

Spring 2014 Third Grade Level Parent Meeting
Dr. Allan Gold, Reed District Psychologist
May 20, 2014

- Introduced 2 hand outs – one by Madelaine Levine & New York Times about raising children well

Topics Raised by Parents

- **How do we deal with lack of respect for parents and other adults?**
 - About at 8-9 is about when many kids start to be less respectful toward their parents. Usually they still treat teachers and other adults with respect.
 - If kids are really disrespectful, parents should have a sit down and discuss how to deal with the emotions that lead them to be disrespectful. They may need to be specifically taught how to express their frustration, dissatisfaction and/or anger. Much of what they see on the media uses derogatory sarcastic tones of voice (often with parents), so that's what they internalize. Be specific: "You can't use that tone of voice, words etc." Model how they can express their feelings in a strong, but respectful way.
 - How to handle when your child's friend is disrespectful to you: Explain clearly what your family finds acceptable and ask them to behave accordingly or they won't be invited back.
 - Kids want a lot from parents now (freedom, toys, etc.). Teach them that being respectful is one way they can earn what they want. The consequences for continued disrespect is that they don't get what they want. But make this clear at a quiet time, not in the middle of an event.
- **What is the balance between protectiveness & freedom at this age?**
 - Currently there is a lot of pressure to grow up fast & have freedom – kids haven't yet figured out that freedom comes with responsibility. Dr Gold's advice is that it should be up to their parent to judge how much freedom to allow based on the children. Discuss what they need to do to earn your trust, so that you will be more inclined to let them have gradually more freedom or privileges. Look for responsibility in two main areas: with home responsibilities (that all children should have as part of their being part of the family) and with their school and homework.
 - You can also add respect for adults as a measure of their maturity and responsibility– if they are not mature enough to respect limitations & boundaries, then they may not be mature enough to be left home alone, for example.
 - Dr. Gold wouldn't leave a third graders home alone as a general rule but each child is unique & ultimately parents have to decide for

themselves. There is no California law specifying an age when you can leave your child alone. At this age a quick trip to the grocery store is probably ok, but make sure that your child knows how to handle phone calls (either don't answer or say parent is busy – not “not home” and someone ringing the doorbell (don't answer).

- Speak to other parents & Dr. Gold about the appropriateness of specific “freedoms.”
- **Should children this age have cell phones?**
 - Discussed whether kids need phones – used to be an 8th grade question. Now a 3rd grade question. They **don't** need a smart phone but for safety and communication you can use a simple phone.
- **Sexual knowledge – where are they?**
 - Fifth Graders doing family life education now so 3rd graders may hear discussions on the playground (or if they have older brothers or sisters).
 - Fourth graders doing the Touch Program now & the children are knowledgeable in a general way about some sexual matters, so in the next year, expect increased interest and questions.
 - If kids ask questions (and they will), give them a little information and if they want more they'll ask. It's usually easier to start with body parts, body changes in puberty. Kids are usually interested in the “science” of sexuality, but be sure to include emotions, love, and responsibility in your discussions. There are many books which can help kids understand physical development.
- **How do we talk to our kids about wealth (in our community) and other values?**
 - Challenge/Success from Stanford (Del Mar participates) – for middle & high school kids. This program was designed to challenge notions of success, particularly the very narrow perspective of grades, good high schools, and colleges, (all of which are tied to money), and the negative impacts of that narrow vision: stress, burnout, depression, even suicide. There are other important values to consider (refer to the Vision for the Reed District Graduate for one source).
 - Kids in our generally well-to-do need to see there are people much less fortunate. (by travel or charity work). Get them to appreciate what they have and consequently that they have a responsibility in the world to put that wealth to good use.
 - Good grades and wealth... it's a matter of choices/values. Remind them there aren't good grades without hard work. Help them understand effort.
 - What you model is particularly important. (not what you preach)
 - Resilience is a particularly important value or trait to help children develop. Part of life is disappointment and frustration. They need to

“exercise” their resilience muscle, so that they can learn that they have the strength to overcome disappointment and move on. This takes lots of practice.

How does a parent retain control (over their physically growing child)?

- Sometime parents need to use rewards. Dr. Gold doesn't like doing this for something they really are able to do. But sometimes rewards to motivate them to break really bad habits can help in breaking a habit.
 - More logical is that you can also take something away. (Most of what they like to do is a privilege, not a right, e.g. video games, TV, even play dates). Q from parent: once you take something away, can they earn it back? Dr. Gold suggests “no” – at least not immediately. You need to stick with the loss of privilege. Eventually, if they prove themselves by increased responsibility, respect, less defiance, then they should be able to earn back the privilege. Ideally, have the conversation beforehand about what they will lose or earn, so the consequence is not a knee-jerk reaction in an angry moment.
 - Allow natural consequences. i.e. If they don't do homework, let the teacher address that problem.
- **Dealing with kids being exposed to movies/games at other's homes**
 - Talk to your child about what you expect them to do. Give them the “script” to encourage their friend to play/watch something else.
 - Talk to the parents of the other family and let them know that you don't allow certain things.
- **How do we as adults help our children process what they see, do, or say?**
 - This is where your values come into play. Ask yourself why something offends you (violent video games, bad language, disrespectful tones of voice, later on – pornography). You need to articulate your reasons to yourself or with your spouse, so you can clearly articulate them to your child, if and when the situation arises. While you will increasingly be less able to control what they do or say or see outside of your home, you certainly can express your own values to help them understand why you feel something is inappropriate. Believe it or not, more of your values get absorbed than you sometimes think.