

Appendix A: Purpose and Context of the Media Policy

The South Shore Waldorf School electronic media policy is designed to support the objectives of Waldorf education, and to be workable in the homes and lives of school families. Parents have consistently found that reducing the influence of media on their family life has encouraged family members to develop a keener interest in one another, enlivened and deepened their communication, and fostered a deeper connection to the world around them.

The school expects that each parent understands and supports the media policy for the good of their own children and their children's peers.

All members of the SSWS community depend on the parents of SSWS students to help create in their homes an environment that supports and reinforces Waldorf education. Each family's respect for the media policy has a far-reaching positive effect on the students' educational and social experience in school. A failure to make best efforts to respect the media policy has a correspondingly negative impact on our own children and their classmates. The impact of media exposure is passed on to other children, reverberating through the community and showing up in other children's play, attitudes, language, and inner life. It is therefore important for the health of the entire SSWS community for each family to comply with the media policy.

To these ends, the school reserves the right to require students to reduce or alter their use of media if that exposure is undermining their education or the education of others.

For purposes of this policy, "Electronic Media" includes television, movies, computers and all other video and audio devices, including cell-phones, tablets, personal digital assistants, video games, and music/MP3 players. The scope of this definition may well change as media technology and its applications evolve.

While SSWS's media policy specifically governs interaction with certain media, care and judgment also should be applied to permitting exposure to media that is not expressly covered by the media policy, including print media (newspapers, magazines, and catalogs) and radio (news and recorded music). Developmentally inappropriate exposure to any media can have harmful effects and may create a level of "background noise" in students' lives that interferes with their direct connection to their environment and is thus antithetical to the principles of Waldorf education.

A Media Policy That Grows With Your Child(ren)

Children enrolled in the Early Childhood programs at the South Shore Waldorf School should be given the gift of a media-free childhood. Teachers are available and willing to assist with transitions to a media-free environment.

Consistent with Waldorf education's emphasis on learning through direct experience, children in the lower grades (1-4) should be allowed to develop new ideas and attitudes based on real personal interactions, without the distortion of mediation through technology. Children in the lower grades should not be exposed to electronic media in their daily lives.

During grades 5 to 7 it is appropriate for students to have a gradual and guided introduction to the applications and use of electronic media. During these transition years, use and exposure to media should be very moderate, under clear parental guidance and participation, and not work to the detriment of the social and educational climate of the class. Media exposure can be a socially divisive influence in these

years and often works directly against what is brought in the classroom. Children in these grades should not be exposed to electronic media during the school week, and should have, at most, limited exposure on weekends and vacations.

Implementing the Media Policy at School

The use of cell phones for any purpose by students is not permitted on campus between 8:00am and dismissal time, during school activities or on school sponsored trips without a teacher's permission. During school hours, all cell phones must be turned off. This policy extends to adults as well. On campus, phones may only be used as telephones, and never for Internet access, as cameras, gaming or audio devices.

Cell phones may never be used by students inside of school buildings.

Note: If a SSWS student will be bringing a cell phone to school, the phone must be kept in a backpack, not on the child's person, and must be registered with the school office. Personal audio or video devices (such as music/ MP3 players, PDAs, cameras) are not permitted on SSWS's campus, during school activities, or on any school trips without a teacher's permission.

When determined by a teacher to be appropriate, media may be used in some instances for supervised educational purposes.

Implementing the Media Policy Outside of School

It is essential to the successful implementation of the media policy that parents guide their children in the appropriate uses of electronic media outside of the school environment. We encourage parents to keep an open dialogue with their children, other class parents, teachers, and advisors regarding media. Specifically, parents should speak to teachers either privately or with other parents in class or other group meetings about their questions and challenges related to media, so that together they can work out viable approaches.

Parents who are interested in a Media Resource Group, which will discuss media impact on students, families and classes, are encouraged to contact their class teacher for information.