

## "Place the Human Being in the Center of Society Again"

### Petition to Education Officials in the EU and its Member States to promote a human-centered education

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#### What's at stake

Business and politics are driving the digital transformation of society at a high rate of speed. In schools this is happening under the slogan "digital education." Today's technology consists of smartphones, tablets and Wi-Fi. Increasingly, lessons, school and learning are defined in terms of technology. The signatories to this petition are working across Europe towards a "human education", which respects the stages and laws of physical, intellectual and spiritual development. Of course, the undersigned see teaching comprehensive digital competence as an essential task of the schools. A basic understanding of how digital technology works also makes possible the capacity to be creative, responsible and critical towards it. However, all in good time!



#### Our demands

Caregivers, educators, teachers, administrators and parents must be able to decide for themselves up to which age educational institutions are screen-free. Pedagogues must be able to choose with which media they work and teach, and if and when they use digital media as a teaching aid. For this, we need the right to have screen-free day-care centers, early childhood programs and elementary schools. Educational policymakers are urged to move away from the fixation on widespread digital screen technology and to allow creative alternative educational ideas, which ensure that the children's learning and formative experiences take place in the real world.

#### Human-centered Education: Age-Appropriate Interaction of Head, Heart and Hand

Children have a right to time for development to master their real world environment with all their senses, through movement and creative play (sensory-motor integration). It is this interplay of sensory and motor experiences in the environment that ensures that they can anchor themselves well in space and time, and that they can develop physically and mentally in age-appropriate ways.

Digital media, used too early, inhibit development and reduce real experiences to the swiping of a screen. This can lead to a lack of physical activity, eye fixation and a head-oriented education that leads to lack of resistance and neural false stimulation that run counter to the healthy brain development. Digital media

used too early and unwisely endanger children in their development through a number of negative effects: overstimulation, addiction, alienation from nature and damage to impulse control and reflexive thinking. Developmental Psychology and Neurobiology has presented convincing research results.<sup>1</sup>

The aim of school and teaching is to educate students to become self-reliant and decisive people. The digital transformation of society needs people who think for themselves and decide and act independently. Children learn this especially in the social context of the classroom, through dialogue and direct cooperation. Learning takes place in the harmonious interaction between head, heart and hand. The brain is a relational organ that needs physical movement and direct experience of the environment in order to develop.<sup>2</sup> IT pioneers like Steve Jobs, Bill Gates and Jeff Bezos have recognized this and have acted accordingly: they do not give their own children smartphones and they regulate their use of IT.<sup>3</sup>



### Our hope

We hope to mobilize colleagues, parents and friends to help us create a worldwide movement to safeguard a time and place in the world in which our children can develop and consolidate their physical, emotional and spiritual health. Education is needed that is rooted in rich natural sense impressions and human encounters and filled with warm interest in who children are and who they may become. We believe that mastery of digital media later in life depends on these vital foundations established in the early years. To make this happen we need your activity!

Please download the form below and help us to collect as many signatures as possible because together we can make a change!

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*Clara Aerts is a member of the IASWECE Coordination Group and one of the coordinators of the Steiner/Waldorf federation in Belgium.*

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Teuchert-Noodt, Gertraud (2015): "For Risks and Opportunities, Ask the Brain", in: Lembke, Gerald / Leipner, Ingo:

<sup>2</sup> "The Lie of Digital Education", 3rd edition, Redline, Munich

<sup>3</sup> Bilton, Nick (2014): „Steve Jobs Was a Low-Tech Parent“, <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/11/fashion/steve-jobs-apple-was-a-low-tech-parent.html> February 6, 2018