



Media Policy

The media policy is a contract between the school and parents to limit children's exposure to media. This allows us to fulfill our mission of nurturing the child's capacity for imagination, healthy emotional development, independent thinking and positive action.

Overview

The harmful effects of media on the development of these capacities is well researched and reported in numerous studies. As such, SWS is committed to supporting the development and maintenance of media-reduced, age-appropriate environments for 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 lacks 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 the ability to create images from within is suppressed by mechanically-produced imagery of television and computer screens.

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, positive learning and social interactions.

Forms of Media Exposure

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

- Television
- Computers
- Video and electronic games
- Tablets
- Cell phones
- Radio & music

Media exposure can also be indirect, such as overhearing an adult conversation about a news story, or conversations between other children about a video game or movie. Younger children learn through imitation and are naturally receptive to influences around them, and must be shielded where they cannot protect themselves.

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

Media Policy Goals

It is the goal of SWS that children be media free until age nine. Additionally, children aged 10+ should be appropriately limited in their exposure to media (television, videos, movies, games, computers,

internet, cell phones, social media and emails) during the school week. Parents have a 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. Watch along with your adolescent or pre-teen child to enjoy the experience as a family, see how the content impacts them and discuss any questions. Refer to the accompanying table for details.

SWS recognizes the challenges associated with achieving these goals, and that an ongoing commitment of time and energy is required both on the part of the school and on the part of 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.

Media Support Plan

Every effort will be made to support families to fulfill the goals of the Media Policy, so everyone can benefit from the gifts a healthy Waldorf classroom provides. Creating and keeping mutual agreements that 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 Media 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;
- **Information sources** on the effects of media and creating healthy environments, including articles to photocopy, links, and a parent lending library will be made available by the school;
- **Parenting Series** talks will be hosted by the school. All are beneficial, and there is one specifically addressing the effects of media on the child.
- **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.

Our Commitment

The school commits to working to a point of agreement with parents on developing strategies to limit media in the home, however it is up to parents 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 maintaining 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.

**Thank you to the Nelson Waldorf School for sharing their Media Policy with us.*

Recommended Reading

Research and articles:

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

Commercial-Free Childhood.org: 7 Parent tested tips to unplug and play:

<http://www.commercialfreechildhood.org/resource/real-life-strategies-reducing-children%E2%80%99s-screen-time>

<http://www.screenfree.org/additional-resources>

The Dangers of Distracted Parenting – the Atlantic, July/August 2018

https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2018/07/the-dangers-of-distracted-parenting/561752/?utm_source=fb&fbclid=IwAR3M06jg_yqgvdXXv-LsLiEWc67d6Ve81xwQ001Txb61_wYuKTdm_-v0pXw

Susan Johnson “Strangers in our Homes”

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

Screen Smart:

http://www.screensmart.ca/screens_health

Marie Winn, “The Plug-In Drug”

<http://www.mariewinn.com/plugin.htm>

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: Brain Development and Learning From Birth to Adolescence*

Joseph C. Pearce

- *The Future does not Compute*
- *Evolution's End*

Neil Postman

- *The Disappearance of Childhood*
- *Amusing Ourselves to Death*

Our Media Policy at a Glance

According to a 2017 study by the Canadian Pediatric Society, 85 per cent of children aged five 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		

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 having a negative impact on weight, sleep patterns, school readiness, attentiveness and ability to be soothed. Early exposure can lead to potential language delays and can have a negative effect on executive function.