



Summerfield | WALDORF SCHOOL & FARM

On-Campus Smart Device Policy

At-Home Smart Device Recommendations

Adopted September 2024

Modern science is validating what Waldorf educators have known for a long time: the consumption of media by infants, children, and young people inhibits their healthy development.

At Summerfield Waldorf School & Farm, we place an emphasis on direct human interaction and authentic experiences. Studies show that a direct experience, as opposed to a virtual one, has a measurable positive impact on brain development throughout childhood into adulthood. Issues associated with premature phone usage, especially smartphones with unlimited internet access, include attention issues, early consumerism, mental health struggles, instances of online bullying, and exposure to explicit online content; all of which are proven to have detrimental effects on a young person's social, emotional, and psychological stability and well-being. Smart device (mobile phones, smart watches, etc.) usage during school hours can inhibit a student from fully embracing one-on-one human interactions with fellow students and teachers and interferes with immersing oneself in present-moment, experiential learning opportunities.

Out of our work together as a faculty and staff in the Spring and Summer of 2024, we have updated our recommendations to families regarding the use of smart devices and bluetooth compatible earbuds, as well as our on-campus policies. As the faculty and staff of the school, we recognize the need to delay the age at which children are given smart devices and social media accounts, but many families feel concerns and pressure around making this decision.

Together, Summerfield as a school: Board members, faculty, staff, parents, and caregivers, can strive to provide our young people with more and better experiences in the real world, less and better experiences on screens, and more in-person, play-based time, with ever-growing independence and responsibility.

When we coordinate our decisions by mutual agreement, the long-term outcome is that all children are better off when none have access to these devices until they are ready for them. This is referred to as collective action. We can build this action for the benefit of all children and students by voluntary coordination; this means parents and caregivers strive together so that there is the likelihood their children will have friends who have the same rules, and will not feel they are the 'only ones' not accessing phones, digital devices, and social media.

As staff and faculty, parents, and visitors, we are all striving to be models for the younger generation. We ask adults to put away their cell phones while visiting Summerfield's campus to support this goal. Our policies around electronic media enhance your child's healthy development and learning. Your collaboration supports the educational goals and well-being of the Summerfield Waldorf School & Farm community as a whole.

What does Summerfield Waldorf recommend?

ECE and Grade School Student Smart Device Recommendation: No smartphones, smart watches or social media.

Middle School Student Smart Device Recommendation: No smartphones, smart watches or social media. If the family decides a phone is needed for their child, choose a flip phone or phone with no browser or internet access. Consider parental controls and agreements for parental oversight of text messages.

On Campus Lower School Personal Device Check-In Policy:

Students in grades one through eight are not permitted to bring to school any personal electronic devices, such as smartphones, smart watches, , or e-readers and bluetooth compatible earbuds. In the case that it is necessary for a student to bring a phone to school, parents must submit, in advance, a permission request form, available in the Main Office. Any unpermitted devices will be collected and held in the Main Office until the students' parents can pick them up.

For permitted phones:

- Phones will be checked into the Office directly upon arrival to Campus. Phone will not be accessible to the student throughout the day
- Phone may be checked back out after dismissal time
- Phone is to remain powered off and put away while being transported to/from the Office

High School Student Smart Device Recommendation: At parents/guardians' discretion, smartphones are allowed in all grades of the High School. We suggest families consider parental controls and agreements for parental oversight of text messages. Due to its considerable negative impact on student mental health, the high school strongly recommends that social media not be introduced earlier than 11th grade.

The Summerfield High School faculty and staff firmly believe that being smart device-free during the school day improves a student's attention, sense of self, healthy social interaction, and mental health. We are committed to creating a learning environment where each student can be as fully present and fully themselves as possible.

On Campus High School Smart Device Check in Policy:

Before 8 am: Students will be required to check their phones into their allotted phone slot in the phone box every morning. The box will be located at the top of the stairs. Checking in the phone will be part of the attendance process, held by the morning movement teachers.

At 8:01 am, the box will be locked in the back high school office. Tardy students will need to go to the office to check their phones and get a tardy slip from Amelia. Students will need the tardy slip to join morning movement and will be sent back to the office to get a tardy slip if they show up to morning movement without one.

At 3:10 pm the phones will be checked back to students. Students may use their phones on campus only between the hours of 3:10 pm and 3:30 pm and only on the north side of the High school Building (near the Annex and Bio lab).

What if my student doesn't have a phone or doesn't bring it to school?

Parents may indicate this on the Summerfield High School Student Cell Phone Status & Device Confirmation Form, required of all high school students at the start of the year.

- If a student forgets their phone, parents must call or email Amelia Miller to let us know.

What if my student needs to make a call during the school day?

If students need to make brief phone calls for essential purposes during snack and lunch, they may do so from the phones in the high school office. Between the hours of 3:10 and 3:30, students on campus (including the parking lot) are permitted to use their phones only under the overhang on the east side of the high school building (outside Math and Physics).

What if a parent needs to contact their child during the school day?

Parents who need to get a message to their students may do so via Amelia Miller.

What about students who don't turn their phones in?

Students who are found to have a phone or a wifi-connected smartwatch during the school day will have the device confiscated and their parents and mentor will be notified. The second time a student is found to have their device, follow-up steps will be set in motion. (These steps will be developed with student participation in the first weeks of this school year. Once these are finalized, this policy will be amended to include them and families and students will be informed of the change).

What is the policy after school?

After 3:30, students on campus not attending a school function may use their phones at the discretion of the adults supervising the after-school activity (ex: coaches, dance chaperones, etc.).

Resources:For parents of all age children

The Anxious Generation by Jonathan Haidt

For parents of teenagers

Surviving Your Child's Adolescence by Carl Pickhardt

The Media and Me: A Guide to Critical Media Literacy for Young People by Ben Boyington, Allison T. Butler, et al.

For Goodness Sex: Changing the Way We Talk to Teens About Sexuality, Values, and Health by Al Vernacchio

For parents of younger children

Simplicity Parenting by Kim John Payne and Lisa Ross

You Are Your Child's First Teacher. Encouraging Your Child's Natural Development from Birth to Age Six by Rahima Baldwin Dancy