

Child Side School Computer and Internet Policy:

Educators' reasoning:

Despite the current popular high regard and urgency for children to use computers from an early age, there is contradictory evidence to the long-term benefits for children's learning (see reference list below for starters). Many highly regarded educational researchers and theorists such as Jane Healy and Howard Gardner are questioning the way we use computers in schools and their value for money (including the high need for maintenance, constant updating, commercial software products and human resources attached to them), given all the other resources needed to create a stimulating, multi-sensory learning environment indoors and outdoors for children. We do not wish for computers to come at the expense of other more relevant tools and resources and learning experiences offered to children, especially in the early childhood phase of schooling.

At Child Side School we see computers as another tool for learning, just like a hammer or a paintbrush and as with other tools, the computer needs to be used selectively and for the appropriate job with adult assistance and interaction.

It is not to be used to keep children busy playing games or surfing the internet for no legitimate reason. Children's time is far better used to interact with others, interact with books, explore the outdoors and tinker with other materials and resources, especially in the early childhood phase of schooling.

Computers are of high interest and motivation for children but careful observation can show children merely pushing buttons and playing reactive games, rather than reading, thinking or processing information or using any 'habits of mind' (such as the concern for evidence using their 'filters'; finding patterns or relationships; seeing multiple perspectives; hypothesizing and finding a range of possibilities; asking themselves what does this information/evidence matter and to whom? Or how they can use this information/evidence/process to express, share, clarify, confirm, contradict, communicate what they already know or have found out?)

Computers are an amazing open-ended resource/tool when used wisely and with deliberation, purpose and care. Adult interaction and interest is essential for demonstrating functions and purposes/possibilities of computers and modelling 'habits of mind' and developing 'filters'. Research into brain development cautions against the wide-spread use of the internet as a means of collecting information for children in the early years and even middle years of schooling. Adult interaction is essential, even with the appropriate commercial 'filters' that schools use to censor certain things available on the internet for children.

All parents are encouraged to think carefully about their own personal computer/play station/game policy at home and to regularly ask themselves what their children are learning (especially what are the 'messages' for children behind many of the games). They are also encouraged to regularly interact with their children when they are on the computer or play

station at home and to help their children develop 'filters' to understand and process these 'messages' and ideas. Parents are encouraged to question the intent behind the programme or game and to consciously decide whether they think it is appropriate for their child/ren, (children will show a high interest and motivation regardless of the content, intent or message behind the game or programme, therefore it will need to be the adult's decision with appropriate discussion with the child.)

Computer and internet use at Child Side School:

- Computers will be used for a specific purpose or reason, integrated with children's current learning experiences and for authentic purposes as expressed by children and adults. **Children will only use computers with adult knowledge and supervision.**
- Laptop computers are available for children in the 3-6 class to use with years 5-6 having priority use. Their use of the computer is regularly checked by the Educator and any safety issues discussed with the children by the Educator. Laptop computers are leased through Nerdism and updated every three years. Physical environment is set up so that the laptop screens are visible to educator at all times. Computers are always used in public places and in an open and transparent manner whereby cyber safety can be monitored by several adults and this applies to anyone on the school site.
- Children will need to negotiate with adults and offer their evidence for choosing the computer as the most appropriate tool for their task (with help and support from adults of course).

As part of this process, children may be required to draw, write, plan, discuss their idea/reasons before using the computer for their next stage to collect data/information, confirm, clarify or contradict ideas/evidence to provide multiple perspectives and alternatives/possibilities. This is part of the learning process of 'theory-repair' where children can use the computer/internet/emails to help them form/reform/deepen/modify their ideas and theories. This is an extremely complex process with which children will need adult guidance, support and interest.

- Afterwards children may also be required to 'do' something with the idea or 'evidence'/information they got off the computer/internet; such as set up an experiment, design and create something, write, draw, discuss, display, print photos for the journals....
- Children will be shown the appropriate computer skills and processes when they ask or when the adult sees a need or when it is deemed developmentally appropriate by the adult. Word processing skills can be learnt early on, but for what purpose? Why expect children to do something today with difficulty that they will 'master' much easier and quicker when they are ready later on?
- CD ROMs will need careful selection and discussion amongst adult educators towards their intent, use and purpose.
- If we are expecting children to be thinkers, the adults (educators and parents) will also be required to be thoughtful and make conscious decisions about computers and their use, and to discuss these with children.

Beginning Reading List:

Thought provoking reading that can be accessed on order through your local library:

- Jane M Healy; **“Failure To Connect- How Computers Affect Our Children’s Minds- and What We Can Do About It.”** Simon and Schuster, New York, 1999
- Alison Armstrong and Charles Casement; **“ The Child and the Machine- How Computers Put Our Children’s Education At Risk.”** Scribe Publications, Melbourne, 1998/2000
- Jane M Healy; **“Endangered Minds- Why Children Don’t Think And What We Can Do About It.”** Simon and Schuster, New York, 1990

Visit www.allianceforchildhood.com for a very succinct case for limiting the use of computers with young children.

VERSION	DATE REVIEWED	DATE RATIFIED	CHANGES MADE	AUTHOR OF CHANGES
1	June 2011	10/8/2011	minor	LO
2	June 2014	25/6/2014	Name changes	KM
3	Feb 2015	25/2/2015	Year level changes eg 3-7 to 3-6	KM
4	March 2015	27/5/2015	In reference to cyber safety and physical environment set up	Staff on SDD day