



SCHOOL *of the* SEVEN SAGES

MEDIA POLICY

School of the Seven Sages is dedicated to nurturing each child's capacity for creative imagination, independent thinking, and positive action. The school's efforts to foster students' healthy emotional development and meaningful relationships with their environment are undermined by those 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. Media thus becomes a supplement to, not a substitute for, the richness of direct experience.

Purpose and Social Context of the Media Policy

The School of the Seven Sages electronic media policy is designed to support the objectives of the Seven Sages education, and to be workable in the homes and lives of school families. Parents have consistently found that reducing the influence of media on their family life has encouraged family members to develop a keener interest in one another, enlivened and deepened their communication, and fostered a deeper connection to the world around them. The school expects that each parent understand and support the media policy for the good of their own children and their children's peers.

All members of the School of the Seven Sages community depend on the parents of School of the Seven Sages' students to help create in their homes an environment that supports and reinforces the Seven Sages education. Each family's respect for the media policy has a far-reaching positive effect on the students' educational and social experience in school. A failure to make best efforts to respect the media policy has a correspondingly negative impact on our own children and their classmates. 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, and inner life. It is therefore important for the health of the entire School of the Seven Sages community for each family to comply with the media policy. To these ends, the school reserves the right to require students to reduce or alter their use of media if that exposure is undermining their education or the education of others.

For purposes of this policy, "Electronic Media" includes television, movies, computers and all other video and audio devices, including cell-phones, personal digital assistants, video games, and music/MP3 players. The scope of this definition may well change as media technology and its applications evolve. While School of the Seven Sages' media policy specifically governs interaction with certain media, care and judgment also should be applied to permitting exposure to media that is not expressly covered by the media policy, including print media (newspapers, magazines, and catalogs) and radio (news and recorded music). Developmentally inappropriate exposure to any media can have harmful effects and may create a level of "background noise" in students' lives that interferes with their direct connection to their environment and is thus antithetical to the principles of the Seven Sages education.

There is some educational media that is excluded from the media policy. These exceptions are determined by the school according to the courses that the student is participating in. Songs (online or on CD), applications for tablets and phones, and flashcards are a few examples of curricula resources that are necessary and approved by the school. Parents are encouraged to use these educational items as they wish.



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Implementing the Media Policy at School

The use of cell phones for any purpose by students is not permitted on campus between 8AM and dismissal time, during school activities or on school-sponsored trips without a teacher's permission. During school hours, all cell phones must be turned off. On campus outside of school hours, phones should be used as telephones, and never for Internet access, as cameras, gaming or audio devices. Cell phones may never be used by students inside of school buildings. Note: If a Lower School student will be bringing a cell phone to school, the phone must be kept in a backpack, not on the child's person, and must be registered with the school office.

Personal audio or video devices (such as music/MP3 players, PDAs, cameras) are not permitted on School of the Seven Sages' campus, during school activities, or on any school trips without a teacher's permission.

When determined by a teacher to be appropriate, media may be used at School of the Seven Sages in some instances for supervised educational purposes.

Implementing the Media Policy Outside of School

It is essential to the successful implementation of the media policy that parents guide their children in the appropriate uses of electronic media outside of the school environment.

We encourage parents to keep an open dialogue with their children, other class parents, teachers, and advisors regarding media. Specifically, parents should speak to teachers—either privately or with other parents in class or other group meetings—about their questions and challenges related to media, so that together they can work out viable approaches. Occasional media use outside of school should be closely monitored by parents and should not develop into a form of neglect. In addition, the school welcomes input from parents regarding media and will happily discuss it at parent-teacher meetings or it may be addressed with your child's teacher or the school headmaster.

The following portion of the media policy is designed to answer specific questions parents may have regarding permissible exposure to electronic media. In support of the education School of the Seven Sages' parents have chosen for their children, the media policy should be followed throughout the year, even when school is not in session.

Kindergarten:

Young children that wish to join the School of the Seven Sages should be given the gift of a media-free childhood. Teachers are available and willing to assist with transitions to a media-free environment. Children in kindergarten programs should be limited to 1 hour of supervised exposure per week.

Grades 1-4:

Children in grades 1-4 should be closely supervised and monitored while exposed to media in their daily lives. Media should be limited to a maximum of 2 hours per week.



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Grades 5 through 8:

During grades 5, 6, 7, and 8, it is appropriate for students to have a gradual and guided introduction to the applications and use of media. During these transition years, use and exposure to media should be very moderate, under clear parental guidance or participation, and not work to the detriment of the social and educational climate of the class. Children in these grades should not be exposed to electronic media during the school week, should have, at most, limited exposure on weekends and vacations, and any exposure should be in keeping with the following:

Television and Movies: It is important that parents carefully select and monitor any visual and audio media to which their children are exposed. Movies rated R and many PG-13 movies are clearly inappropriate at this age; parents are urged to preview movies to make their own informed judgments. As a courtesy to other families and to nurture a positive social climate, parents should not allow children who are guests in their homes to be exposed to visual and audio media that has not been cleared with the visitor's parents. Students in grades 5-8 should not watch television or movies during the school week, and should never have a television in their bedrooms.

Video Games: Children of this age should not have access to video games, including online game sites. Video games can be addictive and can adversely impact students' work, as well as the social life of the class.

Music Players: Any use of music players should be limited and through docking stations rather than headphones. The use of music players with headphones both isolates the listener and has real potential to damage children's hearing.

Internet Access: Children of this age should not have access to the Internet. If they do access the Internet or use the computer, such access and use should be carefully monitored, for limited time periods and never on school nights. Please password-protect computers in the home to control access. Do not allow computer use when a parent is not at home. Please locate computers in open areas of the home, and never in children's bedrooms. At no time will School of the Seven Sages teachers ask any student in grades 5 through 8 to do research on the Internet. All school-required projects in these grades will be based on library research or sources provided directly by the teacher.

Social Networking Sites: No grade-school student should have access to any social networking site. These sites (current examples of which are MySpace, Facebook and Twitter) pose a significant and well-documented threat, not only to children's safety, but also to their ability to interact in socially healthy ways.

Cell Phones: Students should use cell phones as telephones only, not for Internet access, as cameras, or as gaming or music-playing audio devices. We have seen text messaging create damaging social situations in our community. Accordingly, the text messaging feature on these students' phones should be disabled or restricted to emergency situations (and never to be used between schoolmates).

Email, Instant Messaging (IM) and Chat Rooms: Students should not make use of these technologies as forms of communication between classmates, as experience shows that such use creates serious social problems in the culture of the classroom.



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High School:

The media policy in the High School recognizes that it is appropriate for 15 to 19 year olds to learn to critically approach and effectively use media. The school recognizes the importance of media literacy, including educating students to understand the technological principles underlying and the social transformations resulting from electronic media, and seeks to meet this need through a curriculum that includes Internet research skills, computer programming, the science behind the new technologies and the social consequences of the media revolution.

Because the inappropriate or excessive use of electronic media undermines teenagers' living relationships to other people and the world around them, however, parents should continue to monitor and limit their teenagers' exposure to electronic media and should maintain an open dialogue with their teenage children about the role of media in their lives.

Internet and video game use can become self-perpetuating or even addictive, consuming time that could otherwise be spent in more productive pursuits, and can give rise to increasing emotional and intellectual detachment.

Social networking sites (current examples of which are MySpace, Facebook and Twitter) pose a significant and well-documented threat, not only to students' safety, but also to their ability to interact in socially healthy ways.

Email, instant messaging, chat rooms and text messaging can create serious social problems in the culture of any school, workplace or community. Parents should monitor and limit student exposure to these media, including locating computers and video games in open areas of the home.

It is important to maintain a space of media-free quiet for the challenging and creative schoolwork of the High School, particularly during the school week.

Communication between All Stakeholders within the School Environment

Social networking sites (current examples of which are MySpace, Facebook, Instagram and Twitter) are not to be shared between students and teachers or teachers and parents. To maintain the integrity and educational relationship between our students, parents and teachers; no teachers shall be friends with students or parents on any social networking sites.

Although personal social network connections are prohibited, parents are encouraged to follow the school via social media. Links to official school media sites may be found on the school website. Parents have the ability to keep up with current events, classroom activities, announcements and contact the administration through the social media links found at www.schoolofthesevensages.com.

Email between teachers and students should be limited and only for programs or information approved by the school principal. Parents and the school principal must be copied on each and every email sent to a student or group of students. Instant messaging, chat rooms, applications used for chat and text messaging are not appropriate and are not allowed between students and teachers or parents and teachers.

No phone calls shall be made by teachers directly to students. Students are not permitted to have access to teachers' phone numbers. It is very important that parents aid in helping to ensure that this policy is followed by periodically checking student phone calls, messaging services, email, etc.