

MEDIA POLICY

Waldorf Schools are dedicated to nurturing the child's capacities for imagination, healthy emotional development, independent thinking and positive action.

In recognizing the harmful effects that media have on the development of these capacities, SWS is committed to supporting the development and maintenance of media-reduced, age-appropriate environments for the children that attend our school.

Underlying this commitment is a firm belief that electronic media affects child development regardless of the content. The passive condition and the electronic stimulation of these activities cannot be reconciled with the rhythms of nature. Electronic media lack the human presence so vital to the nourishment of the child, replacing it with electro-magnetic forces that inhibit healthy sleeping and eating patterns. A child's need for creative play and his/her ability to create images from within is suppressed by the mechanically produced imagery of the television or computer screen.

Experience at SWS (and other Waldorf schools) shows that individuals who are shielded from media at home are more likely to experience, and contribute to, a positive learning and social interactions. Media exposure can also be indirect, such as overhearing an adult conversation about a news story, or conversations between other children about a popular video game or movie. Younger children learn through imitation and are naturally more receptive to the influences around them, and must be shielded where they cannot protect themselves.

For the purposes of this policy, media are considered to include:

- Televisions
- Computers
- Video and electronic games
- Tablets
- Cell phones
- Radios & music players

NOTE: While music itself is not "media," parental discretion is expected in terms of content and appropriateness.

Media Policy Goals

Based on this commitment to healthy experience, it is the goal of SWS that all children from parent and child through age nine be media free.

It is also the goal of SWS that all children are appropriately limited (guided and monitored) in their exposure to media including television, videos, movies, or other

electronic media such as games, computers, internet, cell phones, social media and emails. Appropriate limits include the adult's responsibility to monitor content, restricting scenes of explicit violence, sexualized or adult content, and genres that may overstimulate the nervous system or impact sleep patterns, such as horror. It may be beneficial to watch along with your adolescent or pre-teen child to enjoy the experience as a family, and see how the content impacts them. See the accompanying table for details.

SWS fully recognizes that the challenge presented in the course of achieving these goals may be substantial and that it may vary significantly from family to family. The school also recognizes that achieving these goals in a satisfactory way will require an ongoing commitment of time and energy both on the part of the school and on the part of the parents.

With this in mind, SWS is prepared to work actively with parents and guardians to develop practical, collaborative solutions and meaningful, personalized support that will move us steadily closer to realizing a healthy, nurturing environment for our children.

Social Media

This is a section that was added in 2021, as use of social media and its effect on the development of youth has increased significantly.

Social media is defined as social websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking. Some of the more popular social media sites are Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, YouTube, Discord and TikTok.

Multiple studies have found a strong link between heavy social media and an increased risk for depression, anxiety, loneliness, self-harm, and even suicidal thoughts.
(<https://www.helpguide.org/articles/mental-health/social-media-and-mental-health.htm>)

Addition to the list above social media may promote negative experiences such as:

- Inadequacy about your life or appearance.
- Fear of missing out (FOMO)
- Isolation
- Depression & Anxiety
- Cyberbully
- Self absorption
- Narrow mindedness as algorithm is set to choose things that you already agree with

It is recommended that students do not engage in social media while enrolled in SWS. This will provide a healthier relationship for all students, for as soon as a few students interact on social media others feel left out and the pressure to connect on these platforms increases.

It is also recommended that texting only occurs for older students (grade 7 & 8) for formal communication not social chatting as it is viewed as social media and has negative effects. Parents should with set parameters on when communication occurs, what gets communicated and how long they are on it for.

Media Support Plan

Every effort will be made to assist families in working towards fulfilling the goals of the Media Policy, so that everyone can benefit from the gifts that a healthy Waldorf classroom atmosphere provides. Creating and keeping mutual agreements that directly support these goals is a necessity.

Support initiatives include:

- Teachers will speak with each family as part of the annual November parent teacher interview to renew the family's commitment to the policy and provide support.
- Discussions will be held in class meetings once a year to discuss the progress of the class as a whole and offer support and resources appropriate to the age of the class.
- The school will maintain a bibliography of information sources on the effects of media and creating healthy environments, including articles to photocopy, links, and a parent lending library.
- Parenting Series talks – all are beneficial, there is one specifically on the effects of media on the child.
- Feel free to talk to your child's teacher about media in your household. The teacher may also contact you if he/she notices that media is influencing your child's school experience.

The school can and will commit to working to a point of agreement with parents on development and management strategies around limiting media in the home, however it is up to the parent(s) to keep the agreement. Ultimately, that is where the responsibility for determining a healthy environment for children rests.

Parents will be informed of the details of the school's Media Policy at the time of registration and will be required to make a commitment to working towards its goals. If a child's media exposure is having a detrimental effect on the classroom experience, a meeting will be scheduled with the family, the child's teacher and, if appropriate, the principal, to determine the source of the exposure and explain its effects. A probationary period of no longer than six weeks will be set outlining specific goals determined at that meeting. If, after the probationary period, these goals are not being met, it may be considered grounds for suspension and/or expulsion.

Recommended Reading

Links:

Research and articles:

<http://www.waldorfresearchinstitute.org/research-technology/>

Susan Johnson "Strangers in our Homes"

<https://www.catholiceducation.org/en/culture/media/strangers-in-our-homes-tv-and-our-children-s-minds.html>

Books available in parent lending library:

David Elkind *The Hurried Child*

Dr. Jane M. Healy *Endangered Minds: Why Our Children Can't Think ,Your Child's Growing Mind*

Joseph C. Pearce *The Future does not Compute Evolution's End*

Neil Postman *The Disappearance of Childhood Amusing Ourselves to Death*

Marie Winn *Television, Computers, And Family Life*

Media Policy at a Glance

According to a 2017 study by the Canadian Pediatric Society 85% of children aged 5 and under are spending too much time on screens. We have listed SWS guidelines alongside those of the Canadian Pediatric Society.

Squamish Waldorf School	Recommendation	Canadian Pediatric Society	Recommendation
0 - 6	None	Age 0 - 2	None
		Age 3 - 5	Less than 1 hour/day
		Age 5+	Less than 2 hours/day

6 - 8	None		
9 - 11	Age appropriate and limited, qualities of friendship, nature, adventure, tension-free		
11 - 13	Age appropriate and limited, qualities of tension, mystery, magic		
14+	Age appropriate open, social media can be introduced		

Rationale

Children in early years learn best (richly and intensely) through face to face communication. Healthy routines are more easily established in the early years. Overexposure in these years leads to much higher screen use later in life, as well as has a negative impact on weight, sleep patterns, school readiness, inattentiveness and less ability to be soothed. Early exposure can lead to potential language delays and can have a negative effect on executive function.

Appendix to Social Media Policy

Here are websites that may be helpful for when your child does engage in social media.

Video Tutorial on iPhone Parental controls

https://www.google.com/search?q=tutorial+of+iphone+parental+controls&rlz=1C1GCEU_enCA831CA831&oq=tutorial+of+iphone+parental+contro&aqs=chrome.1.69i57j33i22i29i30i9.7375j0j4&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8#kpvalbx=_gKSIYLijFNDE-gTM_YGIDg58

Best 10 Parental Control Apps from consumers advocate

https://www.consumersadvocate.org/parental-control-apps/a/best-parental-control-apps?pd=true&keyword=parent%20control&gca_campaignid=1439470442&gca_adgroupid=70956013162&gca_matchtype=p&gca_network=g&gca_device=c&gca_adposition=&gca_loc_interest_ms=&gca_loc_physical_ms=9001587&gclid=Cj0KCQjw7pKFBhDUARIsAFUoMDZGoXEQZP5rfvKAm4YXHvQlwmWNV0_MmMYV-HT3THQEZVhYHuSkhL0aAug-EALw_wcB

“The Circle”

The Circle device operates by inspecting connections between devices in the home and Internet sites and makes decisions to allow or deny traffic based on the destination.

- This allows a knowledgeable adult to define policies for usage centrally and push them out to the different devices, including the ability to track what happens on the different devices and where they are (physically)

<https://www.businessinsider.com/circle-home-plus-review>

Suggestions to consider for home:

- Don't let your child take her/his device into their bedrooms
 - Set a clear downtime (from 1h before bedtime and late in the morning or afternoon)
 - It is well researched that screen time before bed affects sleep patterns negatively.
 - Set clear time limits for all types of apps (Games, Entertainment, etc.)
 - Negotiate a few down-days per week, where the child does not use the device at all.
 - Draw clear “lines in the sand” that you can negotiate from with your kids. If you're soft on where you stand, they will assume you are not serious. From a clear line you can create a co-operative relationship where you both work together to find a healthy middle.

Review & edits: June 2020