

Fall 2017 Seventh Grade Level Parent Meeting
October 23, 2017
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Reason for Meetings:

- a. parent contact
- b. Social norms (what do other parents let their kids do)
- c. Normal developmental characteristics in children this age.

Changes in our 7th Graders since a year ago (observations from parents):

- mood swings
- more independent
- more social
- more resistant to chores
- more argumentative: Good lawyers
- more attitude
- more Confident/happier with self
- hormonal changes
- more drama
- more responsible
- more private
- better at self-advocating
- more aware of their health

There are five areas of development for all children: physical, cognitive, social, emotional, and moral. This is a time of great flux and changes in all of these, so the challenges of parenting are greater. It is also important to recognize that there is a large range in development at this age, so not all kids change at the same rate in the same areas at the same time.

A. Physical development

- a. Puberty : Lots of hormonal Changes
- b. With onset of puberty, interests will change which will affect the other areas of development, such as social. So it's normal for friendships to change
- c. Short boys & less developed girls may feel left out
- d. Because they are more physically capable, they can assume greater responsibility around the house and can contribute more to the family
- e. Because of their physical development they are more competent at sports. Pressure can lead to burn out, but they also want to try new sports.
- f. From the middle of 5th through middle of 7th grade kids have the biggest need to conform, so they are more likely to feel concern about

their differences at this time. (By 8th grade they are more accepting of each other's differences).

- B. Cognitive development: The major change is growth from from understanding the concrete world to more abstract thinking
- a. Impacts curriculaum
 - i. They can analyze literature, write more abstractly and with personal insight, they can understand history
 - ii. They can understand and articulate their reasoning in math and science.
 - b. They an step out of their immediate experience and contemplate the future, see different cultures and values in our country and in the world
 - c. They develop a much greater awareness of complicated world
 - i. Parents have a crucial role in trying to buffer news, scary events, whether natural or man-made (e.g. terror attacks)
 - ii. They will often raise questions about what's going on the world – this makes for very interesting dialogue between parents and kids that didn't take place in earlier years. Parents will need to gauge what is the right amount of information or explanation to share with their kids – start with a little and led the kids lead.
 - iii. TEA Club: Teach Equity & Acceptance is a great example of how kids this age are developing abstract thinking. In discussions of racism, stereotyping, sexism, homophobia, xenophobia, privilege, they are well able to understand and articulate others' perspectives and many sides of complicated issues.
- C. Social development:
- a. Friends change; thus more *Drama*:
 - i. Kids this age still lacking skill in exiting friendships gracefully
 - ii. Girls tend to be good in expressing their feelings and don't want to hurt others, but sometimes that still happens with difficulty giving negative feedback
 - iii. Technology is a huge interference in social interactions today: kids will post negative and even hateful comments on social media. The biggest challenge of parenting today is monitoring their kids' use of technology. It can also lead to much social anxiety and even depression. Setting limits is very important.
 - iv. Boys tend to have less social drama, but that is not always true; they can be just as susceptible to online cyberbullying.
 - b. A good parent role for kids this age, especially for social situations, is that of a consultant. For situations that you're not directly involved in you can act as a consultant to help your child address a problem
As a consultant a parent must be:
 - i. Good listener

- ii. Ask good Qs
 - iii. Brainstorm solutions
 - iv. Help their client (child) evaluate what they've tried
 - v. Help them talk about similar situations you've experienced
 - vi. Parent can help in figuring who could be a good friend.
 1. What the best group for them?
 - c. Other times parents are Managers: you still get to decide what is ok and not ok in your home and what privileges your child gets
 - i. Building TRUST in your child at this age is extremely important. They can build trust in several common sense ways: doing their chores, managing their homework, acting respectfully to you, taking responsibility for any misbehavior and trying to correct it, checking in when they're out, being where they say they're going to be and returning or calling in if they're going to be late, obeying your rules about electronics use.
 - ii. They want more independence: you need to continue monitoring things (social media, they need you more than ever) so that you can be comfortable granting them independence. It's a balancing act – let out the apron strings gradually; they need the opportunity for you to test their responsibility. If they make mistakes, that's normal, but you can impose some limitations for a while and try again.
 - iii. When they are at parties or others' homes, ask questions: who's going to be there, supervisor there? What activities will be going on?
- D. Emotional development: Emotional development at this age is very complicated:
- a. Mood swings are normal, but
 - i. Watch carefully – are they staying in a slump?
 - ii. There is much more stress & anxiety in teens
 - iii. Social media contributes to anxiety
 - b. Most challenging aspect of parenting is **Technology** & monitoring what they're doing on the smart phone: Here you need to be a manager.
 - i. Parents can make rules
 1. Ensure no ipad or phone in bed at night
 2. Have access/passwords to their devices
 3. Amount of time per day on device: different parents allow different amounts of time from none on school nights, other than homework to a couple of hours. More than 30 minutes is not recommended
 4. Technology can develop unhappy kids
 5. Check out Common Sense Media for good suggestions

6. You must set limits to test whether kids are likely to be addicted to technology. If they can't get off, you/they have a very likely problem with addiction
7. The focus on grades can create a great deal of stress and anxiety: monitor their anxiety around grades. They over-identified their self-esteem with what grade they have. They get stuck on the outcome versus the process. Help them to focus more on the process and the effort that they put into work and learning, assuring them that the grade is much less important than the fact that they are learning and getting better at what they're studying.

- E. Moral development: This is a time when kids really begin to do the right thing not just to stay out of trouble, but because they understand positive values.
- a. Understand and communicate your own values: Be clear on what you believe (ie, safety, social issues, etc..)
 1. What are the issues you have a problem with? For example, what's the matter with pornography, violent games, disrespect, some music, etc. Your kids may not agree with your reasons, but the better you can explain your value basis for objecting, the less they may argue.
 2. At this age they need to understand the impact of their behavior on others including you. They need to be given the opportunity to make things right if they've hurt someone. This is restorative justice.
 - b. Again TRUST is extremely important as a basis for moral values:
 - i. Communication
 1. Checking in w/ you
 2. Being where they need to be
 - ii. Accountability
 - iii. Responsibility for chores/ homework
 - iv. Using Technology appropriately

Other areas in the "moral" realm:

- a. Drugs and alcohol:: Programs to stave off the problem
 - Being Adept program at school teaches the effects of substance use and abuse on the brain and gives students alternatives to dealing with stress
 - Parents need to monitor what the kids do and with whom they hang out
 - Talk with your kids about drugs and alcohol
 - kids in high school are constantly exposed to drugs and alcohol so start having these discussions now, if you haven't yet.

b. Kids are very egocentric at this age – while they can certainly understand others' points of view, they are very focused on themselves, so an antidote to that is to channel their energy into community service to show them that other people (and animals) can be in difficult circumstances and can use their help: volunteering w/ animals, old people, little kids.

c. **Resilience** is something we want to monitor and encourage. Can they recover from emotional challenge, a disappointment, do they have skills to recover from frustration, loss, academic failure? If they over identify their failures and disappointments with their overall sense of themselves, then they may need counseling to develop resilience. Sometimes sharing your own life experiences of resilience can help.