

**Kindergarten Grade Level Parent Meeting**  
**April 30, 2010**  
**Dr. Allan P. Gold, District Psychologist**  
**Lexie Sifford, Principal**

---

**Issues and Concerns in Parenting Our K Moving to First Grade Children**

***What should I expect during the transition from Kindergarten to 1<sup>st</sup> grade?***

- Significant changes in awareness in themselves and what others think
  - By the *end* of 1<sup>st</sup> grade, children are quite aware of what others think, wear, who is best at each activity. From the end of Kindergarten there is a gradual increase in this awareness. This has implications for how they see themselves and what they want to be like. A disadvantage is that sensitivity is heightened and they may start to feel not as good as other children. It is important for parents to continue to encourage effort and promote the understanding that everyone is different in what they are good at or find difficult, but that everyone can get better at what they do with effort and practice.
- Academic leap from K to 1 is not as big as it used to be because of the increased academic emphasis in Kindergarten. However -
  - The school day is longer, so it is natural for kids to be tired at beginning of year
  - This is their first transition to a new teacher at Reed School and having new kids in their class. Some kids may adapt to this change more easily than others.
  - Social transition can be harder for shy children used to a small comfort group
  - 1st grade children still focus socially on kids in their class, so that their friends will most likely be children in their first grade class
- We can expect that they will be better able to handle their emotions
- Kids love growing up – K to 1 is generally a positive transition
- Sleep is very important for everything, but especially during transition times

***Is reluctance to go to school common and what should I do in response to reluctance?***

- This can be very common especially after summer time, but usually disappears after a week or so.
- With any new feeling children express, parents should try to figure out what are feelings and why? This is certainly true of reluctance to go to school.
  - Did something happen at school
  - Talk to teacher for clues – teasing, social rejection?
- It is always important to encourage good, open communication
  - Good exercise - ask about ups and downs (something good that happened during the day and something not so good) at dinner table each night. This may give a good clue to children's feelings and start a conversation. Parents should share their ups and downs, as well.

### ***What are some effective ways of communicating about feelings?***

- Learn to listen reflectively to your children – try to figure out what they might be feeling and help them develop a vocabulary of emotions beyond “sad” and “angry.”
- When they misbehave, it is often better to communicate the “softer” emotions, such as disappointment or worry or confusion, than anger. Don’t forget that children learn to expect and then turn out parental anger, but they may be more impacted by parental disappointment or worry.
- Help children learn to make misbehavior right
  - Say sorry in a meaningful way
  - Letter of apology, face to face apology, replace broken item, etc.
  - Parents can take time they need to come up with appropriate consequence
  - Make sure to tell them when you are proud of effort, being nice etc.

### ***What is happening socially at this age?***

- Children are learning how to navigate the social landscape
  - Practice is very important
- Mix of personalities in children
- Learning to branch out of their comfort zone and ask to play
  - Initiating skills are both verbal and non-verbal – hard to learn
- Learning to build and maintain friendships
  - The parents’ job is to help children figure out what makes a good friend, who they feel good being with and who they don’t. This takes a long time for children to sort out.
  - Have them begin to identify qualities in a friend - not bossy, shares easily, funny, easy to talk to, can trust, has same interests, helps others, teaches others
- Learning how to “break in” to groups of kids – this is an important skill
  - Learning to read “nonverbal cues is very important: recognizing when to ask to join a game – when there’s a break in the action, catching a friend’s eye, noting when entering might make teams uneven, etc.
  - Parents can help them get up to speed on new activities that are played on the playground before they try for first time – ex. kickball and jump rope
  - Good thing to learn to flex their “disappointment muscle,” if they are rejected from a game or by a particular child. They need to develop alternatives – find someone else to play with, try another group, don’t take it to heart
  - Advise kids they can always ask for teachers help on playground
  - Parents can praise effort and courage for trying new things, such as, asking to play
  - Parents can also try role playing at home to build social skills
    - When to break into a game
    - Find a smaller group to start with
    - Look for someone you know

***What is Dr. Gold's view on over-programming our children?***

- Too much scheduling of children at this age can rob children of opportunities for developing social interaction skills
- Activities 3,4,5 days a week is too much
- Kids are not ready for organized sports at this age. Wait until about age 8; by that time they have developed skills and they can understand rules and focus better on the game. This is a time for skill building in a non-competitive, fun setting.
- Overscheduling has an impact on parents too – too much driving around makes for a lot of stress for parents – and a stress out parent is not an effective parent.
- It is hard to say no to youthful enthusiasm – but it is important for parents to set boundaries and teach kids to prioritize. They'll have to do that within a short time, when they have extracurricular activities, homework, family obligations, and social life all to try to “cram” in.
- Playdates are good – playing is a critical part of growing up
- It is recommended to rotate fewer activities in shorter segments through the year rather than all at the same time
- Electronics (TV, computer, texting, phone) – need to find a balance
  - If kids seem to be getting addicted to the computer (not being able to stop and get off, when asked, not wanting to do anything else but play video games then it is easier to say no to them altogether.
  - Kids need more maturity to be able to balance a lot of activity
  - Parents need to set example here, themselves, by giving themselves some down time.