

Fall 2018 Eighth Grade Level Parent Meeting
October 15, 2018

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Brian Lynch, Del Mar Principal

- I. Changes in our 8th Graders since Last Year (parent observations):
 - A. More impulsive /risk taking
 - B. Self-Reliant
 - C. More independent (from parents)
 - D. “Snarky” – more attitude
 - E. More reliant on friends
 - F. Physically More developed (especially the girls)
 - a. Puberty
 - b. Affects their social world
 - c. Hormones can impact behavior
 - d. Interests change as well
 - G. More aware of the world, other challenges
 - H. More drama
 - I. More overwhelmed (h/w) –
 - a. Common characteristic
 - b. Organized sports – common to discontinue at this age.
 - J. Taking school more seriously
 - K. More responsible
 - L. More verbal (less monosyllabic)
 - M. More Opinionated
 - N. More manipulative

- II. Issues / Concerns with our 8th Graders:
 - a. Social Media: What’s acceptable Number of Followers?
 - b. How do we handle /manage gaming addiction? (FortNite)
 - c. Health risks v. fear mongering.
 - d. How much screen time does everyone actually get
 - e. How to ensure down time & enough sleep
 - f. What do kids this age expect of themselves (what should we expect)

- III. Five main developmental areas: Physical, cognitive, emotional, social, moral
 - A. PHYSICAL development : This affects their social world; hormones can impact behavior and interests change as well. They are very capable of doing a lot to help around the house, so take advantage of that. They owe it to you. Because they are physically capable, they may want to engage in several organized sports, but there is a delicate balance between keeping

a child busy but not overbooked/overwhelmed. As they move to high school, busy is generally better to keep them out of trouble.

One issue is differences in physical development. Both boys and girls who are later developers may feel uncomfortable or less accepted. They will need assurance that they will grow, get their periods, etc. in due time, and to accept themselves. There is a lot more to a person than just their physical being, so parents should encourage kids to value their whole selves and be patient with their physical changes.

B. COGNITIVE Development: 8th Graders start thinking abstractly. Lots of insight, empathic, critical thinkers, etc.

Not uncommon for them to say “I don’t want to grow up”.

Listen to your 8th grader & ask questions. Having intellectual discussions with them is important. They can think in other than black & white; they are much better able to understand nuances on issues, and see and understand different points of view.

The Del Mar curriculum emphasizes looking at nuances and differing points of view.

Their cognitive development should be valued and taken advantage of in positive ways – critical thinking, discussions.

Parents move from less “administering” to more as “consultants,” helping them think through their problems..

- Kids still listen to their parents.
- They still need parenting.

It is very important that you identify your own personal and family values and be able to express them to your kids. They may not always agree with your decisions, but intellectual discussions about your choices, limits, etc. can help them be more understanding.

Book Recommendations: I’d Listen to my Parents If They’d Just Shut Up, by Dr. Anthony Wolf – available on Amazon

Communication is so very important

- Ensure that they won’t be punished or judged by communicating.
- Watch out for your own anger – they’ll tune you out.
- Hard feelings v. soft feelings – identify the underlying softer feelings: worry/concern, hurt, anxiety, exclusions, etc. and express those to your kids; they’ll be more likely to listen to you.
- Keep your own self in check – take a deep breath.

C. EMOTIONAL Development: Feelings of being overwhelmed, stressed, anxious.-

1. How do we help them?
2. Expectations of our kids: Valued by grades.
3. Getting used to idea of high school – creates excitement, but anxiety, too.
4. Praise their effort, not just their product in order to enhance their self-esteem.
5. Due to hormones – you'll see more ups & downs. Listen, be aware of signs of depression (not talkative, sleeping too much, staying in room excessively, etc.)
6. It is very important for parents to talk to other parents – they and their kids may know more about your kid than you know (and vice versa). Don't be afraid to communicate difficult or troubling information to other parents.
7. How do your kids relieve stress? There are many techniques: physical exercise, reading, listening to music, playing with pets, being with friends, video games. Ask your child what is stressing him/her out. Help them put the stressor in perspective and brainstorm strategies to relieve the stress.
8. Remember, a moderate amount of stress can be a good thing – it helps productivity, but too little or too much leads to less productivity and too much can damage self-image/self-esteem.

D. SOCIAL Development: Middle school friendships change
They still have difficulty getting in/out of relationships. This is where parents can be helpful as consultants. Parents still need to help them to reflect on their relationships and their social problems and to determine who really is a good friend – someone they can trust, who is consistently nice, who makes them feel good about themselves. One positive development: 8th Graders are more accepting of each other now and feel somewhat less need to conform exactly to each other.

1. Social Media
 - Be involved in their social media use
 - Know what they're doing
2. Do kids have rights to privacy?
 - Dr. Gold: "not really"
 - Brains are still developing and they don't have good judgment all the time. They can be impulsive.
 - Important to have access to their cell phone & social media.
 - VERY important to see who they are interacting with on line.
 - Check Del Mar Website – for assistance in settings in social media.
 - Must check: extreme political sites, pornography, extremely violent games, etc.
 - "Blurred Lines" book about desensitization.
 - Discuss the issue of CONSENT around sexual activities, which ties into respect.
 - You have to be courageous as a parent these days to address issues.
 - Dress Code is enforced. The teacher's report dress code violations.
 - It is very hard to manage time in front of screen.

- Trust is very important at this age - self-management. What is trust about? How can they control certain things?
- Take phones away at night.
- MOVIE: "8th Grade" – recommended to watch with your child.

E. MORAL Development

- Kids at this age have a better sense of what's right and wrong.
- They can understand the difference between rules, made to make society and activities run smoothly, and moral imperatives: Treating each other respectfully and as they would want to be treated – not to hurt anyone.
- Help them figure out how to restore themselves when they've misbehaved (eg, been rude), etc. This is restorative parenting: have them recognize the impact of their behavior on others, including parents, and then engage in actions to make the situation right again (sincere apologies, not repeating the misbehavior, a letter, research on the effects of the behavior, doing something helpful).
- The more you can get them out to do something good – they can both get out of their own heads for a while and they can realize they can make a positive impact on this world. (e.g.. Community Service).

Note: Anonymity is kept as much as possible when kids bring concerns to school personnel about other children.