

DIGITAL MEDIA WORKING GROUP-WORKSHOP PRESENTATION

Lisa Pitillo, Digital Media Group

As educators and advocates for the rights of childhood, we experience the ever-increasing presence of digital technology in our communities and in the lives of the children in our care. The Digital Media Working Group is considering questions related to this and how to best support children, parents, and teachers working with this very real presence in our world. This year, the group worked with the WECAN board to bring a statement of our intention around digital media in Waldorf EC Education in North America. You can read the [WECAN Digital Media Statement](#) here, and it is also found on our website.

As part of their continued work on questions around digital media and early childhood, members of the group presented a two-part workshop at this year's Waldorf Early Childhood Educators Conference: *Free To Be... Advocacy for Screen Free Childhood: Observation and Research - Tools of Understanding, and Supporting Parents and Children with Compassionate Presence.*

Janene Ping and Lisa Pitillo offered participants an overview of current research on the developmental effects of direct and indirect exposure to digital media. Current research indicates that developmental effects arise from a child's direct exposure, as well as from parent and caregiver device use. In the workshop, they reviewed advocacy and research groups, both nationally and internationally, including, but not limited to, the detailed work of the [HERMMES Project](#) (Holistic Education, Resilience and Media Maturity in Educational Settings) sponsored by the EU, and the [Screen Time Action Network](#) here in the US. They also reviewed how the foundational support of the senses in the Waldorf EC classroom supports children experiencing digital media, and Janene spoke about what teachers and parents can do to counter the effects of screen use. Participants shared how they are working in the classroom and in their communities, with questions about media use, and expressed a strong desire for guidance on how to approach parents regarding a challenging and sensitive subject with objectivity and support.

Overall, the question emerging from the conversations is how we can, as educators, effect a shift in culture through our work in our communities that is inclusive and supportive, and ultimately fulfill our mission of removing hindrances while advocating for an educational environment that supports healthy development.

The Digital Media working group is considering ways to support teachers in providing parent education in their school communities, including online events for both parents and educators.

Stay tuned for the WECAN Fall online events calendar!

We encourage Waldorf teachers who feel moved to participate in the work of the Digital Media Working Group to contact Meggan Gill at mgill@waldorfearlychildhood.org and to join the Digital Media Group on the WECAN Hub. DigitalMedia+subscribe@wecan.groups.io