

## Crossroads Community Screen Time Principles

As a small, independent-school community, we at Crossroads have a unique opportunity to commit collectively to best practices around the use of electronic devices at home and at school. Sharing basic understandings around how to maximize positive uses of these ever-evolving, powerful devices for our children while minimizing the dangerous impacts -- many of which are just becoming understood -- will help us all raise wise, kind and caring global citizens.

As a community therefore, we commit to the following principles.

- We will listen to experts and take into account individual circumstances, but we believe that holding shared standards will ultimately benefit our children's ability to be successful at school.
- We understand that exceptions may be necessary for special situations, but we know that we will have a more positive and lasting impact on our children if we work together.
- Our policies will be stronger if they are built with input from everyone in our community — students, parents, faculty, staff, and trustees.
- Our goal is to teach our children the value of self-regulation and the joy and benefit of face-to-face interactions. Strictly-enforced rules and punishment for breaking them will not alone serve to teach wise use of these powerful tools, but education, modelling, and family commitment will have better results over time.
- Not only will the devices children have access to change in the coming years, but our understanding of best practices will adapt as well. We commit to reviewing and revising our policies as circumstances evolve, so that we are staying relevant and paying attention to new issues that will inevitably arise.

For these reasons, we have begun to draft policies that will help the Crossroads community navigate the unique challenges and benefits of today's technological innovations. We welcome your thoughts and suggestions as we draft and implement the guidelines that we believe will strengthen the commitment to "inspire our students to love learning, act honorably, and contribute actively to intellectual, cultural, and civic life."

**A. School Protocols**

1. Personal smartphones brought to the Crossroads campus must be powered off completely and stored in a locker during the school day.
2. Students who need to make a call home should do so by using the landline that is available in each Crossroads building.
3. Parents wishing to relay a message to their child during the school day are asked to contact the main office at (603) 795-3111.
4. No digital communication among students is allowed on campus without explicit faculty permission. This includes email, messaging, and “chatting” apps.
5. Technology is used to enhance teaching and learning at Crossroads. Teachers model the appropriate usage of technology to support responsible digital citizenship.

**B. Home Recommendations**

We hope our children will build healthy social relationships and develop the skills to self-regulate their online experiences. Adults in our community can serve as mentors by modeling mindful and conscientious technology use both at home and at school. If families make commitments to healthy technology use at home, our children and our community will benefit.

The following summarizes key research findings and suggests ways to manage technology use at home. We hope you will consider adopting them in an effort to create a shared experience for our children.

**1. Cognitive development**

Screen time exposure may be changing children’s brains in ways that we are just beginning to understand. Online interactions foster fast-paced scanning and multi-tasking behavior rather than focused attentiveness, thoughtful reflection, and delayed gratification.

- a. Delay obtaining a smartphone for your child until 8<sup>th</sup> grade. If it is necessary to do so earlier:
  - i. Choose a “flip phone” or a phone plan that allows texting only a few select family members/caregivers.
  - ii. Disable Internet access on smartphones and avoid adding apps.
- b. Keep phones, tablets, computers, and TVs out of children’s bedrooms; store and use them in communal spaces.
- c. Be aware of media usage and create goals and rules that are in line with your family’s values. The resources listed below can help parents create and maintain a personalized Family Media Plan.
- d. Model focused, personal interactions that are not interrupted by a connected device.

**2. Social interactions**

The displacement of in-person social interaction by screen interaction reduces the development of social skills, emotional cognition, and empathy. When social media use is unregulated, students’ “fear of missing out” (FOMO) can lead to an overwhelming desire to be constantly connected through devices. Social media use is directly linked to feelings of loneliness, anxiety, and depression as well as sleep difficulties among adolescents.

- a. Support and encourage face-to-face social interaction with peers outside of school.
- b. Encourage phone calls over texts or emails.
- c. Social media should not be introduced before middle school.
- d. For middle school students:
  - i. Turn off Internet-based social activities (Instagram, Facebook, Vine, Tumblr, Snapchat, etc.) and texting by designated times for each grade in order to facilitate adequate nighttime rest and minimize FOMO “fear of missing out”:
    - a. 6<sup>th</sup> grade – 8:00pm
    - b. 7<sup>th</sup> grade – 8:30pm
    - c. 8<sup>th</sup> grade – 9:00pm
  - ii. Limit social media use to no more than:
    - a. 30 minutes per day on weeknights (Sun-Thurs)
    - b. 60 minutes per day on weekends (Fri and Sat)
  - iii. Mentor healthy online interaction etiquette that is aligned with Crossroads Core Virtues of respect, responsibility, self-discipline, stewardship, honesty, and moral courage.
  - iv. Have regular, open, and direct conversations about the importance of staying safe while online (see resources below).

### 3. Homework

Time spent on digital devices is negatively correlated with rates of homework completion, memory, learning, and school performance.

Email-based communication between teachers and students is not introduced to Crossroads students until 6<sup>th</sup> grade. Middle School teachers expect students to spend no more than 90 minutes a day on a computer or tablet to complete homework. Online chat groups are discouraged for homework discussion.

- a. Power down and store smartphones during homework time.
- b. Keep screens in a public place at home while students are working on homework.
- c. At the start of computer or tablet-based homework:
  - i. Turn off notifications and alerts.
  - ii. Select “full screen” mode when word processing to reduce multi-tasking and distractions.
- d. Consider the use of an app that disables Wi-Fi during academic computer use such as Freedom (<https://freedom.to/>) when homework does not require Internet access.

### Resources

#### Family Media Plan Templates

1. <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/media/Pages/default.aspx>
2. <https://www.commonsense.org/education/connecting-families/share>
3. [https://www.commonsemmedia.org/sites/default/files/uploads/connecting\\_families/family\\_media\\_agreements\\_k-12.pdf](https://www.commonsemmedia.org/sites/default/files/uploads/connecting_families/family_media_agreements_k-12.pdf)

#### Online Safety

1. <https://raisingdigitalnatives.teachable.com/p/phonewise/>
2. <http://www.cybercivics.com/for-parents>

*Thank you for supporting our community efforts to “inspire our students to love learning, act honorably, and contribute actively to intellectual, cultural, and civic life.”*