

Fall 2017 Eighth Grade Level Parent Meeting
October 30, 2017

Dr. Allan Gold, District Psychologist, Dr. David Kover, Del Mar Psychologist,
Brian Lynch, Del Mar Principal

Purpose of parent meetings:

- Raising kids is a partnership between school and home; today's meeting fosters communication about current and future issues
- Networking with other parents; vet our concerns; build communication with parents
- Understanding what's developmentally appropriate
- you're not alone!
- Parents with older children (high school) can share their experiences

Review of the materials/articles that were left out for taking including articles on technology, technology addiction, positive parenting, restorative parenting, drug use, books on teenage brain, etc.

Recommended :

I'd Listen to My Parents if They'd Just Shut Up by Alexander Wolf
Brain Storm by Selig

Reflections by parents on How kids have changed in the last 12 months:

- Rather not be seen with me anymore ("being with parents = being a baby" – Gold)
- Socializes more online than outside
- Physical change and physical energy
- They know everything; you know nothing
- Transition that academics are becoming more important than sports
- Physical self-consciousness about appearance, clothes
- Irritable/combative
- Spending more time in their room, more private
- More or less taking responsibility for their actions

What is going on developmentally (5 areas)? This is a time where development is in great flux and great development. And the range of development rate is HUGE.

1.) Physical development:

Most are in puberty. More hormones, mood swings. More capabilities so they can and desire to do things on their own. Some have more interest in sports. But also, there can be a burnout factor on sports after years of competitive sports. A lot of kids want to start new sports.

Status comes with height/development; can be harder on those who are behind. But the good news is in 8th grade they begin to accept each other's differences in a way they didn't as much before. There was a discussion about how to deal with mood swings and irritability. Some suggestions included: ignore it, and ride it out. Remove yourself, especially if you are being disrespected. Let them know they have

disappointed you. "I'm frustrated too." Which can surprise your kids (that you have feelings!) and maybe lead to them apologizing at a later time.

2.) Cognitive development:

Between ages 11/12 and on, kids develop abstract thinking. They can think outside themselves much more. They can see both sides of an issue, and it makes for better dinner conversations. But you can't hide things (current events) from them. It can lead to more anxiety as they are bombarded with news about terrorism, politics, etc. They learn that the world is not black and white. There is still an egotistical narcissism about how they view things (assuming they are the only one going through their troubles), but things like Challenge Day helps them ease out of that. TEA Club (Teach Equity and Acceptance) helps too.

More is expected of them academically this year (will address that in the emotional section).

3.) Social development:

Parents need to be clued in (now and for the next 4 years)! On the positive side, kids somewhat more accepting of each other's differences. They are capable of talking things out better. But there is still drama. Changes in friendships is very common, but they're not very good at extracting themselves from friendships without hurting or being hurt.. Some friends are more interested in the same things they have always been while others may be interested in romantic relationships, etc. Often there is frustration/anger/jealousy around friendships, and then it's magnified by social media – mean postings, etc.

Most challenging part about parenting in the 21st century is monitoring the technology! (According to Dr. Gold.)

Kids on social media are more anxious, more depressed (studies have shown this). Kids don't talk to each other directly, and say things online they would never say to each others' faces. This complicates social relationships.

Two roles of parents: manager, or consultant. As kids gets older, parents move to being a consultant. They ask good questions, help brainstorm solutions, etc. This is an especially helpful role for social issues that don't directly affect the parents, so they can listen, offer, ideas, without (or with less) judgment. They can help their kids reflect on their friendships and whether or not particular friendships are good for them.

It's great to get your kids to talk to you about what's going on in their life, and if your kids do, try not to respond judgmentally.

Kids are also becoming sexually interested, if not active (though occasionally they are active, too). Try to be frank and open and talk about it comfortably. The key is to identify your own values about sex, pornography, etc. so when the issues come up, you can be clear about your values. As an example, kids often find pornography, and if you discover that, use it as teachable moment. What is it that you would want to explain to them about why pornography (or drugs, or swearing or alcohol or whatever it is) is not okay so you can relay that clearly? Also, help them be able to

voice their comfort or discomfort with whatever they might do, so they can voice if they aren't comfortable.

The underlying message is "I am your parent, I love you, and I want you to be safe, and you can talk to me about this."

Remember parents are the role models, and kids are watching. And they are listening even if they don't seem like they are.

News can be a catalyst for discussions (e.g., Harvey Weinstein news).

Socially, kids can be friends with people online and you might not know the families. So you can get to know the parents too and reach out to them, and some Del Mar parents are doing this (if kids have friends in other districts). Open lines of communication are important.

In high school, our kids will meet a lot of new people and you won't know the families. Building trust is so important, but your kids need you now more than ever, because a lot happens socially that is NOT okay – pill parties, alcohol. These are potentially life threatening, so you need to be engaged. Help them with strategies about how to recognize if they are in a bad situation and need to get out of it. The majority are NOT doing these behaviors, so help your kids understand that is the case if they are saying "everyone is doing it."

How do kids build your trust in them?

- do what they say they are doing (honesty)
- be open with you
- Show responsibility (school work and home chores) and respect for rules
- Own up to their mistakes

Trust leads to privileges. Privileges and rights are not the same thing. Connect your trust in them to privileges. Privileges can be revoked!

4.) Emotional development:

Mood swings and irritability are part of this developmental age; it's often best to just ride that out.

Kids these days are much more about stressed and anxious. Academics become more important; they worry about high school. It's a stressful time, especially for those applying to private school.

Try to focus on growth mindset; more about learning/process and less about grades.

Del Mar has been working on grading systems to move it to a standards based grading system. This creates some confusion and anxiety for students as it's not as clear how to get an A, nor as easy to get one.

It is difficult as parents to find the balance between helping your children with process, with organization, with executive function, but NOT focus on grades. Frontal lobe development that controls all of this doesn't finish until men are 30 and women are 28! Help your child identify what their goals are; ask your child what they are aiming for. Then help them chart the path towards that goal.

Projects are longer and need benchmarks along the way. They exist in the classroom, but if you, as a parent, aren't seeing those benchmarks and want to help, you can contact their teacher. An important life skill to help them with is to avoid procrastination. They're pretty good at completing work that is due the next day, but the farther away the due date for a project is, the more likely they are to put it off. Help them break down longer term projects so that they can accomplish it in small daily steps.

If kids want their parents off their back, help them realize that if they just took responsibility on their own, parents wouldn't nag them!

Kids are fragile at this age. Talk to them about resilience. If you go through something tough, that builds strength and character of resilience and you can draw on that the rest of your life.

Watch out for depression!! If something lasts for more than a short time, or if there is any self-harm, this is serious! This year, Del Mar is doing the S.O.S. (Signs of Suicide) Program.

It's so easy to give negative feedback, but IT IS CRUCIAL TO GIVE POSITIVE FEEDBACK. Dr. Gold likes to ask kids 3 or 4 things that they really like about themselves. If a kid can't say that about themselves, that's a flag.

5.) Moral development:

This area, too, is in a state of flux. They know right and wrong, but up until recently, kids will do things just to stay out of trouble. They will behave to avoid punishment, or lie to avoid getting into trouble.

Now, with abstract thinking, they are able to recognize the difference between rules and moral imperatives. Rules, like don't wear a hat in class, are just to keep matters routine and organized. Moral imperatives are kindness, respect, golden rule, etc. They can now understand impact and intent – if you mean to knock someone over that's different than accidentally bumping someone.

Kids have empathy, but they are also narcissistic about what they are going through, so they are balancing those two. Pretty much every kid will feel badly if they really understand they hurt someone. But with what's going on in the news, bad behavior is being modeled everywhere by politicians or athletes. It's even more imperative that you demonstrate goodness and show them your good heart.

SUGGESTION TO DO ANOTHER 8TH GRADE PARENT MEETING JUST BEFORE WE/THEY GO OFF TO HIGHSCHOOL? YES!