

Digital Media and the Young Child: New Resources and Opportunities

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Since the beginning of the pandemic, new questions have come from both teachers and parents around screen use and young children. The decision to temporarily bring more screens into the lives of our young children was not an easy one, and each community responded in the best way they could. Both at school and in our daily lives we relied on screens during the shutdown to maintain communication and for some schools, in order to stay open and provide a program for our families. Now as we experience life after the pandemic, the question for all of us working with and raising children remains: How do we support healthy childhood, while navigating the reality of an increasingly technological world? There is clearly a need for supportive resources in our communities.

The Screen Time Action Network at FairPlay is a coalition of practitioners, educators, advocates, and parents working to promote healthy childhood by reducing the amount of time children spend with digital devices. As a leader in EC Education, WECAN was asked to join the working group, and WECAN colleagues have been attending these work meetings for the past 18 months. It is reassuring and inspiring to know that there are many professionals outside of Waldorf Education who are dedicated to advocating for the rights of children to a healthy childhood.

New Resource for Parents and Teachers

This month the **Screen Time Action Network Early Childhood Working Group** published a new guide for parents, [Screen Aware Early Childhood Action Kit](#). This comprehensive tool is meant to reach parents through early childhood educators and other professionals who support and advocate for young children. This research-based guide provides both information about what is needed for healthy child development and practical guidance about what parents can do about screens in the lives of their children. These materials are available digitally and in printable form.

Please have a look at the Action Kit and consider how it might be helpful to parents and teachers in your Waldorf community. You might consider using the kit in some of the following ways in your school:

- Use the materials as a basis for class or program parent evenings on digital media.
- Include a link to resources in the kit in your parent handbook materials.
- Use the kit as a resource for conversation with individual families about their family's screen use.
- Use the resources and research as a basis for developing your school's media policies.

A WECAN Digital Media Working Group

This guide is one resource for us. But what would further support our communities with this question? In order to work with this question further, WECAN is forming a **Digital Media Working Group**. A small group is beginning to form, and we welcome colleagues who are interested in this work. Please contact Susan Howard if you would like to participate. One of the first tasks will be to create a survey for our

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schools so that we can know more about what our WECAN communities are already doing regarding media, and what your questions and needs are.

As Waldorf educators our goal continues to be to remove hindrances to a child's healthy development, and to educate through deep human connection, rich sensory experiences, and a sense of wonder about the world for the children. We look forward to working together to deepen our understanding of supporting our children in a changing world.

And please see the separate announcement for this year's **Screen Free Week**, which will take place May 1- 7. WECAN is a proud endorser of this event, and we encourage you to take part!