



2016-2017 Parent Handbook

“Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire.”

-William Butler Yeats

Our Mission

Mangrove School of Sarasota is dedicated to providing a nurturing and calm space in which children can love, learn, and grow. We seek to engage the whole child in their education - head, heart and hands, while also honoring our inherent connection to nature through frequent exploration of and hands-on experience in our majestic natural surroundings.

Our Vision is to:

Honor childhood. Your child only gets one. It should be amazing.

Respect that each child has their own journey and will unfold in their own time. Meet children’s needs at each stage of their development.

Recognize that children are not empty vessels to pour information into – instead - nurture the child’s natural curiosity and sense of wonder that is essential for real, life-long learning.

Offer a rigorous yet dynamic academic curriculum, integrating arts, movement, music and meaningful activities into traditional academic subjects.

Instill reverence for humanity, animal life, and the Earth through frequent service and exploration opportunities and by fostering supportive relationships within the classrooms and community.

Promote world peace and responsibility for ones’ actions.

Challenge children to discover the full range of their capacities.

Instill children with the confidence to try new things and take calculated risks.

Model and value creativity, innovation and problem solving.

Our Community

We are an intentional school community founded by parents, teachers and friends seeking a unique, progressive education for our children. Serving early childhood through elementary grades, Mangrove School of Sarasota honors imagination as the heart of every child’s learning foundation to cultivate creativity, courage, confidence and contribution to the world.

School Policies and Information

School Hours

Classrooms open at 8:15 am. Please escort your child to their classroom by 8:25. Students in grade 2/3 and 4/5 meet at the playground behind the Sanctuary. Parents may choose to park in the Sanctuary or Community Center Parking lot for their convenience.

8:30 am to 12:30 pm:

- Seahorse Pre-Kindergarten
- Starfish Kindergarten.

8:30 am to 2:30 pm Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday

8:30 am to 1:30 pm Thursday:

- Grades 1-5

Extended Care

12:30 pm-2:30pm

- **Little Siesta** for Early Childhood Students. Includes a story, nap or rest time.

2:30 pm-4:30 pm for Early Childhood and Grades students. (**1:30-4:30 on Thursday**)

Office Hours

8:30 am to 3:00 pm: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday

8:30 am-1:30 pm: Thursday and Friday

Attendance

Absences

Regular attendance encourages the social and academic success of the student. Great care is taken with the preparation of the day's lesson. Endeavor to schedule appointments and special events during non-school times.

An excused absence is one that results from:

- Illness.
- Funeral or death in the family.
- Religious observations and holidays.
- Family emergencies.
- All other absences must be submitted to the teacher in writing, prior to the absence, for approval.

If your child will be absent, please:

- Call or text your child's teacher by 8:30 to let them know.
- Upon returning to school, please present an Absence Excuse Form to your child's teacher.
- When a student has a medical appointment, please send a note or text to the teacher beforehand.

An unexcused absence is one that results from:

- The reason for the absence did not meet the excused absence criteria or was not documented.

Excessive Absences

Consistent attendance in class and prompt arrival are encouraged for your child's well-being and out of respect for the class itself.

- More than 9 absences per semester or 18 per academic year are considered excessive.

Excessive absences may warrant one or more of the following actions:

- Parents are notified in writing that absences are excessive.
- A meeting with the student's class teacher and Director.
- A written plan created by the parent, student, and school to resolve the problem.
- A faculty review.

Tardiness

Children who arrive late miss their teacher's greeting and the opening verse (in the Grades). Tardiness is disruptive for both the student and the class. Please aim to be at school between 8:15-8:25.

For your child's comfort and to prevent interruption during the main lesson or Early Childhood activities, please be sure that your child has used the restroom prior to coming to class.

If your student arrives after 8:30 a.m.

- Please come to the office to fill out a tardy slip.
- Sign into the Tardy and Early Release log.
- Walk your child to class.
- The door will be locked and the parent must wait with their child until there is a natural break in the classroom activities. At this time, the teacher will open the door. For Pre-kindergarten families, please wait near the gate to the play yard for the teacher to receive your child and sign them in.
- Give the tardy slip to the teacher.

Excessive Tardiness

Exceeding 5 tardies per semester or 10 tardies per year may result in the following actions:

- Parents are notified in writing that absences are excessive.
- A meeting with the student's class teacher and Director.
- A written plan created by the parent, student, and school to resolve the problem.
- A faculty review.

Early Release

If your child needs to leave school before the end of the day:

- Please fill out an Early Release Form, available outside the office.
- Sign the Tardy and Early Release Log.
- Take the Early Release Form to your child's teacher.

Illness

In the event that your child is ill, it is extremely important that they stay home, and rest. Students may return to school **24 hours** after their fever has subsided, in order to prevent the spread of contagious illness.

Children must stay home for the following illnesses:

- Fever of 99 degrees or higher
- Severe headache
- Exhaustion or fatigue
- Spasm or convulsion
- Chicken Pox
- Strep Throat
- Nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea
- Lice
- Vomiting within the past 24 hours.
- Sneezing or coughing excessively; any cough that causes the child to become red or blue in the face
- Nasal discharge that is cloudy, thick or yellow/green. A child with any continuous drainage that affects classroom hygiene should also remain at home.
- Infected eyes, especially red eyes with discharge and drainage, or matting of the eyelids
- Presence of any communicable rash
- Any exposed or open sores
- Any illness that prevents the child from participating comfortably in class activities and/or results in greater care than the teacher can provide, without compromising the safety or health of the other children in the class.

Parents will be notified and asked to pick up their child if they become ill at school with any of the above symptoms. If the parent is unable to be reached, the emergency contacts listed on the child's Health Emergency form will be called and asked to pick up the child.

Injuries

A parent is notified immediately when serious injury or sudden illness occurs during school hours. For this reason, please notify the office when there is a change of phone number or of persons to be contacted when you cannot be reached.

- In the event of a serious injury or accident, that may require medical attention, or your child being picked up, an incident report will be prepared for a parent to sign. It will be kept on file in the office.
- A parent is routinely notified if a child receives a blow to the head, whether or not it appears to be serious.

Weather-Related School Closings

When the Sarasota County Public Schools are closed due to inclement weather or other emergency, Mangrove School of Sarasota will be closed. An email will be sent and the school voicemail will provide details about the closing, as well.

Cell Phone Policy

In order to protect our children from the EMFs of cell phones, as well as provide them with our undivided presence, please refrain from using your cell phone during drop off or pick up.

Code of Conduct

The faculty at Mangrove School of Sarasota is committed to discipline practices that focus on the development of a positive self-image in children, reinforcing positive behavior and de-emphasizing the negative. At times, consequences are necessary and appropriate, especially with regard to serious offenses.

Five basic rules are upheld at our school. These parameters are important because their primary purpose is to insure the safety and well-being of the children and the educational climate of the classroom:

1. No child shall hurt, harass, or endanger others.

2. No child shall endanger or hurt him or herself.
3. No child shall destroy or damage property.
4. No child shall leave the supervision of the teacher without that teacher's knowledge and consent.
5. Each child is expected to follow basic rules of the school and classroom code of conduct.

In order to ensure that Mangrove School of Sarasota has a social atmosphere that supports learning, we expect our students, teachers, and parents to follow this Code of Conduct:

1. I will be courteous.
2. I will be respectful of my peers, teachers, and all visitors to the school.
3. I will consider the safety of others' emotional and physical well-being.
4. I will take care of my own property and that of the school and others.
5. I will use polite and socially acceptable language at all times.
6. I will show good will by responding to requests and directions from teachers promptly and willingly.
7. I will be accepting of the differences of others.

Disciplinary Responses

Learning appropriate social boundaries and how to constructively express emotions is a part of learning. Violating the Code of Conduct presents an opportunity for learning. All children will be treated with respect during a resolution process.

The disciplinary response to any violation of the Code of Conduct draws on the professional judgment of the teachers and administrators responsible for making such decision, using a range of discipline management techniques. Discipline action may include one or more of the following responses depending on the age of the children and at the discretion of the teacher.

Redirection
Pedagogical stories
Verbal correction
Cooling off time
Confiscation of items that disrupt educational process
Extra chores
Exercises
Behavioral contracts
Sending students to the office, or to another classroom

For more serious violations, the class teacher and Director will meet with the parents to discuss specific behavior and disciplinary action to be taken.

Corporal punishment is not permitted under any circumstances at the MSS. If a student presents an immediate danger to his or herself or to others, he or she may be physically restrained for the purpose of ensuring either their own safety or the safety of others.

Zero Tolerance for Aggressive Behavior

It is very important that all children feel safe at school. We, at MSS, have a zero tolerance for aggressive behavior. Aggressive behavior includes bullying or intentionally hurting another child (either physically or verbally). If a teacher determines that a child is behaving in an aggressive manner, the child will be sent home from school. The teacher will write up an incident report and the parents will need to sign it upon the child's return. Teachers may ask for a meeting with the parents prior to welcoming the child back to class.

Communication

- **Parent Partnership Update:**
The Parent Partnership Update is published via email to all Mangrove School of Sarasota families, on a bi-weekly basis. Upcoming festivals, events, and notes from the classrooms can be found in the Update. Please read it carefully-it will keep you in the know!
- **Bulletin Boards:**
The monthly calendar, community lunch schedule, class schedules, and weekly events can all be found on the bulletin boards across from the office.
- **Weekly Events:**
The upcoming weekly events are posted to each classroom door in the courtyard, the office door, and in the bathrooms.
- **Office Memos:**
The office sends timely email reminders that contain information and announcements. Please ensure that we have your correct email address.
- **Class Notices**
Notices from your teacher may be sent home with your child and/or emailed or texted. Please speak with your class teacher if you have any questions regarding class specific information.
- **Facebook**
Please "Like" the Mangrove School of Sarasota Facebook page for upcoming events, articles of interest to families, and pictures of Mangrove Sarasota happenings. You may also ask to be added to the private Mangrove School of Sarasota Parent Partnership group for real-time information and more!
- **Parent Class Meetings**
This valuable time together is used to share essential information with parents about the curriculum, to discuss any concerns that parents may have about life in the classroom, and to answer general questions about school programs. Parents are expected to attend these meetings. We recommend that all adults who are responsible for parenting the child are in attendance.
- **Parent-Teacher Conferences**
Class teachers will schedule formal individual conferences with parents during the Fall and Spring terms. These conferences offer an excellent opportunity to discuss the progress of your particular child, the class itself, and any concerns you may have. Conferences are of direct benefit to your child as they enable the teacher and parent to be jointly supportive of the child's progress. Please let your teacher know if you would also like to schedule a conference at any other time.
- www.mangrovesarasota.com
The website is a place to obtain current information throughout the school year, including the most current and updated calendar.

Dogs

Dogs are only permitted in **the parking lot area** and must be on a leash **at all times**. Thank you for understanding.

Dress Code

Students will be active during their school day. Clothing should be comfortable and allow for unrestricted movement.

- Natural fibers are recommended for maintaining a desirable body temperature.
- Flashy, trendy, and revealing clothing are not appropriate for school. Be mindful that clothing is neither too tight nor too loose. Clothing should fit well.
- Keep in mind how clothing will act if the student jumps, rolls, hangs upside down, etc.
- Clothing should be weather appropriate, as the children spend much of their time outdoors. **A raincoat and rain boots or waterproof shoes should be kept at school in the student's cubby.**
- A comfortable sun hat should be kept at school in each child's cubby.
- Clothes should be clean, without tears.

- Clothing should be free of pictures and words, including logos and advertising.
- Midriffs should not be visible.
- For safety, avoid dangling jewelry (including earrings, bracelets, and necklaces).
- Flat, comfortable, closed-toe shoes (suitable for running and games) are required. Socks are helpful in avoiding ant bites. No sandals, flip flops, wheeled shoes or shoes that light up, please.
- **Please send an extra set of clothes to school in a labeled soft bag to be kept in the student's cubby.**
- Avoid hairstyles that are excessively distracting. (Ex. Mohawks, hair coloring)
- No nail polish, please.
- Please avoid the use of perfumes or colognes (and other scented products), as many are chemically sensitive to these substances.

In observance of special festival days and events, please eschew t-shirts, sweatpants, and sweatshirts on these days.

Inquire with your teacher which types of clothing would be appropriate for particular events. On the most formal occasions (Winter Spiral), students are invited to attend in dress pants/shorts, collared shirts, dresses, or skirts to encourage an atmosphere of reverence for the occasion.

Flow of the Year

The following is a description of the events of a typical year. As we grow and evolve these events may change as well. Other events may be added. More specific information about each event will be included in the Parent Updates throughout the year.

Welcome Back Potluck and Orientation

At the beginning of each school year, parents, teachers and staff gather to share a meal, and welcome new and returning families. This event is also an opportunity to get any last minute questions answered, as well. This is a casual, family event to kick off the school year.

Giving Challenge

From Noon to Noon September 20th to 21st, our school is one of the 449 non-profits in the Sarasota area qualified to participate in the Giving Challenge, through the Community Foundation of Sarasota County. During this time, we are asking for you to help support our vision of providing children with a developmentally appropriate education and real childhood experiences, by making a donation, and/or sharing our donation page with family and friends.

All donations by new donors (up to \$100) made to our school at our profile page on thegivingpartner.org during this window, will be matched, 2:1 by the Patterson Foundation. Returning donors will be matched 1:1. This means, your \$100 donation could become a \$200 or \$300 donation to our school! Additionally, there are tons of matching grants and prizes to be awarded during the challenge. For example, the non-profit with the most unique donors can receive an additional \$7000 grant!

This event is completely online, allowing anyone, anywhere, to donate. Last year we raised over \$14,000! More information will be forthcoming on how you can help make this an even more successful event this year.

Autumn Equinox Festival

The Autumn Equinox Festival is the first festival of the school year and it is held on the first day of Autumn – when day and night are perfectly balanced. This equilibrium also represents the duality of light and darkness that exists within human beings. This festival honors the courage and strength in each of us, as we face this

part of the year, of longer nights - a natural time of turning inward, reflection, and facing our own darkness. This is traditionally pictured as the brave warrior in the act of subduing a dragon, which represents the dark side of human nature. For the children, this message is not overtly stated, but rather, this time of year is filled with stories and songs of the brave and true. The children learn that with great valor, dragons can be beaten.

For our festival, the Grades students perform a play for the community that depicts the story of George and his battle with the dragon. Afterwards, the community is welcome to enjoy refreshments from the To-Go Café, before the students return to their classes to complete their school day.

Parent-Teacher Conferences

Conferences are offered twice a year, October and February, by appointment.

Community Lunch

Community lunch is an opportunity for our entire school to come together and share a meal prepared and/or coordinated by the parents, and/or students and teachers. This year, Community Lunch will begin on November 3rd, and will continue each Thursday throughout the school year. More information about this event, and how you can help, will be available in the Weekly Update beginning in mid-September.

Lantern Walk

The lantern is the symbol of our own light which we can shine on a dark world, and we celebrate this festival by holding a reverent "lantern walk." This year, our lantern walk will be held on Friday, Nov 18th at 5:30 pm, on Siesta Key Beach.

This family beach walk is complete with lanterns made lovingly by our dear children, as well as songs they have learned in class. Comfortable, warm clothing is recommended for this event.

Mermaids' Faire

Mermaids' Faire is a day filled with magic and wonder for all ages. Enchanting activities, live music, and delicious food make this a true family event with something for everyone. This year our Faire will take place on November 12th from 2-8:00, thanks to the hard work and dedication of parents, teachers and staff throughout the fall. An antidote to the rampant commercialism that often overwhelms this time of year, this wholesome, endearing, event is not to be missed for Mangrove families and friends.

Winter Spiral Garden

On the last Sunday in November, families gather in the North Hall to walk the Winter Spiral. Children will sit with their classes, and one by one, each child will take a turn to slowly walk the spiral, holding a red apple with a small unlit candle inserted into it. As the child reaches the center, he or she lights the candle and then returns out of the spiral, when they will place the apple and candle near one of the golden stars. Each child lights the way for those who will come after them. As children take their turns, more and more lit candles light the spiral as the room starts to glow. The evening is quiet and moving. With the winter days being short, and the nights long, the spiral celebrates a kindling of our inner light, and holds a promise that spring, light, and life will begin again. Sunday best is appropriate for this event.

Local Outdoor Artisan Marketplace

A lovely outdoor market of local artisans for parents, (formerly during the Faire) with activities and childcare available indoors for children while they shop for the holidays.

Santa Lucia Day

Santa Lucia is celebrated during the school day on December 13th. This festival celebrates the warmth of light and giving. The second/third grade, dressed in white and singing a traditional song, visits each class with a special treat for each student.

Winter Assembly

On the Friday before Winter break, an assembly is held before an early dismissal for all at 12:30 pm. Parents, grandparents and friends are warmly invited to attend as each class offers a performance for the rest of the school, followed by a potluck lunch.

Spring Fest

For this festival we celebrate the bounty of our beautiful garden and rejoice in the arrival of spring. Games, activities, and a delicious lunch from our garden make for a lovely day. Early dismissal follows.

End of Year Parent/Teacher Social

This is an evening event thrown by the Parent Partnership to show appreciation for the hard work and dedication of the parent body throughout the school year, as well as celebrate the success of school year. This year, the Parent Social will be held on April 29th.

Festival of May

Our former "May Day" has been updated to better reflect our seasons here in Florida. Families gather before dusk for an evening at the beach, for a festival of "Letting go". Students will make head wreaths and dance the maypole with their class. The evening will be complete with music and dance as we celebrate the freedom and relaxation that comes with summer. This year Festival of May will take place on Friday, May 12th.

Rose Ceremony/End of Year Assembly

Another ceremony that has been updated is The Rose Ceremony. Typically done to warmly greet first graders as they walk the bridge from Early Childhood to Grades, our first grade is the bridge itself. In order to meet the young child of today, our first grade offers the beginning of academics as usual, but still recognizes the need for more play and more work for children under seven. This year the all-school final assembly will offer them a very special welcome – when each first grader is offered a rose from our oldest students in the school as they become our rising second graders, which is a much larger leap developmentally, and should be honored as such.

At this assembly we will also see the culmination of the entire year, as each class offers a performance for the rest of the school. Teachers, staff and key volunteers are honored for their dedication to our school and community. A community potluck closes out the year, just as it began.

Other events that will occur throughout the year include To-Go Café, Adult Enrichment opportunities and All-school meetings. More information about these events will be included in the Weekly Update.

Food Guidelines

The connection between food and mood has long been established. Healthy food is essential to a productive school day. Attention span, immunity, and impulse control are all directly influenced by food and drink. Sugar, specifically has been known to lower immunity. Natural, unprocessed foods help children have enough energy to participate fully and to avoid behavioral issues. In the interest of providing the best possible learning environment for

all students and staff, we have developed a Food Guidelines policy based on the experience of the faculty and related current scientific data. If you have any questions or comments about the Food Guidelines, please speak with your teacher.

- Each grades student should bring a healthy snack and a full lunch in a basket or lunchbox (no pictures or characters, please) and two cloth napkins.
- Early Childhood students may bring a healthy lunch if they are staying for Little Siesta. Early childhood classes prepare a hearty mid-morning meal together.
- One full water bottle should be brought to school each day. Children bring their water bottles outdoors, so a rugged design is recommended. Please bring water only.
- All foods containing added sugar, food dyes, artificial additives or preservatives may not be brought on campus. This includes, but is not limited to:
 1. Soda
 2. Gum
 3. Candy
 4. Sweetened beverages
 5. Chips (Doritos, Cheetos, etc.)
 6. Flavored yogurt (Gogurt, etc.)
 7. Pudding/Jello cups
 8. Sweetened granola bars
 9. Cookies, cakes, etc
- In consideration of students with food allergies, lunches may not be shared.
- Some suggestions of what to bring – whole grain sandwiches, fruit, veggies and hummus, Lara Bars, soups, etc
- In the office there will be a snack basket with snacks available for purchase if you have forgotten something
- To further promote harmony and ease in the classroom, we request that students do not eat any of the offending foods before coming to school, as well.

The faculty and staff are greatly appreciative of the steps families make in adopting the Food Guidelines for their students. We truly believe that eating whole, natural foods is the key to a productive and enjoyable school experience.

Forest Fridays

Every Friday that is a full school day, unless otherwise noted, our Grades students will participate in “Forest Fridays” with a walk to Phillippi Estate Park for an afternoon immersed in nature. They may do Siesta Key beach nature walks or explore other parks and preserves as well. Parents are welcome to help chaperone, and may be asked to drive on occasion. Parents are strongly encouraged to pick up their children from the field trip location, at 2:00. Otherwise, they may pick up their children from school at 2:30.

Fundraising

Our affordable tuition covers approximately 90% of our operating expenses. MSS relies on internal and external fundraising to meet our annual budget needs.

All families are expected to participate in annual fundraising efforts, through contributions or volunteerism. Even if you are not able to give a lot, all families are encouraged to give some amount so that our annual participation rate is 100%. This allows our school more grant opportunities.

This year our fundraisers include The Giving Challenge through the Community Foundation, Mermaids Faire, To-Go Café, Roll-a-thon and more. Additional information will be available in the Weekly Update as events approach.

Issue Resolution

Mangrove School of Sarasota Resolution Process

We strive to resolve issues and conflicts in a healthy and transparent manner. Conflict resolution occupies an important role in building a community. We sincerely hope that if you have a concern, you will let us know, so we can help resolve it in a timely manner.

When an issue or concern arises please follow these steps in this order.

1. Speak directly with the individuals involved. Often issues can be resolved through open, direct and respectful communication.
2. Inform the Director
3. Have a mediated discussion if necessary. Notes from the meeting will be documented.

All concerns will be taken seriously and responded to appropriately, as quickly as possible.

We appreciate and welcome your feedback.

Media Guidelines

The use of computers, laptops, hand-held devices, tablets, and television by students is strongly discouraged. Media interrupts the child's natural inclination to:

- Move their bodies
- Create original pictures in the mind
- Engage in lived experiences.

Additional concerns include:

- Inhibited neurological development
- Shortened attention span
- Consumerism
- Inappropriate content/attitudes
- Interrupted sleep patterns
- Body image issues
- Loss of patience

We recommend that children under the age of 10 avoid media of all types. Older students may use screens sparingly, avoiding it altogether on the evenings before a school day.

It is our sincere desire that each family consider the available research and recommendations regarding media and become whole-hearted supporters of our media guidelines.

If you have any questions about the media guidelines or how to reduce screens in your child's day, please speak with your teacher. The links below will further explain our position on media and screens.

- <http://www.waldorftoday.com/2013/01/the-sorcerers-apprentice-mind-over-machinery/>
- http://nytimes.com/2011/10/23/technology/at-waldorf-school-in-silicon-valley-technology-can-wait.html?ref=gradingthedigitalschool&_r=0
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ge5G_cYpj8G

Sleep

Children who get the optimal hours of sleep per night are able to meet their day with vigor and positivity. A full night's rest also helps to prevent illness, as it strengthens the immune system. The following chart lists the recommended hours of sleep for each age:

Child's Age	Recommended Hours of Sleep	In Reality
4-12 Months Old	11 - 15 hours per day	most infants get only about 12 hours sleep
1-3 Years Old	12 - 14 hours per day	toddlers typically get only about 10 hours
3-6 Years Old	10 - 12 hours per day	these children usually get less than 10 hours of sleep
7-12 Years Old	10 - 11 hours per day	the average for this age group is only about 9 hours
12-18 Years Old	9 - 10 hours per day	most are averaging 7.5 hours

Smoking

Smoking and e-cigarettes are not permitted on the campus for the safety and comfort of students and staff. Thank you for understanding.

Student Progress

Parent-Teacher Conferences

Parent-teacher conferences are scheduled twice a year. Please allow 30-45 minutes for the meeting. Both parents are encouraged to attend the conference to best address both parents' concerns effectively. The meeting will address the academic, social, physical and emotional development of the student. Additional parent-teacher conferences may take place throughout the year, as needed. Please contact your teacher if any issues arise.

Progress Reports

In June, a comprehensive End-of-Year report will be mailed home.

Student Support Services

It is our sincere hope to provide as many children as possible with this unique, progressive education. We strive to serve children with diverse learning needs whenever feasible. Sometimes, however, children will need additional support in order to reach his or her full potential.

If your child is noted to exhibit any learning or behavioral concerns, they will be referred to our Extra Lesson teacher for an observation. This observation will take place during class time. If your child is identified as needing this type of work, our Extra Lesson teacher will schedule these lessons weekly, during the school day. The rates for 2016-17 will be \$30 per session, and will be at the expense of the parents or guardians.

Benefits of Extra Lesson include:

Foundations for literacy - developmental capacities for all aspects of language.

Foundations for numeracy - the math/logical and spatial intelligences

Readiness for desk-work - enhancing focus and attention. Setting the stage for harmonious receptivity to new material.

Bodily/kinesthetic and spatial integration.

Strengthening the will.

The Extra Lesson teacher will communicate with you and your child's teacher regarding your child's progress on a bi-weekly basis at minimum, as well as keep a detailed record of these sessions in your child's file.

Alternatively, you may be referred to Child Find, for a free developmental assessment through the Sarasota County Schools system. If it is determined that your child is eligible to receive services, they can take place on our campus and will be free of charge.

Your child's class teacher will also keep frequent communication with these therapists to ensure that we are meeting your child's educational needs.

If you have any additional questions about this policy, or for more information on requesting an assessment through the county, please contact the office. 941.927.3711

Tuition and Arrears

The Board of Trustees is responsible for the financial health and stability of the Mangrove School of Sarasota. To that end, the following financial policy has been established:

Tuition Payments

- The first tuition payment of the school year is due on July 1st.
- The July 1st payment holds the student's place for the 2016-17 school year.
- For families choosing the 10 month payment plan, payments are due on the 1st of each month through April.
- Although tuition can be broken into payment plans for affordability purposes, it is not a month to month obligation, but rather, an annual commitment.

Unfortunately, there are times when a family is unable to make a payment due to illness, job loss, etc. We do not want any family due to inability to pay. Please contact the office as soon as possible if you are having difficulty in making your tuition payments. In the event that a payment is late/missed and an arrangement has not been made with the administration, the following arrears policy applies:

Arrears

1. Payments made after the 6th day of the month will be assessed a \$29.00 late fee by TADS.
2. After 10 days, an email will be sent as a reminder.
3. If a payment is not received by the 14th day, the Director will notify the family by phone that the student(s) may not attend class, until payment arrangements have been made.
4. When 30 days have passed, a letter will be sent via certified mail as a reminder and notice that a 5% finance charge has been assessed on the total arrears.

Toys at School

Grades children should leave toys at home, as they tend to be distracting. Your child's teacher will let you know when they will be hosting show and tell days, during which time your child is welcome to bring something from home they wish to show their friends.

Visitors

For reasons of safety and liability, unauthorized visitors are not allowed on MSS school grounds. All guests and visitors are required to check in at the school office, located at the front of the Community Center. Parents should take any missing student items to the office during the school day instead of directly to the classrooms, as well as text their child's teacher to let them know.

Volunteerism

Volunteering provides a meaningful and necessary service for the school, while enriching the experience of both the child as well as the family. Our school offers many opportunities for parents, grandparents and friends to invest their time in our community, and the students' education. If you are interested in volunteering, please stop by the office and fill out a volunteer survey to share the interests and skills that you have to offer the school.

Education Resources

Books

Simplicity Parenting by Kim John Payne

You are Your Child's First Teacher by Rahima Baldwin

School as a Journey by Torin Finser

School Renewal by Torin Finser

The Education of the Child by Rudolf Steiner

Creativity in Education by Rene Querido

Beyond the Rainbow Bridge by Barbara Patterson and Pamela Bradley

Waldorf Education: A Family Guide by P. Fenner and K. Rivers

Online Resources

Waldorf Online Library: www.waldorflibrary.org

The Association of Waldorf Schools of North America: www.whywaldorfworks.org

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The Sorcerer's Apprentice: Mind over Machinery



By DOUGLAS GERWIN, PhD

The term “media” has an interesting and surprisingly short biography. As recently as the 1970s the *Oxford English Dictionary* listed only three meanings for this term—the oldest going back no further than the 1840s—

and none of them had anything to do with newspapers, magazines, radio, film, or television, though the phrase “mass media” has circulated in popular American parlance since the 1920s.

Instead, “media” is listed in the *OED* as a biological term denoting the middle membrane of an artery, while in phonetics it refers to a soft mute sound, such as in the consonants “b”, “g”, or “d”. The third definition is simply as the plural of the noun “medium”. On this view, iron bars or pools of water or even table tappers could be described as being “media” for sounds, waves, or disembodied spirits.

Today “media” is such common (and sometimes abused) currency that we all know—or think we know—what we mean by it. Let’s explore different aspects of what by now we call “the media”, especially in their relationship to technology as vehicles or platforms for education. . . .

When Is Technology a Tool? When a Crutch? The Role of Technology in Education

During the course of history, advances in technology have typically been accompanied by stern warnings about their false promises and dangers to our physical or mental health. Listen only to the words of Thamus, legendary king of Thebes, who according to Socrates had this to say to the divine Theuth when the Egyptian god presented the king with a new technology for recording events and memories called “writing”.

“If men learn this,” exclaimed the king, “it will impart forgetfulness in their souls; they will cease to exercise memory because they rely on that which is written, calling things to remembrance no longer from within themselves, but by means of external marks. What you have discovered is a recipe not for memory, but for reminder.”

*“And it is no true wisdom that you offer your disciples,” he went on, “but only its semblance, for by telling them of many things without teaching them you will make them seem to know much, while for the most part they know nothing, and as men filled, not with wisdom, but with the conceit of wisdom, they will be a burden to their fellows.” [Plato, *Phaedrus*, 275a-b]*



Similar outcries during the Renaissance were launched against the printing press, and in more recent times we have heard laments about the corrosive effects on our

language of the tape recorder, the typewriter, the word processor, spell check, and now e-mail and Twitter and AAA — the Age of Acronyms and Abbreviations. A modern-day Cassandra might well tweet, “OMG. How un42n8!”

Thamus’ words of caution did not prevent writing from becoming an increasingly widespread tool, first among priests and scholars and by now in the pudgy hands of every eager first grader. No elementary school teacher would wish it otherwise.

And yet there is prescience in Thamus’ warning. Our powers of memory today, it would seem, are no match for those of the Ancient Greek bards, who we are told could recite Homer’s epic poems by heart, hours at a time. And I hear high school teachers say they can tell by its tone and fluency whether a student’s essay was hand-written or composed on a keyboard.

Do I wish to imply that we should roll back the teaching of writing or extend “Screen-Free Week” to all electronic communication? No. (How, after all, could I expect you to be reading this article, if I did?) Rather, my point is to suggest that Socrates’ cautionary tale hints at an aspect of technology we may be prone to overlook.

As the root meanings of the word suggest, technology [Gr. *techne*, “tool” and “way, means”] implies something about instruments, on the one hand, and something about ways to use them, on the other. Now, before you can make use of a tool, you need first to develop a measure of skill to carry out *on your own* the physical or mental deed that the tool is intended to make easier. Don’t give toddlers a hammer, for example, until they have mastered some level of skill at hitting things accurately. Keep calculators away from children until they have acquired some proficiency in arithmetic operations. In the first case, youngsters need to build up physical muscle before a hammer can serve as a useful (rather than as a recklessly destructive) tool; in the second case, children need to build up “spiritual muscle”—say, through mental math—before a calculator can function as a useful aid to intellectual operations rather than as a substitute for them.

Herein lies the key: give a child a tool early on in life, and it will supplant the very skill it was intended to supplement. In other words, tools become prosthetics, or crutches, if introduced too soon. Their use also tends to become addictive.

The same case can be made about any piece of technology, to the degree that it enhances a human skill or way of doing something. Electronic media are no exception. The fundamental questions remain the same:

1. Which human skill are these electronic “tools” designed to assist or even mimic?
2. At which age will children have developed these skills sufficiently so that these “tools” can serve rather than subvert them?

Let’s take television, perhaps one of the more controversial examples. Television mimics the human ability to create pictures. According to Rudolf Steiner, children learn to think by inwardly creating mental pictures and mental images. If pictures are outwardly supplied ready made, they rob the child of the opportunity to build the “imaginative muscle” needed to become independent thinkers. Since the ability to think unfolds gradually, the age at which children can benefit from television, rather than become slaves to it, will vary. A general guideline, though, will be: the later, the better, recognizing that we cannot shut off our children from all exposure to these kinds of tool.

Indeed, Rudolf Steiner cautions against banning tools of technology outright. In a lecture given shortly after the outbreak of World War I [“Technology and Art”, Dornach 28 December 1914], he declared: “It would be the worst possible mistake to say that we should resist what technology has brought into modern life, that we should protect ourselves . . . by cutting ourselves off from modern life. In a certain sense this would be *spiritual cowardice*.” [emphasis added]

Instead, Steiner goes on to say, the more we expose ourselves to technology (rather than flee from it), the more we need to strengthen in ourselves—for instance, through the arts— precisely those human capacities that technology mimics or supplements.

In our present time, attention is turning to the appropriate use of computers in schools. Paradoxically, we read about kindergarten teachers who are encouraging the use of computers and tweeting in pre-school while some university professors are banning them outright from their lectures and seminars. In this hotly contested field of enquiry, the same questions suggested above can be posed:

1. Which human skills does the computer mimic or supplement?
2. At which age will children have developed these skills sufficiently so that the computer can assist rather than hijack them?

The first question: Which human skills does the computer mimic or supplement?

It is tempting to think of the computer as a fancy calculator or stern grammarian, and for many people (myself included) this device does indeed serve these functions. But what makes the computer distinctive from other technological devices is its ability to *simulate human experience*. In fact, as one respondent suggested, we should rename the computer “the simulator” in recognition of the tremendous benefits that the computer has wrought in our culture, especially in the fields of engineering, medicine, and—yes—entertainment and even broadcasting.



Computer models allow us to test new engines, fly new airplanes, try out new drugs without even creating them in the physical world. Using virtual models, we are able to experiment with new designs and simulate their effects. By the same token, every weather map you see on the evening newscast and just about every vehicle or building you see get blown up in a scene of a so-called “action movie” these days is some kind of computer simulation. If you have remained seated in the cinema long enough for the end of the credits, you will know just how many people work on a film’s computerized “FX”.

So, what’s the problem with that? The problem is the same as for all examples of technology. It’s great when it *supplements* a skill you have already developed, and it’s not so great when it *supplants* it. If you have mastered some drawings of projective geometry, the computer can enhance your understanding and appreciation of this mind-bending subject through models of geometric forms set whirling in simulated motion. But in teaching this subject, I would never wish my students to work with these simulations until they had first achieved a measure of skill in making their own drawings. It’s the difference between listening to a recording of music you don’t know and listening to a recording in which a skilled soloist plays precisely the piece you have struggled for months to play for yourself. The recording is all the more thrilling if it supplements your own experience rather than replacing it.

There, then, is the first point: the computer supplies us with a virtual experience that can serve to supplement our actual, that is to say *lived*, experience. The mischief—including, I would suggest, the beginning of addiction—begins when the computer supplants it.

Virtual experience is of a different order of being than lived experience. It is like an advertisement for a loaf of bread: the promise—but not the delivery—of nourishment. If anything, the image will stir the craving but not, of itself, relieve it.

The second question: At which age will children have developed these skills sufficiently so that the computer can assist rather than hijack them?

If we can recognize the specific genius of the computer as being its ability to simulate human experience, then (at least in an abstract way) we have already answered the second question. The child will be ready to benefit from simulated experience to the degree it has already engaged in its own lived experience.

But here's the rub: who is willing—or even able—to withhold the computer from children for that long? As one set of parents reported in response to our questions, the more they try to keep the computer from their children, the more they run after it. So we need an alternative approach.

Here's one. Let's ask a practical question: what are children *not* doing while engaged with the computer that otherwise they might be doing? Three things come to mind:

1. They are not *moving*
2. They are not *creating their own mental pictures*
3. They are not *engaged in lived experience*

Empirically, we know that children need to exercise all three of these capabilities if they are to enjoy a healthy physical, emotional, and spiritual life, both in childhood and later in adult life. In the context of Waldorf education, we know that all three of these exercises involve the child's developing sense of self, or "I". When the child's "I" is engaged, the child will develop healthily; when the "I" is not engaged, the child will not mature.



Empirical studies show that the "I" is most engaged when the child is stirred to physical movement (especially in the pre-school years), when it is inspired to create mental pictures (especially during the grade school years), and when it is motivated to embrace self-directed lived experience (especially in high school and in the years that follow). To the degree, then, that children spend their time on the computer at the expense of exercising these three capacities, to this same degree their caretakers—that is, we as their parents and teachers—need to provide all the more opportunities to develop them.

A ratio of computer time to movement time; a ratio of computer time to mental creativity time; a ratio of virtual computer experience to lived experience needs to be calculated — perhaps negotiated and modified, as the child gets older. The key point, though, is that movement, mental creativity, and lived experience are "front loaded", so to speak. *First the real, then the simulated, or e-real.*

Otherwise, the child will run the risk of growing up without the full involvement of its “I” or ego. And when ego is treated as e-go, in time it will be e-gone.

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Notes about the images and the title “The Sorcerer’s Apprentice” -Ed.

The images are from “Fantasia” by Walt Disney and from Goethe’s “Der Zauberlehrling.” The Sorcerer’s Apprentice (German: Der Zauberlehrling) is a poem by Goethe, written in 1797. The poem is a ballad in fourteen stanzas. The poem begins as an old sorcerer departs his workshop, leaving his apprentice with chores to perform. Tired of fetching water by pail, the apprentice enchants a broom to do the work for him — using magic in which he is not yet fully trained. The floor is soon awash with water, and the apprentice realizes that he cannot stop the broom because he does not know how.

Not knowing how to control the enchanted broom, the apprentice splits it in two with an axe, but each of the pieces becomes a new broom and takes up a pail and continues fetching water, now at twice the speed. When all seems lost, the old sorcerer returns, quickly breaks the spell and saves the day. The poem finishes with the old sorcerer’s statement that powerful spirits should only be called by the master himself.

Der Zauberlehrling is well known in the German-speaking world. The lines in which the apprentice implores the returning sorcerer to help him with the mess he has created have turned into a cliché, especially the line Die Geister, die ich rief (“The spirits that I called”), a garbled version of one of Goethe’s lines, which is often used to describe a situation where somebody summons help or uses allies that he cannot control, especially in politics.

Fantasia, the animated dialogue-free 1940 Disney film Fantasia popularized the story from Goethe’s poem, and the Paul Dukas symphonic poem based on it, in one of eight animated shorts in Fantasia based on classical music. In the piece, which retains the title “The Sorcerer’s Apprentice,” Mickey Mouse plays the apprentice, and the story follows Goethe’s original closely, except that the sorcerer (“Yen Sid”, or Disney backwards) is stern and angry with his apprentice when he saves him. Fantasia popularized Goethe’s story to a worldwide audience. The segment proved so popular that it was repeated, in its original form, in the sequel Fantasia 2000.

Some versions of the tale differ from Goethe’s, and in some versions the sorcerer is angry at the apprentice and in some even expels the apprentice for causing the mess. In other versions, the sorcerer is a bit amused at the apprentice and he simply chides him. The sorcerer’s anger with the apprentice, which appears in both the Greek Philopseudes and the film Fantasia, does not appear in Goethe’s Der Zauberlehrling.