

Spring 2012 Second Grade Parent Meeting
April 18, 2012

Dr. Allan Gold, District Psychologist, Nora Ho, Principal,
Debbie Johnston, Second Grade Team Leader

Principal Ho introduced the meeting with a discussion about the Common Core Standards in English/Language Arts and Math, adopted by 45 of 50 of the states, and to be implemented over the next couple of years. The purpose of these common standards will be to increase both the rigor and the consistency of instruction and academic expectations throughout the United States and internationally. More information will be coming as the change takes place. Math will be the first focus.

Summer School: as of the Board Meeting on 4/17/12, there will NOT be Summer School offered. The district will be revamping the technology infrastructure, so a lot of work will be taking place on all the campuses.

Dr. Gold: Springtime meeting is less of a lecture, more of a question/answer. This is a time of big transition, and with the school structure the students will be making the move to a new school, Bel Aire. In addition, this will be the first time that students will participate in the STAR testing program, where they will be assessed on their achievement in second grade.

STAR Testing: Since 1998 all students in California take the annual achievement testing from 2nd-11th grade. The test has morphed and modified every year. It is now based on the current California State Standards. The second grade consists of three Language Arts and three Math sections. Teachers do most of the reading in second grade. Dr. Gold will have a parent meeting in September to go over the results. Parents receive the results at home in August before school starts. The test is useful in a number of ways. It is instructive in helping individual teachers and the grade level determine how well concepts and skills have been taught, but it is NOT used as an evaluation tool for teachers, as classroom composition can vary and teachers are evaluated on with much broader criteria than a single student test.

A student's results are given in terms of a level of proficiency: advanced, proficient, basic, below basic, and far below basic. We hope that our students reach the proficient level. Our district generally has the highest scores in the county and among the top scores in the state, so we do not generally worry about our students' performance. However, we do pay careful attention to test performance to identify those students who may need extra help, more intensive teaching or remediation, or who may need further challenge.

Preparations have been going on in the classrooms so that students will be ready for the tests. These include teaching them how to read questions, how to use strategies to make their best answer, etc. Teachers do not exaggerate the importance of the test and neither should parents. Students generally enjoy demonstrating what they know. Parents can be helpful by making sure their children get a good night's sleep and not create any extra anxiety.

Specific Parent Questions:

How do you go about class placement?

The ultimate goal is a balanced class: behaviors, academics, parent volunteers, friendships, special needs. 95% of students will do well with any teacher. If a child needs a certain type of classroom structure, we do our best to accommodate this. Write a letter to Mrs. Ho, Mrs. Purcell, and Dr. Gold describing your child's characteristics and classroom structure or teacher style that has seemed to work well in the past. We engage in a very thoughtful process, with all staff working hard to make the best decisions. The class lists will be posted the day before school starts, online and at the site.

Is there a way to deal with the anxiety about the move to Bel Aire?

Recognize that change is anxiety producing (but often more for parents than kids). Take trips to Bel Aire to point out third grade classes, the playground, lunch area, etc. Talk to your child's current teacher about finding a good combination for a friend to be kept with in the third grade class. Talk to them about being *resilient*. Check out the Reed District Vision of a Graduate...you're 1/3 of the way through. How is it going?

Some basic information about the transition:

You have to enroll there. There will be information coming home about deadlines and how/when.

The second graders take a field trip to Bel Aire on May 21. They will meet some of the teachers, eat lunch there, and take a tour. This will go a long way to allaying anxiety. There will also be an evening meeting for the parents, where you'll see a video and have an opportunity to ask questions.

Expectations in third grade should not be an overwhelmingly different than second grade. While our district involves this school change, we recognize that third graders are still elementary students and teachers respect the gradual growth that takes place (rather than suddenly ramping up expectations). Homework will mostly remain a weekly packet in third grade, but it will come home on Monday not Friday. Fourth grade homework will go to nightly. They will change classrooms during "SEMINAR;" this will be a new experience for your students. The Seminar Program takes place in 3rd-5th grade for differentiated instruction – enrichment, small group reinforcement. The goal is for more individualized instruction, and takes place for all students two or three times a week for about eight week blocks during the year.

Bel Aire school day: 8:10-2:40, minimum day (Wednesday) is 1:50

What can we expect for our children socially?

The playground is big. There will be over 450 students at Bel Aire next year and all are out at recess at the same time. There are special circumstances built in. (Gaga pit is one day for 3rd grade, one day for 4th grade, and one day for 5th grade). Lunch recess has A LOT of options – clubs, athletics, etc.

Don't be surprised if kids come home with "drama", especially among girls. Bel Aire uses the MOSAIC program to tackle social issues and personal decisions. We have a lot of support both in the classroom and through counseling from our School Psychologists to help resolve interpersonal issues.

Challenges presented by Technology:

Should my child have a cell phone? Should my child have an email account? More and more, as parents, you will have to deal with these questions. Children will have laptops for school. To ask them to manage the technology and tools is asking quite a lot. Misuse of technology through cyberbullying, for example, has a huge impact on what's happening in school – causing anxiety, hurt feelings, etc. Addiction results in difficulty in monitoring – asking children to disengage from something fun and attractive to do something *real*. Transition period is 3rd-5th grade. If you are getting a lot of pushback when asking kids to stop their computer use, then you may need to set limits. Children at third grade do not need cell phones. Until students are on their own, they do not need cell phones or iphones. By the time they go to middle school, you may want to consider cell phones. At middle school or even Bel Aire cell phones are supposed to be OFF during school. It is important to note that there doesn't seem to be any teasing of students if they don't have these devices.

Always consider the values that we want to communicate to our children? What is the impact of our choices in parenting?

May Atlantic Monthly article: Is Facebook/Social Media making people feel lonelier?

It is okay to have different rules for different age kids, specifically siblings?

You probably can't monitor your younger children's exposure to what your older children are doing, but you can limit what they do. What is fair is not that all of your children get to do the same things, but that they are allowed to do what is APPROPRIATE for their age level.