

Electronic Media Concerns and Guidelines

In our society, electronic media in all its forms is an ever-growing presence and influence in our lives. As adults we face the difficult choices of deciding how to use various media wisely, and when and how various media should be introduced into the lives of our children.

It is a well-documented fact that the experience of watching television affects the development of children. Strong evidence shows that habitual TV use negatively affects IQ, attention span, reading abilities, imagination, play, language patterns, critical thinking, self-image, perception of others, and moral values. Recent studies indicate that even a single viewing of violent behavior through electronic media can increase violent behavior in children. Habitual use of electronic media affects the child physically as well, altering brain waves, reducing critical eye movements, immobilizing the body, and undermining nutrition, eating habits, and exercise. The content of most TV, video and computer games, and movies shows a glaring disregard for the sensitivity and impressionability of the developing child, and gives commercial interests direct access to a child's forming mind and character.

At SunRidge, there is a conscious intention and effort to provide an educational environment that nurtures the imagination and healthy development of every child. Because electronic media exposure tends to work at cross-purposes to this intention and effort, SunRidge teachers need the support of parents in restricting media use in the home. Similarly, parents who choose our school because they want to protect their children as much as possible from the negative affects of electronic media also need the support of the parents of their children's classmates.

For these reasons, the Kindergarten and class teachers request that parents protect their children from exposure to electronic media. As a guideline, we strongly recommend that children from kindergarten through 3rd grade not be exposed to electronic media at all. If electronic media is introduced to children in grades 1-3, it should be limited to wholesome content, on weekends only, and kept to minimum. We ask that any exposure to electronic media with children in grades 4 and 5 also be limited to weekends only. Attention to content is particularly important if use is allowed, keeping in mind that electronically received images, language, and meaning lodge in the child's inner being and affect their behavior and sense of well-being at home and at school.

Early adolescence (grades 6-8) marks a time of increased exploration and desire to learn about the world. It also is a time when children do not yet have the maturity to make important life-affecting decisions, and need parental guidance and clear boundaries set by the responsible adults in their lives. We ask that parents of these older students work in partnership with our teachers to limit exposure to electronic media in ways that protect them from its negative influences while also encouraging their increasing capacities for discernment, critical thinking, and self-discipline (i.e., media literacy). We strongly recommend that any TV and movie use be limited to weekends only, and that parents supervise and restrict the use of TV, movies, computer and videogames, the internet, recorded music, and radio use due to the extremely varied content that is present through these media.

We recognize that restricting electronic media use in the home requires a commitment to a family lifestyle that runs counter to our mainstream culture. We also recognize that protecting children from media exposure is especially challenging in homes where older siblings are present, and when a child lives in more than one household. A whole-hearted effort to thoughtfully protect children from media exposure can only be successful when we educate ourselves about the affects of electronic media on children, and then exercise continual determination to go "against the grain" in order to do what we believe is most healthy for them. We ask that every parent join us in this challenging, but so very important, commitment.