

Spring First Grade Level Parent Meeting
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Questions, Issues, Concerns in Parenting Our 1st to 2nd Graders:

Some general comments about development:

There are five areas of development to consider: Physical, cognitive, social, emotional, and moral. This period of time between 5 – 7 years is a rapid time of growth in several areas, particularly cognitive, social, and emotional.

Executive functioning is like the conductor of an orchestra. What do I expect my first grader to do? Parents are still the conductor. First graders are still getting the idea of homework. They should be just beginning to be able to manage materials, responsibilities and time. This is about a two to three year process that does need to be guided by parents.

Now is the time to establish routines. Parents can put up checklists. If they are getting the important things done, then they can do their “fun” (reward) things. Make sure to watch for addiction to iPads and video games. They will turn to these things when they have free time – every time.

Allowance – try not to tie it to things they *should* be doing anyway (chores). These should be done because they are a member of the family. These things should be intrinsic. An allowance should teach money management: spending, saving & charity. A seven-year could get \$3 (one dollar for each category).

Some questions that were raised by parents:

- How do we respond when kids can't sit still/pay attention?

Can use devices like squishy balls and squishy seats to help kids move freely. Sometimes kids need to stand to work. As long as they are working, it's fine. Treat children as individuals, as long as it doesn't impact others' learning.

What if someone in class is distracting others?

How do you balance children's individuality and needs with classroom requirements? Maybe there is an “and” – one can be more tolerant of differences in the social world, but may need clearer limitations in class. The teacher can take care of that.

- How to handle use or experimentation with bad language

It's no uncommon that children will be exposed to bad language, either from older kids, peers who have older siblings, or even parents. Be clear on your own values, that certain words are not used around the house because they're insulting, rude, or inappropriate: “It's not a nice word. We don't use that word.” Then don't use that word in front of kids. We have to watch ourselves, because we do slip and children

will pick up our usage of words that we don't want them to use. Don't be afraid to admit that you made a mistake and try to be careful with your own language in front of them.

- How to gauge the level to talk to kids when they ask difficult questions (e.g. sex, scary current events, etc.)

It's perfectly okay to buy some time, "let me think of a good way to answer that question." A good rule of thumb is not to talk down to them. Give them a little information and if they want more, then provide it. If they find out about something scary in the news (though it is appropriate to protect them from most news at this age), help them understand the probability of the event: this happened far away, it is very unusual, we live in a very safe place.

How do we teach them to accept mistakes?

Kids pick up on parent anxiety. This generation of parents has lots of anxieties, which significantly impacts kids. It's good to model failure for kids, so that they can see this, that it's okay not to be perfect. The best route to success is failure. Let kids know that you make mistakes all the time and that you can remain calm and be resilient.

Sometimes kids are hard on parents and they yell at us for forgetting a snack. We need to remain calm and remind by saying, "Yes, parents work hard and we are not perfect and we forget things."

- How to help kids manage their emotions

For a 7 year old we don't see tantrums as much anymore. We expect them to manage their emotions more. They are under a lot of stress. They hold it together a lot at school and they melt down at home.

When kids have an outburst, avoid them for about 15 minutes. Let them calm down and then later you can have a conversation when everyone is not angry. Use "softer" words: "I feel really sad, disappointed or concerned (Don't use the word 'angry')...."

Together figure out what is making a situation so difficult.

- Birthday parties – now at age 7 kids might not want to go, whereas they wanted to go a year ago

They are expressing an opinion; ask why they don't want to go. They might be sorting out who is a friend and who is not. Find out more. Ask, "What is it you like about Jimmy?" Delve and engage a bit more about what makes a good friend.

- What to do when kids are too literal and they are correcting people

Ask the person what they are trying to accomplish by correcting the person. Help this person to understand their impact. "How do you think the other person feels? How does it make you feel? Nobody likes to be criticized." Are other people doing this to you?