



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 with their children.

Waldorf education and the experience of Waldorf trained teachers - as well as other teachers, researchers and medical professionals - have identified that early exposure to media such as televisions, movie screens, computer screens and video games negatively affect a child's physical, emotional and academic development. These devices, so central to our current culture, limit 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 regularly engage in these image technologies often do not have a healthy relationship to their own creativity and initiative.

Others, usually adults, have created 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. This form of image life, that is "ready-made," pacifies a child's own creative activity. In addition, a standardization and uniformity of imaging creeps into the inner life of child. 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 one-dimensional, rather than a "full-blooded" picture of a human being. Cartoons take this a step further. Not only is the cartoon character a simplified version of a human being or animal, but the appearance of the person or animal has been reduced 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 their authentic experience, and what can be learned from such experience, 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 as creative individuals, before gradually introducing them to the amazing technological advances that are available to us today.

We ask therefore, that children be exposed as little as possible to media such as TVs, dvd's, video and video games, and computers - *especially* from kindergarten through 5th grade. After 5th grade we expect that parents will ensure that media exposure does not take place on school nights, or the evening before a school day, and that exposure be *only* in moderation. Media experiences during the school week counteract the teacher's instructional methods and program with the children. Greenwood's teachers want to engage with parents around these questions individually and at class parent evenings. Joining Greenwood school means a resolve to free 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 directly and unhindered.

As a child progresses through the grades, the ability to use computers as tools, but not being inappropriately dependent on them, is extremely important. By 7th and 8th grade it is important that our children learn to keyboard, and learn the fundamentals of computer use as they grow in their capacity to understand this significant technology, in preparation for high school entry.

We realize how difficult it is to shield younger 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.

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 fully develop their capacities, unhindered, so that they can grow to become engaged, empathetic, literate, free thinking, and responsible adults.