

Grade School Media & Technology Policy

School policy prohibits the use of cell phones, smartphones, music (e.g. iPods or similar) or tablet devices (e.g. iPads or similar) by Grade School students at all times on school premises.

Grade School Media & Technology Guidelines

Waldorf education seeks to nurture and fully develop each child's imaginative and intellectual capacities. Current research confirms that the capacity for imagination is impaired by repeated exposure to electronic media.

Consistent with Waldorf education's emphasis on learning through direct experience, we believe children, especially in the lower grades (1-5), should be allowed to develop new ideas and attitudes based on real personal interactions, developing capacities that will be needed for later use, without the loss of sensory congruence that technology presents. We have observed that excessive exposure to television, videos, computer games and other visual and sound recordings significantly interferes with our educational work.

Our media & technology guidelines are designed to answer specific questions parents may have regarding recommended permissible exposure to electronic media. We acknowledge the importance of conscious, developmentally appropriate use of electronic media as necessary and as a useful tool in our current times. Thus, as guidance for parents, our media guidelines grow with your child, and will be discussed at parent meetings on a regular basis. You are welcome to contact your child's teacher to obtain detailed information and his or her personal observation of your child as it pertains to media exposure.

Grades 1-3:

We recommend that children in grades 1-3 not be exposed to electronic media in any form in their daily lives. They should not watch television or movies, use video game devices, computers or similar. Ideally, they should not be exposed to radio and recorded music. As well, they should be protected from overhearing news and other potentially disturbing media broadcasts.

Ratified by the Grade School Faculty, April 16th 2013

Grades 4-5:

We recommend that children in grades 4-5 not have access to electronic media (“screens”) on a regular basis and especially not on a school night or morning. They still should not be exposed to or use computer/video games, iPods/audio devices, nor ideally their own cell phone, unless unusual circumstances make it necessary. Carefully monitored introduction to age-appropriate movies may occur occasionally, preferably within the home. Watching videos of themselves (e.g., in class plays) and using electronic media/technology to create videos, artwork, etc., is not recommended at this age.

Grades 6 - 8:

We recommend that middle school students not have access to electronic media during the school week. It may be appropriate for parents to provide a gradual and guided introduction to the use and applications of electronic media, at their discretion, on weekends. During these transition years, exposure to media should be limited, with clear parental guidance and participation, keeping in mind that varying levels of media exposure among members of a class can be socially divisive. Middle school students are entering a period of their lives which is exciting and ground breaking. It is also a time of increasing peer influences and pressure. One student's behaviour may be imitated by his or her peer group or an entire class. We ask parents to recognize this fact and to work with other parents and the teachers to consciously educate our students in relation to these media, entertainment and communication tools.

- **Television and Movies:** The content of TV programs, commercials and movies often work directly against what is brought through the Waldorf curriculum by the teachers. Students should not watch television or movies during the school week, and should never have screen access in their bedrooms. It is important that parents carefully select and monitor any media to which their children are exposed. Many movies rated PG-13 are clearly inappropriate at this age. Parents are urged to preview movies to make their own informed judgments.
- **Video Games:** Children of this age should not have regular access to video games, including online game sites. Video games can be addictive, especially for adolescents, and can adversely impact students' work, as well as the social life of the class. Any occasional exposure should be monitored carefully by parents. Please note that many social networking sites (see below) are also portals to online video games.
- **Music Players:** Any use of music players should be limited and through docking stations rather than headphones, whenever possible. Parents should pay special attention to the lyrics, which may be inappropriate.

- **Computers:** Learning basic keyboarding skills is appropriate during the time period between 7th and 8th grade. Students can use a common program such as "Mavis Beacon".
- **Internet Access:** Children of this age should have only limited access to the internet (including e-mail, instant messaging) or use of a computer; such access and use should be carefully monitored, and for limited time periods. Please password-protect computers in the home to control access. Do not allow computer use when a parent is not at home. Please locate computers in open areas of the home, and never in children's bedrooms. Awareness needs to continually be brought to the student's attention, both from parents and teachers, that short and fast forms of communication are no substitute for in-depth, personal conversation.
- **Social Networking Sites:** Current examples are "Snapchat", "Facebook", "Twitter", and "Instagram". Though currently prevalent as a communication vehicle, they decrease social interaction in real time. These artificially created social arenas are huge distractions from a student's creative and productive time in daily life, and are not recommended before high school. It is highly important that parents are educating themselves on the use and abuse of social media in its ever-evolving forms, in particular, the dangers such as cyber-bullying, sexual exploitation, internet visibility, and loss of privacy.
- **Cell Phones:** Research has indicated that cell phone use may adversely affect brain activity. Cell phones with smartphone capability provide unlimited, often unsupervised internet access, as well as acting as a social status symbol. Parents are advised to delay their child's use of cell phones outside school, and, when absolutely necessary, to consider curtailing data plans to limit internet access.