



MEDIA-CONSCIOUS PARENTING AT THE GARDEN SCHOOL

The Garden School is dedicated to nurturing each child's capacity for creative imagination, independent thinking, and positive action. Our efforts to foster students' healthy emotional development and meaningful relationships with their environment are undermined by encounters with media which separate children from authentic experience and promote a distorted, developmentally inappropriate, and consumerist view of the world. Students learn best to use electronic media as a resource and tool when these media are introduced after children have developed a rich experiential foundation.

The school expects that parents understand and support the media policy for the good of their own children and their children's peers. 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, etc.

Kindergarten: Young children at the The Garden 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.

Grades 1-4: Children in grades 1-4 should be closely supervised and monitored while exposed to media in their daily lives. Exposure should ideally be limited to a maximum of 2 hours per week., with no media at all during the school week.

Grades 5-8: In the upper grades, it is appropriate for students to have a gradual and guided introduction to the applications and use of electronic media. Students should use no electronic media during the school week, and exposure on weekends and vacations should be limited to no more than 1 hour per day.

The reasons for this have to do with the physical and psychological effects of the medium on the developing child, so "educational" quality of programming is not considered to be a redeeming factor. Research shows that media exposure, especially in the early years, hampers the development of the child's imagination -- a faculty which is central to the healthy development of the intellect.

By delaying a child's exposure to electronic media until the student's will and feeling life have reached a certain level of maturity, we hope to encourage an enlightened, inquiry-based relationship to technology.

We acknowledge that this can be a difficult transition, especially if the student has had a lot of media interaction prior to attendance. The school, and the families in our community, support new families making this transition. New students have an easier time acclimating to this policy when they experience it as the status quo of our community.

SOME RECENT NEWS EXCERPTS ABOUT CHILDREN & TECHNOLOGY:

*“Steve Jobs Was a Low-Tech Parent”
New York Times
Nick Bilton, Sept. 10 2014*

“So your kids must love the iPad?” I asked Mr. Jobs, trying to change the subject. The company’s first tablet was just hitting the shelves. “They haven’t used it,” he told me. “We limit how much technology our kids use at home.”...

Since then, I’ve met a number of technology chief executives and venture capitalists who say similar things: they strictly limit their children’s screen time, often banning gadgets on school nights, and allocating ascetic time limits on weekends...

These tech C.E.O.’S seem to know something that the rest of us don’t.

Chris Anderson, the former editor of Wired and now chief executive of 3D Robotics, a drone Maker, has instituted time limits and parental controls on every device in his home. “My kids accuse me and my wife of being fascists and overly concerned about tech, and they say that none of their friends have the same rules,” he says of his five children, 6 to 17. “That’s because we have seen the dangers of technology firsthand. I’ve seen it in myself, I don’t want to see that happen to my kids.”

The dangers he is referring to include exposure to harmful content like pornography, bullying from other kids, and perhaps worst of all, becoming addicted to their devices, just like their parents...

*“What Screen Time Can Really
Do to Kids’ Brains”
Psychology Today
Liraz Margalit, Ph.D., Apr 2014*

When very small children get hooked on tablets and smartphones, says Dr. Aric Sigman, an associate Fellow of the British Psychological Society and a Fellow of Britain’s Royal Society of Medicine, they can unintentionally cause permanent damage to their still-developing brains. Too much screen time too soon, he says, “is impeding the development of the abilities that parents are so eager to foster through the tablets. The ability to focus, to concentrate, to lend attention, to sense other people’s attitudes and communicate with them, to build a large vocabulary – all those abilities are harmed.

Put more simply, parents who jump to screen time in a bid to give their kids an educational edge may actually be doing significantly more harm than good...

*“What Happens if My Child
Looks at a Screen?”
USA Today
Ashley May, Jun 13 2017*

A California State University study showed technology does have an affect on children’s health. Increased technology use was linked to psychological, including difficulty with attention, and physical health problems, including weight gain and sickness in the study.

“Our preteens and teenagers need help in reducing screen time in favor of physical activity,” the study states.

A commentary published in Pediatrics in 2015 questioned if significant use of devices in early childhood could affect development of empathy, and social and problem solving skills, which are often a result of exploring and face-to-face interaction...