

Spring 2009 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Parent Meeting  
Dr. Allan Gold, District Psychologist  
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## **Questions, Issues, Concerns in Parenting our 6<sup>th</sup> Graders as They Approach 7<sup>th</sup> Grade**

### **What rules at home are appropriate for kids this age? / Computer Monitoring, how much time, when?/ Cell Phone, Monitoring?**

The issue of monitoring is very important for kids at this age, particularly with their having laptops. The computer, even the laptop, should be in a public place so you can see what they are doing. You may have a “No Laptop in the Bedroom” rule. Set a time limit on the laptop. Kids need to learn how to balance their computer time, social time, homework time, and family time. This is particularly difficult for young adolescents. Communication about this is very important. Don’t overlook your own “addiction” to the computer – your kids are watching you.

Parents should advocate for responsibility. You can still set the limits. If you feel like something is “out of balance” ... then stop and make some new rules and do something different. The question is how do you bring things back into balance?

Work with your child on how long they need the laptop for homework. Homework these days may take far longer than it needs to because the kids are playing while working. When the time for homework has been met, then the parent can unplug wireless (parent suggestion)

### **We can help parents with managing the computers (from Kit Pappenheimer, Principal):**

- School can set a time limit on the laptop
- Parents can opt to have the computers stay at school, school can work with you
- If you want support with these issues, we can support you at the school level.
- We can also facilitate another round table discussion with parents etc.

Ultimately, this does come back to parenting ... it’s a challenging time. Technology is part of our present and future and it’s not going away. Parents are the “digital immigrants” and kids are the “digital natives” ... lets partner together. Empower the kids to be your educator.

### **Parents are “not my boss,” Yes or No??**

You are still their bosses, as long as they’re living under your roof. However, they will be pushing for more freedom and privilege, and should be given opportunities to prove that they are responsible and trustworthy.

Plan parameters and consequences before giving them a new privilege, such as going somewhere with a friend (telephone when you get there, stay where you're supposed to, be back on time). The consequence if they mess up is that they don't get the privilege again for a while (a month or so). The reward is that they can have the privilege the next time they ask for it. Kids need parameters; they function much better if they are clear about rules from home to school.

What happens if they are disrespectful?

It is important that they know up front what happens, if they are disrespectful. Remember, you don't have to do everything for them. You owe them food, clothing, shelter, and love, but disrespect should not be rewarded with giving them everything they want. When they do not contribute to the running of the household by shirking responsibilities, then you're spending your time to complete those responsibilities – so that's less time for you to do what they want. Have these conversations up front and not in the middle of an argument. Be clear and concise about the rules.

At the same time you're establishing rules, you want to maintain communication. You want them to keep talking to you. Give them space, let them transition from school to home. Don't ask how school was immediately. Over dinner, you might share ups and downs for the day (including your own), which might lead to productive conversations. They will become increasingly private, so you might find out more about your child from another parent. Get comfortable communicating with other parents in a non-attacking and non-defensive way. We're all in this together.

### **Dating?**

Dating is not appropriate at 11 or 12 year olds

They are interested in each other and it is not unusual that they will experiment with sexual behavior. This is an age-old topic - try to comfortably talk with your kids about this. House parties, dances are fine if they are well chaperoned. But just having enough adults (one to 6 or 7 kids) doesn't mean that kids won't try to get away with misbehavior. Don't hang out at one end of a big house with the kids at the other end; be visible and cruise around without lurking.

Get prepared to have tough discussions about sexual behavior as kids move into 7<sup>th</sup> grade..

### **Chores, responsibilities, how strict to be?**

Chores are very important. It's a good balance to have and good for your kids to demonstrate responsibility. Kids are part of a family and they are quite capable of helping out. At this age they get so focused on their own needs that it's good for them to have chores. Chores could certainly switch from month to month so no one gets stuck with their least favorite ones. It is also very important, and let them know you appreciate them helping out. They need to feel like they are making a

contribution. Examples include: Loading dishwasher, cleaning table, walking dog etc.

An allowance is a family decision, but it is very useful for them to learn how to manage money. One philosophy is not to have an allowance tied to chores, but allowances can be docked if chores aren't done.