

Spring 2011 Seventh Grade Parent Meeting
April 28, 2011
Dr. Allan Gold, District Psychologist, Dr. Alan Vann Gardner, Principal

Del Mar has refined its 5 year statement plan/vision and has used it to inform all curriculum at our school. Other schools are also adopting it. Today we will focus on two of the five goal areas for our Reed District/Del Mar graduates: "Engaged Citizen" and "Balanced Individual/Best Self."

Parents were asked what evidence they have seen of the qualities in each of these areas. What are we (school and home) doing right?

- An English assignment: "How would you improve the world?" - also correlated to a Science project and community service project.
- One parent cautioned that students should not be coerced into community service. Rather, they should be introduced to the opportunity/needs and then given a chance to decide on their own.
- Further ideas were brought forth on community service:
- school-wide projects.....philanthropy night.....a website with posted opportunities...(the Human Society is in need of student involvement).....a Challenge Day of Service

What might the school do to improve our efforts?

- Have teachers stagger deadlines for larger projects (to reduce stress).
- Stick to the deadlines and don't mislead the students about these deadlines.
- Students must learn time management, resilience, coping.
- A more obvious and inviting time is needed for students to approach teachers with concerns about grades and assignment questions. (Students and parents may co-create emails to teachers.)
- Some parents complained about the rigor of homework and suggested that students have greater retention with less homework.....others thought our school's homework level appropriate.and even less than what they had experienced at private schools.

Dr. Vann Gardner informed us that each student was asked if he/she felt engaged and connected to Del Mar School. 80% did. Also 38% said that they would stick up for others during a conflict. We continue to work on those remaining 20/62 % of students.

Spring fever is bringing with it increased discipline problems. Dr. Gold said it presented mostly with inappropriate name calling--gay, fat, retard, etc. The school is doubling its efforts to stop this with a slogan---"If You See Something-Say Something". (It is not OK to ignore such hurtful behavior.)

Parents asked for suggestions on how to deal with narcissistic thirteen year olds. Dr. Vann Gardner suggested starting with the implementation of "three nonnegotiable rules" as a good place to start. Dr. Gold said that when children are disrespectful to one parent, it is very important for the other parent to always defend his/her partner. Dr. Gold met with 6th and 7th grade teachers, who expressed some concerns about their students in hopes that parents would support them in dealing with these issues:

Positive Developmental areas:

- encourage kids to take healthy risks. (they learn from failure)
- encourage children to be their own advocates
- help them learn resilience and perseverance
- guide them toward delayed gratification
- help foster their independence

Some negatives to work on:

- stop enabling our children; let them experience consequences
- decrease the emphasis on grades and try instead to emphasize learning
- stop "catastrophizing" - a C is not an F
- do not pull students out of school for vacations right before or after the scheduled vacation; teachers are still trying to teach

Note: Redwood teachers report that Del Mar students enter 9th grade academically prepared but really too coddled by their parents.