

MEDIA POLICY

School Philosophy

As a Waldorf elementary school, protecting the kingdom of childhood is core to our mission. We seek to create an environment where imagination, relationships, learning, and play can flourish. In our view, less exposure to media is better for the growing child, and little-to-no media supports the education we are providing. We recommend no media exposure through fifth grade, and strictly monitored access once it *is* introduced, ideally not before middle school.

Our opinions and suggestions regarding media grow out of our view of child development, our collective experience with children, and our mission as a Waldorf elementary school. We find that the less screen time children have, the more receptive they are to the stories brought by their teachers. We also see that, with little-to-no screen time, it is easier for children to enter the imaginative play we consider essential to their development. We see more authentic personal connections. We see a stronger social fabric within classes. We have also observed a correlation between increased levels of attention span, centeredness, and grounded behavior among children who have little to no media exposure. Lastly, research about brain development in children supports this view. (Please contact your child's class teacher for further reading.)

Media is an unfolding reality of our time. As parents and teachers we are being asked to participate in an ongoing conversation about the pros and cons of this new "media-rich" world. Indeed, being open to and engaging in this conversation seems required of us to navigate this uncharted territory. Thus, another central component of our school philosophy around media is the importance of talking together about it.

We recognize that one of the reasons families join Waldorf schools is to find an environment where their values about the media issue can be supported by the school and community. To this end, we communicate our recommendations and provide information through class conversations and parent forums so that parents can be educated and informed.

**Recommended viewing: Marin Waldorf School Website: Media & Waldorf Education*

School-Wide Recommendation for Play Dates and Sleepovers

- No media/electronics during play dates and/or sleepovers through fifth grade.
- In middle school years, we recommend open communication and agreements about screen time and content among parents prior to play dates. We encourage openness on the part of all parents to honor no screen time if requested by another parent. Good communication around this issue is vital for the social health of the class.

Practices Recommended for Implementation at Home for Children in Grades 1-5

- Upholding a no-screen-time policy at home during the school week.
- Supervising screen time and monitoring media content if it does happen.
- Installing security software on home computers.
- No social media.
- Encouraging books on tape rather than movies.
- Making movie-watching a family time versus an alone time for the child.

- Modeling independence from screen time and cell use when you're with your child.

Practices Recommended for Implementation at Home for Children in Grades 6-8

- Upholding very limited screen time, if any, during the school week.
- Monitoring amount of time spent on media and devices.
- Monitoring content of all media.
- Installing security software on home computers.
- No social media is ideal. In the cases of exposure to social media, we recommend that it is both limited and very carefully monitored.
- Carefully hand-picking movies and watching them with your child while encouraging conversation after viewing, so your child can better "digest" what was taken in.
- Providing instruction for how to use media as a research tool for educational purposes.

Policies Enforced on Campus

- No cell phones, iPods, smart watches, or electronics are to be used on campus by students at any time.
- No conversations about media or films in the classroom to avoid creating feelings of exclusion.

Media Misuse

In cases of media misuse by Siskiyou School students such as cyberbullying, unwanted sexting, etc. in which Siskiyou School students are impacted, the school reserves the right to take disciplinary action on a case-by-case basis.

Communication among Parents Regarding Media

Open communication and mutual respect among parents will foster a strong social fabric in the class and a healthy sense of community. We encourage open communication among parents of a class about their choices and values related to media. We encourage conversation, a "Do ask! Do tell!" approach. We encourage parents, led by the class teacher, to make agreements as a class and with one another regarding media. As Waldorf educators our wish is that when children get together outside of school, they just play, entirely media free. If, however, as host of a playdate, you plan to have the children watch a movie, check in with the other parent. Children are so different; what might feel fine to one child may be terrifying to another. Families are equally as diverse; what might feel fine to one family may be unacceptable to another. We want to spare children from feeling caught in our adult struggles about this. We must be willing to have the hard conversations with one another, so that the children can just be children. Key to this is acknowledging our own fears and concerns and talking together.