

December 5, 2008

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5H Updates

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Ask Me About

Here is a quick list of conversation starters for your 5H student!

Social Studies:

What resources were Ancient Egyptians lacking?

What protected Egypt from invaders?

Why were the pyramids on the west side of the Nile?

How was the flooding of the Nile both helpful and harmful?

What have you researched for your Nile Brochure this week?

Reading:

What book group novel did you begin this week?

How does the main character in your book show courage?

What predictions do you have about the book?

Writing:

What evidence did you gather to make your essay stronger?

What is your "intro lead"?

What is your big idea?

What are your three arguments to prove your point?

Math:

How are fractions, decimals and percents the same?

When do you use each one?

What percent is one-eighth – how do you know?

UPCOMING DATES

December 2 Math tests returned – corrections due Friday

December 4 Definitions Nile Brochure due

December 4 MFA trip

December 5 Notes category 1 due

December 9 Author visit for parents - see info on last page for details

Class Meeting

The last piece that I wanted to share with families was a game that we played during a class meeting on November 24th. The game is called “Where Do You Stand?” It is a way for children to examine different ethical issues and choices they may be asked to make some day. Two sides of the room are identified as places to “stand.” A dilemma is presented to students and they must choose where to stand, not based upon what is the “right thing to do” but rather, on what they would do. There is no discussion during the activity and children are asked to choose based upon their own feelings, not those of peers or adults.

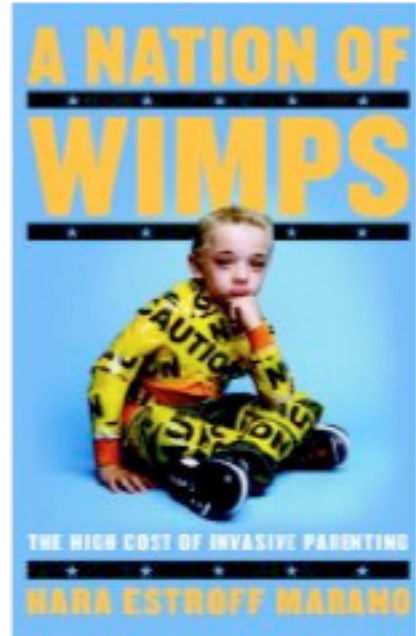
Some of the dilemmas presented were as follows:

- You are walking down the hall, no one is around. You find a dollar. Do you keep it or turn it in to the office?
- What if it was \$20?
- During a test you notice someone cheating. Do you say something or keep quiet?
- What if they were cheating from you?
- You write a mean note to someone. A different child gets blamed. Do you accept responsibility or let the other person take the punishment?
- You are in town with a friend. S/he decides to steal something. Do you say something?
- You find an autographed baseball or jewelry on the field. Do you keep it or turn it in?
- You are caught teasing another student. Do you lie and say it was just a “joke” or admit and apologize?
- You break a lamp while no one is home. Your sibling gets blamed. Do you own it, or let them get in trouble?

I am pleased to say that 5H students were honest in their “stance,” telling what they would really do. However, the results of the game are sometimes surprising. We, adults, spend a lot of time talking to kids about the “right thing to do” but not often discussing what people “really do” or why we make those choices. “Values” is a word laden with taboo these days, but it affects how children see the world and consequently, how they act in it. Children are not immune to the models that exist in our world. However, they are at an age ripe for examining those models. At this stage of development, children are starting to see the world beyond themselves and are able to understand why certain choices may be deemed “right or wrong.”

5H students were quick to articulate their feelings. A few children in 5H described a “gnawing” feeling inside that kept them from making certain choices. “I may not get caught, but it is just WRONG!” “I would feel really bad and know that by not acting – someone else was hurt.” Some children articulated that it would not be “cool” or “popular” with my friends, but I would have to do it. “What if I was the one to lose something? What if I was the one being teased – I would want someone to stand up for me.” Other students felt and expressed, “finders keepers, losers weepers,” or “someone is a wimp if they don’t stand up for themselves, why should I get involved or admit I was teasing?” “If you can get away with it, why wouldn’t you do it? I could own up later if I got caught. If you cry enough later, you usually get off easier with your parents.”

While this was only one exercise conducted in the classroom, I hope it provides an opportunity for you to discuss choices and choice making with your child, This is a ripe time to offer our guidance to children before they are unduly influenced by peers and the media. We should draw upon our own experiences and model how we solve dilemmas. Discussions at home and at school about taking responsibility, standing up for others and doing the right thing because it is right are all excellent topics. School work, including, Open Circle or our book groups on courage, along with conversations at home work in tangent to guide children. Next week, there is also a presentation for parents by the author of *A Nation of Wimps: The High Cost of Invasive Parenting*, that will also be a great connection to this issue. As a parent myself, I recently read the book, and encourage you to attend and/or read the book, if at all possible. This age is ready to discuss “what if” and “why” with you. As fifth graders head off to middle school next year, this is an opportune time for all of us to guide their thoughts about decision making. As always, thank you for your support!



You are invited . . .

Author Hara Estroff Marano, *A Nation of Wimps, The High Cost of Invasive Parenting*, will speak at an event (no admission), which is open to the entire Wellesley community.

Wellesley High School

Tuesday, December 9

7:00 pm

TRUE TALES of PARENTING 2008

Investment Banker Says No to "Fancy Kids" On a recent cross-country airline flight, I was seated next to a woman who is a vice president of a major investment banking company. She herself isn't a parent, but she comes in regular contact with young people. She asked what I was doing in L.A. I told her I had just given a speech to parents and faculty at a big and wealthy day school on the west side of L.A.. She confided that she now makes it a point NOT to hire the "fancy kids." She hires only the children of first-generation immigrants. Why? I asked. Because, she said, she has found that the kids of immigrants are resourceful, hard-working, good at figuring things out and at problem solving. The "fancy kids," she says, always had parents running interference for them or cleaning up a mess in their wake. They're not persevering, not willing to work hard, not clever at problem-solving, not resourceful. The immigrant kids have parents who speak little English and lack the knowledge and ability to manipulate the system on their behalf. They are forced to learn to bring in their homework on time and to handle life on their own. Their "disadvantage" wound up making them stronger.

The Phenomenon Something radically changed in American culture at the dawn of the twenty first century. As a result of the economic shifts and the quickening pace of technological change, adult anxiety began skyrocketing and it found a whole new arena for investment--the kids. Parents sought to give their kids every advantage in what they see as an increasingly competitive world. Affluence encouraged many parents to leave the workplace and devote their formidable professional expertise to a whole new enterprise--perfecting their kids and smoothing the path to success for them. Right about then, cellphones became de rigeur for the young and radically altered the ability of parents to monitor their children--and children to call on their parents to solve their problems minute by minute.