

Mindfulness Media Packet



From the Family Handbook

Media

As an integral part of its mission, the school takes a strong stance against the inappropriate exposure of children to television, videos, computers, tablets and other electronic devices that undermine and work directly against the healthy growth of essential learning capacities in the formative years of childhood.

Teachers strongly advise that students do not watch television, movies or videos in the home and refrain from operating any handheld devices or video games.

Waldorf education strives to nurture and protect the development of the imagination, which is the vehicle for learning and growth. In general, Waldorf schools strongly discourage your children from television viewing, using video games, watching videos, and using computers, tablets, or hand-held devices, as exposure to images anywhere that are grotesque and caricatured rather than beautiful and wholesome affects children deeply and they carry these images and gestures into their play and social interactions with other children.

Research has shown that watching television and videos and using handheld devices shortens childrens' attention spans and reduces their powers of imagination. The violence, sex, and cynical language often displayed in media affect the child's own behavior, and there is strong evidence that exposure to media has a negative affect on cognitive development in children. For these reasons, we believe the children should be protected from screen use.

Computers and Hand-Held Devices - Children learn best through direct physical contact with the world around them and activities that engage the body, soul and spirit. Staring at screens can affect the musculature of the eyes which need movement. Research has shown that cursive writing has a direct positive effect on brain development.

Car Radios, Music etc. - Ideally, the ride to school is quiet and undisturbed by news of the world or stimulating music and radio talk. Children need a chance to awaken slowly and to be with their thoughts and daydreams. It has been suggested that exposure to the heavy beat of modern music can lead to premature adolescence.

Often new parents wonder whether eliminating media is realistic, and whether other families are actually complying with the school's recommendation. The answer is Yes, and Yes! Families who eliminate or minimize media are quickly rewarded with the positive changes that come when children are left to explore their own imaginations. And, community parents, who are making sacrifices to keep their children at the school, also depend on your cooperation regarding this issue.

Mindful Media Agreement

I understand and acknowledge that the Academy at the PARC has the following policies regarding mindful use of media and electronic devices. I also understand that it is an important objective for the school community that all parents and community members remain mindful of these policies.

- As an integral part of its mission, **the school takes a strong stance** against the inappropriate exposure of children to television, videos, computers, tablets and other electronic devices that undermine and work directly against the healthy growth of essential learning capacities in the formative years of childhood.
- **Teachers strongly advise** that students have minimal time watching television, movies or videos in the home and refrain from operating any handheld devices or video games, and on non-school nights.
- We recognize that students' use of cell-phones, tablets, gaming devices, iphones, ipads, itouches, smart watches and other similar electronic devices **is highly distracting, disruptive, and counterproductive to the culture of learning at the Academy** and the healthy social environment we strive to create for the children.
- **Students shall not bring any such electronic device to school or to school events.** If such a device is inadvertently brought to school, the

teacher shall hold it for safekeeping and it shall be returned to the student's parent or guardian at the end of the school day. Also, **students shall not bring such devices to school events** (regardless of whether they are held on or off campus) including festivals, camping trips, and Parent Council events.

- The Academy at the PARC provides children with a **unique haven** from the pervasiveness of these devices, and many parents choose to enroll for precisely that reason.
- **Parents are asked to honor and respect this policy, and to support the children, teachers, our community and the education you are paying for by reducing, and preferably eliminating exposure to screens and media for your children, to the fullest extent possible.**

By signing below, I acknowledge that I am aware of and understand the above Mindful Media policies. To the greatest extent feasible for our family, I agree to strive to support the Academy at the PARC's Mindful Media policies.

Parents who are newly exploring this issue should be aware that many school families choose Waldorf education precisely because their values closely match the school's philosophy regarding elimination of media influences, and they seek an environment and community that expressly shares these values. In other words, our school and parent community indeed depend on the cooperation of all families regarding this issue.

Often, parents of older children understandably feel that the issue of media exposure grows more complex as children grow older. For parents confronting this issue, our teachers are interested in being helpful and supportive in any way they can, and the Academy presents parent education opportunities that help us integrate these ideals with the realities of modern life.

Resources - Our outstanding faculty is the best resource for more information, and many fellow parents are also happy to share their insights. In addition, below are just a few resources that have been recommended by our teachers and found to be very useful to our parents:

[*Heaven on Earth: A Handbook for Parents of Young Children*](#), by Sharifa Oppenheimer

[*You are Your Child's First Teacher*](#), by Rahima Baldwin Dancy

[*Simplicity Parenting*](#), by Kim John Payne

[*Understanding Waldorf Education: Teaching from the Inside Out*](#), by Jack Petrash

[*Peaceful Parents, Happy Kids*](#), by Dr. Laura Markham

[*The Plug-In Drug*](#), by Marie Winn

[*Incarnating Child*](#), by Joan Salter

[*Wired Child*](#), by Richard Freed, Ph.D.

[*Screen Schooled*](#), by Joe Clement and Matt Miles

[*Glow Kids: How Screen Addiction Is Hijacking Our Kids - and How to Break the Trance*](#), by Nicholas Kardaras

Additional Resources

[Screen Time and the Waldorf Difference: Parent-to-Parent Panel](#)

90 minute Zoom recording from summer, 2020 -- very potent!

Marin Mindful Media Video

9 minutes. Packs a punch. We started the Parent Panel above with this video:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=124&v=ge5G_cYpj8g&feature=emb_logo

Childhood 2.0 <https://www.childhood2movie.com/>

Social Dilemma <https://www.thesocialdilemma.com/>

Parent Education Series Recordings with Waldorf Tampa Bay Faculty:

[Supporting Your Child's Waldorf Education at Home: **Rhythm & Discipline** with Connie Manson](#)

[**Imagination & Mindful Media** with Melissa Wood](#)

[Core Values of Waldorf Education: Truth, Beauty & Goodness with Connie Manson](#)

Articles:

[No Tech in Silicon](#)

[A Silicon Valley School that Doesn't Compute](#)

Survival Tips for Screen-Aware Parents

Ok, you are ready to limit (or eliminate) the screens – so now what?

Here are some ideas that really work to get through travel, car trips, and everyday life!

1. Lead by example (See the next page, *Tips for Parents Managing Their Own Screen-Time*).
2. Educate yourself so that you feel confident about your family's approach to screen-time. It is much easier to hold limits when you are fully grounded about the importance of limiting screen-time for your child's well-being.
3. Be patient. If children are used to being entertained by screens, they may need time to transition into creating their own fun. But they will. Give them time.
4. Have art supplies and open ended playthings available to your child.
5. Be available to get children started with their play. You may need to watch them recreate a puppet show or draw with them for a while, and eventually they will surprise you with how much they are able to play independently.
6. Nothing is better than time outdoors! Encourage activity! Sidewalk chalk, jump ropes, mud-pie kitchens! The options are endless.

7. For your own sanity, minimize toys that beep, flash, need batteries or frequent help from parents.
8. Find out what handwork or art projects are happening at school and support them at home. Hours can be spent finger-knitting and modeling beeswax. Older children can do even more sophisticated projects.
9. Suggest a project with a goal. ("Aunt Sally would really love a new finger-knitted bracelet!" "We need to draw a picture to send to Grandpa."). Making a card or something in the mail to a loved one is especially fun for children.
10. Spend time with other like-minded families. Thank goodness for our school community!
11. For long car-trips, create a "busy bag" with crayons, paper, yarn for finger-knitting, modeling beeswax, small finger puppets, tracing paper, reusable stickers, string for string games, etc. Play I-spy, license plate bingo, sing, etc.!
12. For long car-trips, some parents use Sparkle Stories, gentle audio stories that are enjoyed by many Waldorf families. www.sparklestories.com
13. When traveling, go minimalist. Your child will have more fun playing with the trial size soaps at the hotel or the things in Grandma's cupboards than the suitcase full of toys you bring from home.

Tips for Parents for Managing Their Own Screen-Time

What we model for children matters!

Being mindful about screen-time is important for adults too. Consider if some of these ideas might work for you!

1. Make the common areas of the home screen-free. Keep TVs, computers, laptops and other devices in areas where children don't spend much

time, such as a parent's office or other room.

2. Better yet – get rid of the TV all-together! (Pretty much anything worth watching is available online, on Netflix or via similar services anyway).
3. Limit adults' TV and screen time to when children are not present (or are sleeping in another part of the home).
4. Use an old-fashioned alarm clock instead of using your phone as an alarm clock. (This avoids having your phone in the bedroom).
5. Keep your phone on silent as much as possible to avoid getting distracted by every new text or alert.
6. Consider opting out of social media.
7. Consider using your stand-alone GPS, camera, calculator, etc. when you need those functions, as opposed to using your phone for those purposes.
8. Limit the apps on your phone. For example, resist installing apps for social media or email so you aren't able or tempted to use your phone for those purposes. Instead, check in with those sites when you can intentionally set aside time on the computer.
9. If you use web based email, such as Yahoo mail or Gmail, set a bookmark to go straight to the sign-in page and avoid having to potentially get distracted by other content.
10. Give yourself a bedtime, and do your best to honor it. Parents need sleep too.