

SPRING 2009 SECOND GRADE PARENT MEETING

April 10, 2009

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Questions, Issues, and Concerns in Parenting Our 2nd Graders as They Approach 3rd Grade

I. STAR Testing is coming up soon – what is it all about?

- This is the 12th year of state-mandated testing for 2nd – 11th grades.
- It is a basic skills testing focused on reading and math.
- It is a standardized test, based on the California academic standards in multiple choice format.
- Test period is two weeks; there are six untimed subtests, three in language arts and three in math. One section is given on one day, lasting less than an hour
- Teachers are now working with students on how to take a multiple-choice test. Teachers using practice books with kids so they will get used to the format.
- The party line of the second grade teachers is “we are doing this to tell us how well the teachers have taught you.” We don’t want the students to be anxious about taking the STAR test.
- Parents should advise teachers if there is a personal emergency at home that may affect their child’s performance or concentration. Kids should get a good night’s sleep the night before and have a good breakfast the mornings of testing.
- In the late summer parents will get a summary sheet showing the level of child’s proficiency. Dr. Gold will offer a parent education evening meeting in late September to present district data and help parents interpret their child’s results.

II. Questions about friendships:

- When should parents intervene?
- There’s already drama; what can we expect next year?

Some facts:

- Friendship is a ‘huge piece of 2nd grade’.
- Second graders become much more self-aware.
- Girls form strong friendships; boys tend to run in ‘packs’.

- Children this age can identify who is good at what, who are friends with whom, and begin to want to fit in. The task for kids is: where do I fit in? who is good for me?

Parents should ask “who makes you feel good? Who is nice to you?” This helps build values. Sometimes kids need an “OK” to NOT be friends with someone.

- There can be lots of drama at this age; exclusion/hurt feelings, tending to be

more among girls than boys, though boys are not exempt. This will probably increase in third grade. The highest drama is typically from the middle of second to the middle of third grades, as children learn that a best friend may not always want to play with them and that friendships can be flexible. Right now, kids don't have the perspective to see problems as temporary. There is also great drama at middle school, but by the end of third grade children get better at negotiating the daily ups and downs of friendships.

- Some kids are adept at flowing from one group to another. This is a wonderful life skill and this is where you want your child to be.
- There is a gradual shift where parents go from "Manager" role to "Consultant" (as far as friendships go). The parent can guide the child's thinking about friendships by being a good listener, asking good questions (e.g. what do you like about this friend? How does the friend make you feel?), helping brainstorm solutions to problems and, in general, helping the child to figure out solutions on their own.

III. Boy/Girl Relationships – what are they like at this age?

- At this point boys and girls are pretty much separate.
- Girls discover boys long before boys discover girls.
- Kids at this age are not great at reading people's expressions, so they may mistake intentions of other kids.
- Parents should teach and want that all children's (and adult) relationships to be based on respect. If another child, boy or girl, is not being respectful then you should encourage your child to find another friend (and let the offending child know why).
- Parents must teach basic social skills. Kids need feedback on how to handle situations in different ways.

IV. Influences

- With increased peer influence, how can we get our kids to take the high road?
- What if the kids are OK with each other, but there are philosophical differences between parents?
- Bad Language: How long and in what ways can parents prevent their kids from using bad words. Parents should be prepared to talk about bad language; know your (family) values around the use of words, and if parent is not OK with it, take seriously and have some type of consequence.
- Parents today micro-manage their child's social and academic lives. They really only need to micro-manage technology. Note: Parents are 'digital immigrants'. Our children are 'digital natives'. It is critically important to establish rules about use of technology now: have the computer where you can see and monitor what your child is doing on it; have

time limits; watch for beginning addictions. It's OK to set limits on the computer as you would for any other activity.

- If you have philosophical differences with other parents, have the child over to your house. Don't be afraid to ask about movies, even if there are guns in a house. You need to protect and promote your child's safety and your own family's values.

V. Communication with kids – how do we draw them out? How do we find out what's going on if they're not very communicative?

- Not all kids are equally talkative and willing to share. Good times to find out what's going on are at the dinner table, listening to conversations while you're driving, and bedtime.
- A strategy to use at the dinner table is to have everybody take a turn sharing a "high" and "low" of their day.
- Other sources of information may eventually be other kids and/or other parents.
- Parents should be OK with talking to other parents when two kids seem to be unable to resolve problems or when you find out some disturbing information about another child, involving safety or bad behavior. It is important to begin to build relationships with other parents and to find gentle, not attacking ways to communicate difficult information (e.g. "I'm a little reluctant to call you, but I thought you'd want to know..." "I know there are always two sides to a story, but it seems that our kids are having a really difficult time right now, and I wonder what you've heard...")

VI. Embarrassment: How to get our kids through their increasing self-consciousness

- Embarrassment and guilt are not necessarily a bad thing. Kids need to become introspective about things they have done.
- This is the age where you want kids to take healthy risks.
- It is OK to make mistakes – that is a part of learning.
- Sometimes if a child is afraid to tackle new things, the parent should spend time with the child beforehand so the child knows what to expect.

VII. Responsibility

- In this community and county kid's sense of entitlement is very high.
- All kids should have responsibilities – the world should not revolve around them. They are quite capable of helping around the house. Parents should express appreciation for help, but also require it. Parents do not need to do everything that their children ask; if they have to spend time doing what kids could do, then the kids will "pay" in lost services by parents. On the other hand, the more they help, the more time parents will have to take their children places, spend fun time with them, etc.
- Children also need to learn the responsibility of entertaining themselves. Their time should not be structured all the time; they must learn to entertain

themselves...and not just with Wii and videos, etc. This is still an age when children should be engaging in fantasy play, drawing, having face-to-face playtime, reading, playing board games, playing outside. There is a lot to do besides the computer