

Del Mar Parent Meeting: Transitions  
May 23, 2013  
Dr. Allan Gold, Psychologist  
Dr. Alan Vann Gardner, Principal

Parents were first asked to reflect on parts of the Vision of the Del Mar graduate, particularly the “best selves” area. Parents indicated the attributes that they felt their children were well on the way to demonstrating. Some of these were:

celebrate achievements  
ethical  
engaged  
curious

Areas for continued growth included:

confidence  
balance  
learning through mistakes

Parent felt that the following were key or critical concepts in the vision, like the former Character Pillars:

balance  
resilience  
motivation  
self advocacy  
curious  
ethical  
empathy  
perseverance

The three keywords: respect, respect, respect

The remainder of the session was spent discussing transitions for children in 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> grades moving on to the next grade

**1) 6-7 Grade Transition Concerns**

Time management  
Friendship changes  
Academic pressure  
Changes in body & emotional development (intellectual, too) – dramatic change  
Increased closing off of 6-7 graders to adults  
Increasing temptations – online (e.g. ask.fm), cyberbullying, sexting, cutting, more curiosity about drugs, alcohol. Greater need to fit in and increased peer pressure.  
Parents need to be aware!!

---

## 2) 7-8 Grade Transition Concerns

8<sup>th</sup> grade will bring even greater exposure to complex social issues

Kids do not see the ethical impact of what they post on line. Empathy seems to go out the window. Issues of privacy come up – should parents monitor what kids post online. The truth is that everything is public, so why should parents be the only ones not seeing what going on with text, KIK, various chat , Instagram? There is no privacy anymore. Parents need to be explicit in discussing rules for what is posted on line– posting is forever! Google kids name and select images. Bikini shots are commonly posted for 8<sup>th</sup> grade girls.

Parents need to resist pressure to give too much – iPhones, etc.

\*Kids' job is to push and test limits and to try to turn privileges into rights. Parents' job is not to make that easy and to hold their kids to standards of ethical behavior – or they don't get the **privilege**.

It is unrealistic to think that kids won't be able to use technology at all. They need to learn how to manage this very attractive, seductive, and addictive tool. Banning it altogether only will make it more attractive. Kids need to learn balance, both in terms of time and content. Parents have to act as their kids frontal lobes until theirs develop (or at least until they go off to college; the judgment part of the brain isn't complete until nearly age 30!) Too many parents are not following through with setting boundaries. Parents need to feel empowered to set the boundaries.

In addition parents need to be good role models – spending all of their time on the computer or smartphone is not good role modeling to get kids to balance their time. We are all part of the proverbial “village” trying to raise our kids. Other parents are part of this village, so it is very important to be able to talk with other parents, share information, and discuss any concerning issues. School staff should definitely be included in the “village,” so we can help, too. Be observant, good listeners (like when you're driving kids somewhere and you're invisible) and you'll learn a lot about other kids, and (hopefully) your own.

Fall of 8<sup>th</sup> grade can be stressful with deciding where to go for high school. Students applying to private high school may well experience greater stress with both the demands of 8<sup>th</sup> grade and the application process (as well as making the public/private school decision in the first place). One piece of good news is that

In general kids experience stress if they have too many extracurricular activities. It is wonderful that they want to try new things, but, again, sometimes the adults have to set limits if the stress level becomes too high (for both parents and kids).

## 3) 8-9 Grade Transition

Perhaps the biggest challenge for parents is not knowing your children's new friends families. So it is not just recommended, but really incumbent that parents need to reach out to the parents of new friends. If there are parties, make sure that you know who will supervise, how many students will be there, if liquor is going to be around. Parties should have one parent for about every 7 kids. Just because there is a parent at a party doesn't mean that it is being supervised. If you're not

comfortable with their going, you can forbid them from going. Even better is having serious discussions about how they will deal with drugs or drinking temptations – what will influence their decisions, and what they will say to refuse to participate without seeming “uncool.”

Building trust is important because driving is imminent.

Look for emotional changes that last for longer periods of time than just a few days. Watch for signs of depression, keep your eyes and nose aware about possible drug or alcohol use. Try to keep communication open; ask non-judgmental questions, so they don't always feel on the spot. Raise the questions, empower them over time to use good judgment, rather than telling and protecting them. They will make mistakes; use those mistakes as learning experiences. Keep the conversations going. Promote their thinking different situations through.

For academics kids going into high school need to be good self-advocates, continue with organization and particularly time management. Hopefully, they have developed those skills in middle school.

### **Suggestions for Middle School Parents**

Volunteer to drive kids home from activity

Rules for electronics

Encourage social play dates

Get to know their friends

Quiet time reading

Keep the talking going

Get Table Topics

Never say, “not my child”

Come to these Del Mar meetings

Kids need their parents more now than ever (at least since they were very young)

Don't judge your kids by how they are at age 12 -14; they will mature!