



GREENWOOD SCHOOL

Media Guidelines

Since Greenwood School is a place that strives to allow children to experience life as authentically and as creatively as possible, the faculty asks parents to be very conscious of the effect of mediated experiences and, therefore, the use of media on their children.

21st century life is full of possibilities to cause things to happen without exerting or using one's own energy. Dishwashers, washing machines, electric saws and so on have replaced the need to use coordination skills and physical energy. Thus the growing child has little opportunity through work to experience the capability to "make something happen" through his/her own body.

This is not meant as a romanticization of the physical work of the past, but rather to point out that, apart from healthy play, children do not "need" their hands and feet in the same way as they did in former centuries.

What we see is that children today often need extra opportunities at school,, to remedy the consequences of a life where the child's physical energy is not 'needed' in a meaningful way.

A similar phenomenon is observed in the imaginative and cognitive life of our children. Early exposure to media such as televisions, movie screens, computer screens and video games, take away a child's opportunity to experience him or herself as someone who can generate games, stories, and activities that are interesting and exciting purely through his/her own energy and creative forces.

Children who continually have the opportunity to delegate the generating of interest and entertainment to a foreign energy, i.e. electricity, very often do not have a healthy relationship to their own will and creativity.

Others, usually adults, have generated the pictures that the child otherwise would have generated inwardly and independently, others have decided what the picture looks like, and others will have interpreted the story or activity for the child. This means that images already filled with the subjectivity and interpretations of an adult are imposed on the child. A standardization of imagery takes place and there is a huge danger, that an uniformity in the inner life of children takes place. Furthermore, the adults creating these images neither know nor love the children at which the images are aimed!

Characters in TV shows become points of reference for children, heroes are created not by story tellers who can see a child's face and thus react accordingly, but by anonymous strangers who have no personal care for the inner life of a child.

These characters are mostly caricatures of human beings. They tend to be undifferentiated and mostly represent one particular aspect of a human character in an exaggerated form. Most comedy programs are based on that premise. Thus the child is subjected to a very reduced picture of a human being, which is very often the subject of ridicule from his fellow human beings. Cartoons take this a step further – not only is the character a simplified version of a human being or animal, but also the appearance of the person or animal has been reduced completely to a caricature. Exposure to these characters can lead to cynicism and a deep sense of disappointment in the child from a very early age.

Video games create an illusion of activity and power that can be extremely misleading to a child. He/she experiences himself as someone able to make figures do skateboarding tricks, crash cars and even kill people.

Without criteria based on real experiences, there is a danger that the child will grow up in a world full of illusions and mediated experiences and will not be able to differentiate between real and virtual experiences.

It is not our goal to shield the children completely from the world that they are growing up in, but rather to allow them enough time to experience themselves, know themselves and to have been creative, before gradually allowing them to get to know all the amazing technological advances that are available to us today.

Being able to use computers as tools but not being completely dependant on them, for example, is extremely important. The child who has heard a story told by candlelight, will know what to do, when the electricity goes off and the TV is no longer available! The child who has played outside and pretended to be as many characters as possible, will be able to entertain himself/herself when the video games are broken.

There is freedom in the knowledge that we can generate our lives through our own forces rather than through a foreign energy that might not be available to us at any given moment.

We ask therefore, that children be exposed as little as possible to media such as TVs, video games and computer *especially* from KG – 5th Grade and thereafter *only* in moderation and with consultation with the teachers. This is especially important during the school week, as these experiences counteract the work done at school by the teachers with the children. In fact, this kind of education and growing up with media is a *contradictio in adjectio*. Joining this school means a decision to free the children as much as possible from the influences of artificially mediated images and experiences and a commitment to allowing the curriculum, presented through the teachers, to nourish the children unhindered.

We realize how difficult it is to shield children completely from these technologies, but we also know how detrimental it is to a class, when there are children present who are strongly affected by media exposure. It sometimes becomes necessary for parents and the school to part ways, if an agreement cannot be reached on media use.

Through conversation and cooperation, we hope that we, as the teachers and you, as the parents, can provide an atmosphere for the children, that will enable them to grow to be healthy, free thinking and free acting adults.

Meinir Davies (Faculty Chair – on behalf of the Faculty of Greenwood School)