Emphasize and praise effort and persistence over achievement – culturally, we need to switch this. Go back to your child later and say, “I know that was hard for you, but you kept trying.” Kids need 2000 repetitions to make new information set.

- A parent asked, what is the research for why we enable as parents?

A: When the older generation grew up we had an emphasis on work hard and you will succeed. The pyramid is so much steeper now. Our whole view on what having a child is has changed. Children used to be used for manual labor! Now childhood is perceived as a rich, magical time where we remove all obstacles from your children. This deprives them of the ability to deal with challenges and weakens their resilience. Again, it is important that we as parents allow our children to struggle with challenging emotions. Some recommended books on this topic include The Blessings of a Skinned Knee, and The Blessing of a B- by Wendy Mogul, Raising Happiness by Christine Carter, and The Price of Privilege by Madeline Levine.

5. Moral Development in 2nd Graders

- This is an area of a slow change at this age. They are still developing empathy. The concept of Restorative practices/Restorative parenting was discussed. When kids do something wrong, we have a meeting or conversation and ask they why they did it, how did it make others feel?

- All children lie. Emphasize telling the truth and that the consequence for doing so is much better than the consequence of the lie.

Next, the **Vision of a Reed Graduate** was handed out to parents. This is what we want for the kids by the time we leave our district. Post this on your fridge. Motivated learner and balanced individual are the two most important categories at this age. How would you gauge these goals for your child? Parents broke into groups and discussed specific examples that show that children this age are making progress towards the vision.

Motivated learner:

Responsible/independent:

- Homework – they acknowledge getting it. More responsibility
- Goes on line learning about Legos – he is happy with self direction and focus – but not homework! But takes initiative.
- Choosing own clothes and getting dressed in the morning

Takes Risks and initiative

- Only at sports
- Best guess spelling is great in the class!

Take Pride in Accomplishments

- Very pleased with self in doing things
- Forthcoming in wins

- Math websites – son can't wait to tell you how well they did at school and feeling good about beating last time's effort. Having kids recognize this is great – praise the effort!

Balanced individual/best self

Integrity/good judgment

- Takes care of younger siblings – yet lots of lies! But regretful of lies, at least. Talk about consequences
- With food – we see better lunch choices by self at Choice Lunch.

Confidence

- Acknowledge if they are good at a subject

Perseverance

- If something happened in a social aspect – he can bring things up later.

Make better choices

- Healthy food choices
- Choosing to do cautious things rather than risk taking?

Believe in the power of making a difference

- Seems abstract at this age

General advice, to think about gratitude and kindness each day. Think about something kind someone did for you and also something kind you did for someone else each day. You can discuss this at the dinner table. Help them understand how we impact each other. You can train them to impact others in the world.

The topic of **technology** was brought up and discussed. This is a huge, challenging aspect of parenting today, that many parents are not prepared to manage. It's not going away. We have given them a seductive toy that functions as a baby sitter. What we see is addiction from about 5th and 6th grade on, though nowadays that can start even earlier. It's a great tool, however, you need to manage it in your home. Time limits need to be set – based on each child. Moderation, in technology and other areas, needs to be taught and modeled. If you are limiting their use of technology, try to not always be on your own phone around them.

Thank you for coming!