

Spring 2014 Fifth Grade Level Parent Meeting  
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**What are questions, issues, and concerns in Parenting Our Children  
Transitioning from Fifth to Sixth Grade?**

- **How do we discuss “big” issue questions with our kids?**
  - At this age kids’ cognitive ability is expanding; they are able to think in a more abstract way.
  - Help them think in shades of grey because kids initially think in “black and white.”
  - Around age 10 to 11 is where you can start talking to kids like adults.
  - It is important to integrate your values into discussions. For example, the question “why are we here?” gives you the opportunity to impart your values like “we are here to do good.”
  - The world opens up to kids at this age and you can begin to have fascinating intellectual discussions with them.
  - The Internet opens up the opportunity for them to see things they may not have easily seen in the past such as pornography and violent video games. There have been instances where kids in 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> grade have been exposed. You have to ask yourself what you object to about these subjects, pictures, etc. At this age they will still listen to you. It is very important to tell them why you don’t think something is appropriate. It is important to be clear on these issues, beforehand, so that you’re not taken by surprise and can clearly articulate your objections, concerns, and values.

**How do we handle the big negatives if they happen?**

- What happens when they are exposed to things at friends houses like violent video games? They need to find inner strength to say no. They can also use parents as excuse.
- This age is height of conformity where they don’t want to be different.
- Do you see access to drugs and alcohol at this age? Right now, they are pretty much against it. By 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade some kids do start to experiment. Being Adept is a program that Del Mar does with 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders which is a strong program. Check out the Being Adept web site.
- One good thing about middle school is that there really are no secrets; if something happens either in or outside of school, the gossip mill takes over and adults find out about it.
- Kids will increasingly push you away, which is a natural part of their development. Listen when they are talking with their friends when you’re driving them places.

- It's very important to tell kids that if they are worried about a friend they need to tell an adult. It doesn't need to be you, but any trusted adult. At school there are ways not to identify the person who is telling to protect their anonymity.
- Kids need to learn to say no and to say it in a way that isn't totally uncool. Blame parents. Use sports as excuse. It is good to practice with kids. "If you are offered a cigarette, or drugs, or a drink how do you get out of that?"
- What's an appropriate consequence for middle school? Take phone away, take away privileges. Tell them about mistakes you made.

### **How do we support our kids with executive functioning skills and adjusting to Del Mar?**

- Development of executive functions isn't like an on and off switch; it's a long process. It involves the judgment part of the brain which isn't completely developed until the late 20s or even 30. Executive processing includes skills like managing emotions, setting priorities, paying attention, time management, organization. It is essentially getting all of the parts of our lives in order so we can function.
- In 6<sup>th</sup> grade we expect some level of organization.
- If you're worried about their getting from place to place at Del Mar take them over to Del Mar during the summer to familiarize them with the campus.
- They will have 8<sup>th</sup> grade buddies.
- There is a WEB (Where Everybody Belongs) program to support sixth graders.
- The first week there is a bit of confusion in navigating the campus, but within a week it is sorted and the teachers are understanding of this adjustment period.
- For parents the issue how much you micromanage versus letting them be independent. In 6<sup>th</sup> grade you can use Power School to monitor how your child is doing. It's a tricky situation where you don't want to over do it and over-micromanage, but you do want to keep a pulse on their progress and specifically to make sure there aren't missing assignments. A general guideline is that it's good to check once a week or maybe every other week if your child is consistently on top of their work.
- It can be good for parents to help set benchmarks to avoid their child's procrastination, particularly for longer term projects. Teachers certainly set benchmarks, but it's helpful to make sure kids are following those.
- This is the time when parents change from managers to consultants. Consultants ask good questions and get their consultee to reflect and think, help brainstorm solutions and what effects might be from different choices. Help them evaluate. Social situations and school

work are very good content areas and issues for parents to be consultants, because you're not directly involved. Be a good listener.

### **What's coming with girl drama?**

- Kids do mature at different rates and going through puberty can affect their interests. Kids develop at different ages and because of that friendships change.
- The friends your kids start out being friends with at the start of Del Mar are unlikely to be the same at the end of Del Mar.
- Boy drama doesn't happen as much.
- What we are seeing more of is cyberbullying like Ask.fm. It is important to be aware of all of the social networking websites, to have a continuing dialogue about appropriate use of technology, and to monitor their communication and postings.

### **Should kids have cell phones?**

- Regardless of the answer it's about trust. Many students at Del Mar have smart phones (not that they really need them). This is an opportunity to see if they can be responsible, not only about not losing or breaking the phone, but whether they can stay within cost parameters (if they don't have unlimited texting, say), and most importantly, whether they communicate appropriately with the phone and whether they don't use it to avoid direct face-to-face communication. Discussions should (must) take place about how feelings can easily be misunderstood when only using digital means of communication.
- Don't let them have their phones, ipads, or laptops in their rooms at night.
- Kids need to get 10 hours of sleep a night and devices can be a real draw to staying up.
- If you see inappropriate texts it give you the opportunity talk about values.

### **How do we balance independence /freedom with parental oversight/monitoring?**

- You have to give kids the opportunity to prove that they are trustworthy. This can only happen if they have both requirements and some freedom.
- At this age they should have chores and household responsibilities. Their reasonable compliance without a lot of your nagging and reminding is a good way for them to build trust. Handling their schoolwork responsibly is another way.

- They can have some freedom to go places, but you can set criteria such as letting you know when they get somewhere or if they change plans. They need to be home when they say they are going to be home.
- There is a delicate balance between giving them freedom and setting controls. They need to feel they have some independence.
- Keep communication open. Listen more than speak. Don't overreact.
- Freedoms that are appropriate for this age – going to a friends house, going to the grocery store.

### **What controls on computers are there at Del Mar?**

- Certain websites are blocked
- Great program that instills personal responsibility
- There is a program that allows the teachers and administrators to see what kids are doing on their computers.

### **Some Book suggestions:**

- About boys
  - Real Boys
  - Raising Cain
  - Masterminds and Wingmen
- About girls
  - Queen Bees and Wannabees