



FAMILY TECHNOLOGY ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

OPENING STATEMENT

Children's Access to Digital Devices and the Online World

Congratulations on choosing a Steiner education for your child. Steiner education is recognised as a highly valued approach to helping students develop flexible, creative, and critical thinking alongside an ability to collaborate and thrive in a rapidly changing world. West Coast Steiner School seeks to cultivate strong school-home partnerships and we value parental support for the ideals of Steiner education. This support facilitates optimal healthy growth and learning for our students and fosters a positive and harmonious class culture.

At West Coast Steiner School our curriculum and methods actively support the healthy physical, emotional, and social growth of children. Through movement activities, storytelling and our emphasis on play, the children's own capacities are strengthened. It is the child's ability to think imaginatively, to play and create stories, and in the long run to re-imagine the world, that we are fostering. Allowing your children the space to be bored and space to create, imagine and move is the greatest gift that you can give them.

Research indicates that electronic media can have detrimental effects on a young child's healthy growth and development. If their imagination is already filled to the brim with readymade movies or digital pictures, our work as educators is hampered. It can be very difficult for a child used to the excitement and stimulation of movies and electronic games to listen and bring their own imagination to our quiet, gentle stories.

Neuroscientists tell us that a child's brain is developed not just through cognitive endeavors. Children are whole beings whose brains are being actively grown and developed through their bodily activities. Running, climbing, somersaulting, and balancing are of the utmost importance. This is especially true during the very early years of childhood but is still important through their entire schooling. The sedentary activity of screen watching is the antithesis of what your child needs.

Steiner education formally introduces digital technology at a developmentally appropriate age (generally in the high school years) encouraging students to be conscious technology users, not unconscious consumers. Steiner educators are philosophically opposed to young children being exposed to mobile phones, television, streaming services, films, computer games and social media. Whilst not intending to discredit all types of media, it is true to say that exposing young children to such media is incompatible and counterproductive to the aims and methods of the education you have chosen.

The child's pre-frontal cortex is still developing in their teenage years and doesn't complete its growth until the early to mid-20s. We as adults must keep in mind that the part of the brain that helps us to make discerning judgments and control our impulses is not yet developed in the child. Children are therefore especially vulnerable to the addictive qualities of technology. As a result, it is important that as parents and educators we recognise that it is our responsibility to protect our children from premature exposure to the virtual world.

Your family decision about the use of electronic media is important for both education and health and we appreciate your considered support and commitment.

POSITION STATEMENT

Access to Digital Devices and the Online World

Digital technologies are an essential part of our lives and are shaping our world more and more. The introduction of digital technology in the Steiner curriculum is deliberate and purposeful, and a considered and graduated approach is taken. Steiner education aims to prepare children to manage and master technology in the high school years and not to be shaped by it.

West Coast Steiner School discourages any "screen" interaction until the age of 9 years old with limited, gradual, well researched, mindful introduction of age-appropriate mediums and programs up until the age of 12 years old. We seek a commitment from parents and caregivers to support the ethos and pedagogy of Steiner education.

Along with Perth Waldorf School and Parkerville Steiner College, West Coast Steiner School believes parents must be responsible for guiding and monitoring their children as they encounter the digital world. We would never let a young child be at the beach or pool without supervision. We teach them to swim, watch them carefully and monitor where they can and cannot go. Likewise, we must not let our vulnerable children into the online world without supervision, instruction, guidance, and restrictions.

Many social media and gaming accounts are only legal from the age of 13 years (16 years for WhatsApp). If a child is younger than this, parents must give consent for an account. In such cases, parents have a legal obligation to supervise, monitor and be responsible for its use. For more information about social media apps, their content and risks please see the following link:

<https://www.internetmatters.org/resources/apps-guide/social-networking-and-messaging-apps/>

TECHNOLOGY GUIDELINES

The process of introducing the media and technology into your child's home life will be unique and based on your family's goals and ideals, but here we give some basic guidelines for this introduction based on our observations of children and our understanding of child development.

Parents are urged to provide their young children, up to the age of 9, with an environment ideally free of electronic media of all types, including radio and recorded music. Audiobooks can be used at times if parents find them helpful, though storytelling, storybooks and picture books are best. While we recognise the difficulties of this request, we believe it is beneficial to the young child's development. We ask you to embrace the challenge of incorporating a media-free lifestyle into your family life.

After the 9-year-old change (Class 3), parents may wish to occasionally introduce some type of movie or video experience into their children's lives. We recommend that you do this only on occasion, never during the school week, and as a family rather than solitary activity. Carefully selected and shared with a parent, this type of experience can be a special treat. However, time spent in nature, such as a trip to the beach, a bicycle ride, or a bushwalk; and all kinds of meaningful work and play, remain the best choices for your family time.

After the 12-year-old change, parents may find their child is ready to navigate the world of electronic media and has some ability to filter and discriminate media messages and images. Gradually and with careful monitoring, parents may begin allowing the child to be exposed to computer games, movies, email, and the internet, knowing that each new medium will require you to make choices and decisions about what, how much and when. Social media can be a slippery slope for children, because of the dangers of overuse and inappropriate content. We suggest that you look carefully at your own child and at your family life, asking questions, as each new technology is introduced. You as parents need to retain control over the use of technology by your children.

Perth Waldorf School and Parkerville Steiner College recommend that students do not have a mobile phone or electronic device until they are in Class 8 (High School). That is the year they turn 14. The school expects that students will not have access to any social media apps until at least Class 8. If applying or enrolling at a Steiner/Waldorf High School, it is important to be aware of their expectations before purchasing devices.

In Steiner Education, we nurture imagination, creativity, and adaptability in our students, centred in human relationships and real experiences. We believe the foundation for these capacities is best laid in the Early Childhood and Class 1-6 curriculum, free of technology in our classrooms.

Considering the above West Coast Steiner School recommends the following guidelines:

- Children under 9 years should not watch television, videos, or films, play computer, or video games or engage with online platforms or mobile devices.
- Children between 9 and 11 years may watch suitable TV programs or films during holidays but should refrain from computer/video games.
- Children 11 years onwards may watch suitable TV programs or films during the holidays, Fridays, and Saturdays. No computer/video games.

Students are not permitted to bring any electronic devices to school without prior arrangement and approval of the School Principal. If brought to school, these devices are to be left at Reception throughout the school day and should not be in student bags.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT ABOUT THE USE OF TECHNOLOGY

I/We have read and acknowledge West Coast Steiner School's position on digital devices and understand the expectation is that I/we will strive to:

1. Restrict my/our child's access to the online world during their time at WCSS.
2. If I/we choose to introduce digital technology, guide, and support my child to safely navigate the online world because their developing brains make them more vulnerable to many online risks and the 'addictive' potential that technology poses.
3. Setup Parental Controls and restrictions and use internet filtering tools such as the following:
 - Family Zone/Qustodio: (free) [Free sign up | Qustodio](#)
 - Family Zone/Qustodio: (paid) <https://www.qustodio.com/en/familyzone/>
 - Esafety: <https://www.esafety.gov.au/parents/issues-and-advice/parental-controls>
 - Austparents: <https://austparents.edu.au/information-and-advice/digital-parentng/>
4. Test and educate myself about apps, games, programs, and movies before my child is exposed to them.
5. Establish firm boundaries around my child's technology habits - not just how much time they spend plugged in, but also what content they can consume, where, when and with whom.
6. Keep bedrooms tech-free zones or have an open-door policy and remove access at night to ensure devices aren't interfering with my child's sleep.
7. Be mindful of my own digital habits so that I can be worthy of imitation and that I am acting in an authentic way.
8. Maximise my child's 'Green Time'. Everyone, especially children and teens, needs 15-20 hours of natural sunlight each week.