

Media

(excerpt from MWS Family Handbook, 2019-2020)

Teachers and staff at Madison Waldorf School know that most children are exposed to at least some media/electronic experiences. These include TV, films, video, computer games, Internet (including social media). We also know that, typically, parents at our school expect and assume their child's classmates' exposure to media is monitored and regulated. The following statements reflect the school's position on this important topic in our community. We encourage an ongoing conversation among parents and teachers for broad agreement on media at Madison Waldorf School.

We believe that:

Children are affected by electronic exposure in various ways.

Their behavior in play and social situations, the learning environment of the classroom, and children's integration of content from their lessons are affected by such exposure. Daily experiences and images are integrated during sleep. With electronic stimulation and the strong visual and sensory experiences of electronic media, the benefits of Waldorf Education can be undermined.

Children are imitative. It is common to see children acting out characters and actions from movies and video games. Consider how your child's exposure to media might affect the kind and quality of their play. Children's free imagination is valuable; media interferes with it by substituting commercial or adult images for the child's own imagination about a story or scene. Exposure to media, in order to occupy your child while you prepare dinner or do other household chores or take a break, comes into the classroom. If the children in a classroom have had media exposure between the end of school and the start of the next day, we can see the impact on them, in their play and learning, the next day. The teacher's ability to bring reverence, respect, and other human values, along with the goals of learning academic content, is influenced by that exposure.

Restricting media exposure allows the images the children experience during the day in stories, artistic work, movement, speech and poetry to continue to work in them for the next day's review and/or development. In our school, we deliberately open children to the world through their senses. When children get exposure to ugly, parodied, and mechanical sense experiences, they become vulnerable. Consider the contradiction of exposing children to media in this way and then bringing those same children to a Waldorf school.

Our policies are:

Families should restrict media exposure, especially on school nights. Visual images (TV, computer, YouTube, movies) should be particularly avoided after school and before sleep. (See below regarding the pedagogical issue related to sleep.) Restricting media exposure means that no media exposure on school days and nights is the goal.

Tolerance for our children's media exposure varies considerably. Before allowing your own child to share movies, YouTube, or video games with classmates and friends, it is considerate to get permission from the parents of those children.

Silence all cell phones before entering school. While on the school premises, parents should use cell phones judiciously.

Teachers may request that a student be picked up by a parent during the school day if media exposure has interfered with the child's ability to participate actively in the school day or if their behavior interferes with other students' learning.