

Spring 2011 Second Grade Parent Meeting

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Questions, Issues, Concerns in Parenting Our Second to Third Graders

1. STAR Testing - How do we talk about STAR testing with our children?
 - a. Students are well prepared for the testing in class with practice tests and explanation by the teachers about what the testing is for.
 - b. Tell them that the test is not about them - it's a test for the teacher and school to learn what they taught well and what we need to work on.
 - c. Are STAR results used for class placements/differentiation?
 - i. Results come in mid-late August, so they are not used for class placement
 - ii. Results along with classroom activities will play a part in differentiation of instruction at Bel Aire
 - d. Results do NOT need to be shared with the children at this age. Save this for your 4th-5th grader.
2. Techniques for easing the 2-3 transition
 - a. The transition generally goes quite well. There is excitement and anxiety. It's usually the parents that have more anxiety than the children.
 - b. Children will visit, meet the principal, have a 3rd grade classroom visit, eat lunch on campus, and tour the school with 5th grade tour guides all at the end of May (May 23rd this year).
 - c. Academic transitions will occur, there will a ramping up of expectations, but this happens gradually.
 - d. Anxiety of how big kids will be - Bel Aire still emphasizes the Character Pillars & MOSAIC. Fifth graders usually look out for the younger children now.
3. Language: how do we control use of "bad" language, when kids this age and older try it out?
 - a. They will be exposed to bad language through the media, on the playground, and from older siblings or friends. In your family, you do have control. Emphasize what is acceptable to you BUT don't use that language at home, yourselves. Have discussions to teach the "value" in not using offensive language. You don't want your child to say these words because ...it's rude, it's offensive, others may not want you

around (or their parents won't want you around), giving another word to use instead at this age might help, people will assume that you are not nice and respectful if you use that language...start talking about reputation. There is some usefulness in not making it so taboo, that they will keep on testing to get you upset.

- b. Revisit the rules and enforce them. Good parent communication on playdates will allow for others to enforce rules at their house
- c. Part of growing up is learning WHAT YOU CAN DO WHERE - kids will use bad language in their peers groups, but should learn pretty quickly not to use that language when adults are around or in hearing distance of adults at school. At Bel Aire and Del Mar kids are admonished for using bad language if they are overheard.
- d. Fascination with what's "taboo": It's normal and children will push it. The more we make something forbidden, the more they want to try it. Kids job is to push limits, our job is to set the boundaries. Kids associate this with growing up and being older, which is what they want. Some demystification can be helpful, by using the words without emotion, explaining their meaning and what's wrong with them, and then giving them the expectation that they will not use those words in your house. Some families even have a jar for everyone, adults included, putting quarters/dimes in when bad language is used.

4. Aggression/"violence" in boys - what's normal?

- a. Video games, movies, and media will desensitize children to these issues. Video games become their "life" and it becomes worrying. Limit video game usage
- b. Fantasy play is fine. Watch for anger behind it. Boys need to get out their energy, but it shouldn't be fueled by anger.
- c. Is fascination with guns normal? How do you move it in a different direction and reel it in?
 - i. Ask questions about why he is so interested in it. Why, what do you like about, etc.
- d. How to stand up for yourself vs. retaliation?
 - i. Role play - How to stand up for yourself - "Stop doing that."
 - ii. Spend time on what "telling" is okay vs. tattling to get someone in trouble. Telling an adult to keep yourself safe in threatening or uncomfortable physical or verbal situations is not tattling. Kids need to learn the difference.
 - iii. Go over techniques: Walk away, Ask to Stop, Get an ally to help you stand up. You might use Kid Power organization for lessons
- e. How do you tell regular escalation vs. anger around competition

- i. If you see your child is usually the one losing their temper around competition, you may need to step in
- ii. Watch & be aware, Fairness is a big deal right now and for a while.

5. Peer pressure about likes/dislikes

- a. What's popular with clothes/fads? Parents can set the standards.
There are some clothes that are representative of groups of people and you can talk to your children about this - It's okay to say it's not appropriate for a child your age. Making associations to gangs, etc. is okay in giving your reasons why some clothes are not appropriate. You can always use school as an ally - if you think some clothes are really inappropriate, have a discussion with your child's teacher and have him/her deliver the message, too.
- b. How do you encourage them to be different?
You want to validate who they are. Have the children begin to evaluate what makes a good friend. They have to reflect and think about their relationships. They have a right to their own preferences (assuming they are appropriate choices). What's my public face? How do I fit in? Can I have a friend that accepts who I am at home? Again, it's part of finding out what they can do where. It takes awhile for all of us to be secure in our likes & dislikes.

6. Keeping friendships inclusive

- a. It's okay to have a small group of friends, but to actively exclude is not okay. They should not judge others by superficialities. Ask them Why they might not want to play with a particular child. What is it that you don't like about that child?" They may have very good reasons for not wanting to play with someone, but they need to learn how to get out of situations tactfully. Sometimes a "white lie" is appropriate. Sometimes it may be better to let the other child know in a gentle way that there are things s/he is doing that make you not want to play with them.
- b. Talking to your child's teacher is an option for expressing some friendship issues - if you've discussed someone in class at home someone who has had difficulty making friends or causing your child discomfort - inform the teacher, possibly inform the parents (if you've seen behavior) - call them to form a partnership about helping your children work through the issues.