

Fall 2014 Fourth Grade Level Parent Meeting
October 15, 2014
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- **Welcome to Parent Academy – why we meet**
 - Parenting is the hardest job in the world. It is even more difficult in the 21st century. No one can do it alone. We use these meetings to strengthen the school – home connection and the connection and communication among parents.
 - Parenting gets more complicated with 4th graders. Kids begin to ask for privileges. Communication between parents is important to help determine what other families are allowing and what is normal and appropriate.
 - This is also the time to talk about values. We tend to get caught in the drama of events. Instead of reacting from core values, we tend to respond to drama and may revert to how we were parented, rather than thinking our responses through.

- **Changes in Our 4th Graders Since Last Year (parent observations)**
 - More independent
 - More reliable
 - More capable
 - More of a debater
 - More aware – social, academic, real life
 - More dramatic
 - Stronger sense of self
- The above changes are appropriate for 4th graders

- It helps to look at five developmental areas to better understand these changes
 - Physical
 - Cognitive
 - Social
 - Emotional
 - Moral

- **Physical:** Children are now much more capable to physical skills – everything from sports to helping out at home.

- Household Responsibilities
 - Children **should** be doing household responsibilities (cooking, gardening, trash, making bed, etc.). Kids need to get the idea that helping is part of being a family member and not necessarily tied to allowance. They do need to learn to manage money. An allowance

can be given with the understanding that 1/3 is for spending, 1/3 of charity, and 1/3 for savings

- How independent do you want to let them be? This comes up during the 9-10 age. They want more independence. Can they ride their bike to school? Are they safe and trustworthy? How do you know how or when to trust you kid? You need to start letting them have some freedom sometime, now that they are physically more capable of handling freedom. When do you make the transition between strings → no strings? They should be demonstrating some responsibility for homework, chores, etc. These are areas they can prove themselves. Telling them a time to return. These “tests” help you determine how trustworthy they are at the present time. Parents have a gut feeling and you need to listen to that but parents also need to create opportunities for their children to prove themselves.
- **Cognitive:** The developmental stage where children gain good understanding of the concrete world, including patterns, rules, order, understanding that there are other points of is generally in place by age 7 or 8. They are now beginning to have cognitive awareness of news. This is appropriate. However, they don't have a very well developed sense of perspective, so they still need parents to help them process what they see and hear. They are savvy enough to know bad things can happen, but parents still need to reassure them that these things are rare, may occur far away, and that they are safe. Don't assume kids are using factual information; they are quick to overgeneralize and anxiety can result
 - They are growing in their capability of making good choices .
 - Instead of learning to read, they are reading to learn. They are getting the idea that they are going to be independent learners. Curiosity is increasing.
 - Executive functioning = the frontal lobes are managing activities (setting priorities, making choices, time management, judgment, etc.). These skills are still developing well into the late 20s. All through school we are training kids to develop this aspect of judgment. We expect that 4th graders can follow a routine, make good choices, know what's safe. Time management is still difficult. Expect them to focus though not all kids are there at the same time. Ex. They can plan for meeting their Reading AR goal.
 - 8th graders are doing a 'What would you teach a 6th grader coming into Middle School?' → Most teach about procrastination, so the sooner children learn to plan out their work and not procrastinate, the better.
- **Social:** Relationships are much more complex. By 4th grade we expect girls to realize they can play with more than one person. They begin to learn that

they can talk things out, have more than one friend, realize that it's ok to have different friends for different activities. However, there is still a lot of drama for the next five years (at least)..

- Think of the role of parents as administrators vs consultants. An administrator manages, is on them, makes the rules. A consultant asks questions, listens, helps their clients reflect, give ideas, helps them make good choices. The best place to make this transition from administrator to consultant is in the area of social relationships. You want to listen. And you want to help them figure out how they want to handle situations. From now on you probably aren't going to get on the phone with another parent to sort issues out for your children. If something happens outside of school, it could still spill over into school. First listen to their stories. Sometimes they just need to vent. If they want a solution, ask what they'd like to do and help them brainstorm some possibilities. You may need to role-play some responses with them. But it is now up to them to decide what step is next. We want them to be independent to solve these problems.
 - Physical change is also connected to social change. Physical change and maturation will affect relationships. Interests will change (boys, clothes, music, video games, etc.). Kids aren't good at extracting themselves from relationships so when change happens they may need help making a shift in relationships.
- **Emotional:** Kids need to understand how their responses to situations matter. What are the expectations? how does their behavior matter? We don't expect temper tantrums, though anger is still normal. We expect them to manage frustration. By now, they need to communicate verbally instead of repressing and exploding. They need coping skills, self-help before escalation. Students should be able to look around to see what other students are doing to stay connected and get back on track. They can ask other classmates, leverage resources around them before going directly to the teacher. 4th graders still cry due to frustration or social triggers. More meltdowns happen at home rather than here at school. Our school community is compassionate and kids step in to help each other.
 - Touch Program: Dr. Gold teaches this program in the spring of 4th grade – good and bad touch; stranger danger; abuse. Many kids are more sophisticated than parents might expect. Many kids will talk about examples of what they've seen or heard about. Verbal abuse is a big topic in respect to teasing and bullying. Kids can make a positive or negative difference.
 - They should have a much richer vocabulary around emotions and begin to read other people's emotions. Some kids are better at this than others. Can they tell the difference between annoyed vs furious? Ask them to recognize the feeling I'm showing on my face. They should be learning to "read" non-verbal cues and respond appropriately (e.g. annoyance, loneliness, boredom, sadness).

- **Moral:** Kids right now still do/don't do things to avoid trouble, though they are starting to learn that rules can be flexible or change. Kids need to know rules are in place to make things run smoothly. Moral development is slightly different. Ex. We don't do something because it might hurt someone. They can begin to understand this.
- Parents can begin to use the process of Restorative Parenting. Restorative Justice was developed as an alternative to suspension in schools. It provides a method to help kids develop empathy, understand the effect of their actions on others and make their wrongdoing better or right. How would you feel if someone did that to you? Guilt can be a motivator because it doesn't feel good. Kids don't want parents to feel angry. The switch happens when they don't want parents to be disappointed. But we also don't want them to feel like they are bad people, so they need a chance to make things right again and redeem themselves, including making positive contributions to the family.
- **Handouts:** Handouts provided include general profiles of 4th graders; general developmental assets and goals, some do's: restorative parenting, how to handle many parental situations, some don'ts – how not to enable or how not to talk to your child.
- **Reed District Graduate Exercise**
 - How do we measure if our kids are progressing appropriately toward the visions of the Reed District Graduate? What kind of "grade" would you give your child? How is your child performing against these ideals?
 - Parents were asked to discuss among themselves the abstract bullet points of two to the five visions, motivated learners and balanced individuals/best selves. They were asked to identify observable behaviors or comments that kids say that would lead them to believe that their children were evidencing or making progress towards these visions.
- **Parents' Suggestions:**
- **MOTIVATED LEARNERS**
 - Responsible, self-directed, independent
 - Starting homework on their own and getting it done (take it home, do it, bring it back)
 - Personal care
 - Risk-taker, not being afraid to make mistakes and learn from them
 - Experimenting with words
 - Running for student council/willing to compete
 - Public speaking

- Take pride in accomplishments
 - Showing a test
 - Telling a relative
 - Showing pride in friend's accomplishment
- Understand that learning is a lifelong process
 - Modeling from parents
 - Child expresses: "I want to learn about..."
- BALANCED INDIVIDUALS/BEST SELF
 - Demonstrate self-knowledge, integrity, good judgment, and honor
 - Expressing personal likes/dislikes
 - Not taking negative criticism so seriously
 - Sticking up for someone, commenting on negative behavior
 - Telling the whole truth
 - Exhibit self-assurance, confidence, and social acceptance
 - Willing to present work
 - Developing a personal style (e.g. clothes)
 - Accept others' different preferences
 - Persevere and are resilient amidst adversity, stress, disappointment, and conflict
 - Child expresses: "I have another chance next time..."
 - Try to solve problems on own
 - Modeling from parents positive handling of disappointment
 - Learning to put events in perspective... "This could be worse..."
 - Make positive choices for personal and physical well being
 - Choosing a healthy snack
 - Personal hygiene
 - Believe in the power of the individual to make a difference
 - Child expresses: "One day if I'm president..."
 - Kindness to and helping others (e.g., opening doors)