

Fall 2019 Third Grade Level Parent Meeting
September 24, 2019
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Introduction:

Purpose of the grade level meetings

- Provide an opportunity for parents to meet, create relationships, and work together to support each other and they raise children of similar ages.
- Learn what is developmentally appropriate for different age levels?
- Opportunity to discuss specific parenting issues and gain perspective and suggestions for how to handle social, emotional, school, and home issues.

Question for parents to answer: How has your child changed in the past year?

- More independent and more productive
- Less emotional
- More willing to help around the house
- Picking up older kids' language
- Knows what she wants and willing to negotiate
- More comfortable being by himself
- Can identify consequences
- More aware of social structures
- Thinks he knows it all

Five areas of child development:

1) Physical Development:

Children are more able to do things physically. This creates a desire for more independence and doing things themselves.

Because of their greater physical ability, it is very important that children have chores. They need to learn that they are part of the family and can contribute and can learn responsibility. Examples of common chores for children this age are: taking out garbage, dishes, cleanup, setting the table. At least some chores should be done without a money reward. Allowances are very appropriate for students this age. Parents can figure out how much money they are comfortable allowing their child to spend on themselves each week and then multiply that by three. Then 1/3 of their allowance can be for charity, 1/3 saving, and 1/3 spending on themselves. They can learn how to budget their spending money in case they want to buy something more expensive. They may also be given extra money for completing extra tasks, like washing the car, or mowing the lawn.

Children this age are ready for organized sports. Parents should encourage physical activity. Not all students like team sports, but some physical exercise and activity is good. There should be a balance of downtime, free days, play dates, unstructured play. Try not to overschedule your children.

2) Cognitive Development:

This is a period of gradual growth in cognitive skills after a period of significant change from ages 5 to 7. They are able to understand the concrete world, rules, other's points of view. They are more aware and more curious about the world. They are starting to think about things more. Their vocabulary is growing; they are able to learn math, reading and new skills.

The biggest cognitive challenge for parents is how to deal with their kids' exposure to the world and world events. They don't understand probability, that the chances that something big and scary and highly publicized on TV or newspapers will actually happen to them is quite small (like a natural disaster or plane crash or terrorist attack). Help them understand that their world is safe.

Think about what your family values are for those teachable moments. Prepare yourself around your own values. What things are important to you and provide reasons for your beliefs. Kids may be exposed to violence whether in real life or through games. They may, even at this age, be exposed to pornography (either by accident or through older siblings or neighbors). Think about what you don't like about these things and how they conflict with your values, so you can use these as teachable moments. While you may not want to have to deal with these tough issues, it's better to be prepared than caught off-guard.

Internet Safety: The Reed District website provides resources under the Parent link, for example, how to place controls on websites.

**It is crucially important during these Bel Aire years to develop and maintain a positive and trusting relationship with your kids. They need to know that they are loved and appreciated and that they can share information and concerns with you without fear of being punished and harshly judged.

3) Social Development:

Social issues tend to become much more complex (particularly with girls) in third grade and will continue for many years. Kids this age want to have close or best friends and often triangles occur. When there are two best or very good friends, one can often feel left out. Boys attend to play in groups; girls tend to find one really good friend. It is very important that all kids develop additional friendships and positive relationships. Kids feel very sensitive about being excluded and haven't yet mastered the art of including more than just one friend. Third graders often come to me for help with resolving hurt feelings and exclusion.

Parents have two main roles: up until now you are the “manager,” where you know what your kids are doing and can direct many or most of their activities. Starting now you have another role to develop – that of the “consultant.” A consultant is a good listener, problem solver, helps brainstorm how to address the issues that kids bring up. The social realm is the perfect area to be a consultant, since their social problems are theirs, not yours. You can help them figure out what makes a good friend: consistency, trust, kindness. Ask what they like about a person. They need to learn to make good choices in their friendship and avoid toxic relationships. As consultant you can really help them start to figure this out.

Communication between children at this age is crucial. Often I help children articulate and communicate their concerns with each other. Without feedback no one (including adults) can change, so you can help your kids really identify what other kids’ actions or words might be bothering them and help them to stand up for themselves with clear verbal explanations of what they want to stop.

Although “popular” used to be a term that somewhat older kids recognized, even third graders now can identify “popular” classmates. Kids are beginning to understand social structure. Well liked kids are not necessarily the ones that will be the best friends for your child. Focus on what is right for them. Focus on what is a good fit for them. Help them try to identify what they like to do and what makes them feel good about being with particular children. Social interactions are increasingly complex, so be prepared to be good listeners and to help kids learn to resolve their social issues. Of course, we are here at school to help with that.

4) Emotional development:

Kids this age are much better able to manage their emotions and understand others emotions. However, they are still impulsive and not yet at the point where they can think about the consequences of what they say and do before they speak or act. That develops generally by the time kids are ten.

On the other hand they are much better able to understand their feelings and use an emotional vocabulary to express themselves. Parents can be very helpful in assisting them in identifying their feelings and talking in a respectful way about their feelings. That includes speaking respectfully to parents, when they are frustrated or angry about something. They can learn to identify the softer feelings underlying anger or frustration, such as worry, discomfort, confusion, disappointment, and hurt and can learn to express those feelings with much greater chance of being listened to by parents and other children.

5) Moral Development:

This is a relative stable time for moral development. Kids this age know what is right and wrong, but don't do the wrong thing just because they don't want to get in trouble, not because they don't have a larger understanding of the impact of their behaviors on others. That doesn't mean that parents don't have the obligation to help kids understand that there is a moral right and wrong, based on how others feel. They are capable of empathy and can understand the importance of treating others with respect, compassion, and understanding. Look for remorse when your child does something wrong. A method of approaching misbehavior is through Restorative Parenting. Rather than just punishing kids, they need to understand and acknowledge the impact of what they did or said and find a way to repair the hurt – make it better (that's restoration).

It's not too early to introduce the concept of trust to kids. As they get older, they will want more privileges, including going places on their own. As parents you have to trust that they can be trusted to do what they say they'll do (like chores), do their homework, treat you with respect, communicate where they are, etc. This will all develop over the next year or two, and you, in the manager role, have the right to say what they can and cannot do – and that largely depends on trust. Of course, telling the truth is a huge part of building trust. Every child lies, mostly to get out of trouble or not take responsibility for something they did, or to avoid doing something they should do. But they need to know that telling the truth will not only build trust but will make their consequences less severe. Kids will make mistakes and it is ok. Let them know that everyone will make mistakes. The importance is how they deal with the mistakes.

Moral development is a step-by-step process: build empathy and trust!

Technology

Dealing with technology is the most challenging aspect of parenting in the 21st century. We are encouraging parents to limit electronic time to a half hour or less on school nights and if they cannot regulate themselves and seem to be heading to addiction (they can't get off the device when they are supposed to – time gets extended and turns into arguments and fights), then stop the electronics altogether.

A new movement in the United States is "Wait Until Eighth" – don't get your child a smart phone until they're in 8th grade. There is too much adult peer pressure to get kids smart phones, but the research is increasingly showing that stress, anxiety, and even suicidal thoughts are the results of overexposure to social media. One of the main purposes of these meetings is to insure that you're not the only parent who is setting limits, so that when your child says "everyone else gets to do X," you know that's not true, because you're in communication with other parents who set similar limits. Parents also need to be good role models for using technology. As difficult as it may be to postpone your own email checks or work, as much as possible have

phone free meals and do your communication and work after the kids are asleep. The key for kids is self-regulation in all aspects of their lives and this is very challenging when they are this age; you will have to be the regulators for quite a few years to come. As they get older you need to monitor their games and their communication, text messages, social media accounts. They are technically smart and clever, but we do have to stay one step ahead. Use the technology suggestions on the parenting website. We hope to have an evening workshop for parents on technology this year as we have had in the past.