



CURAMUS SCHOOL

FOR AUTISM

94 Sterkfontein Road
Paardeplaats
Krugersdorp, 1739
Gauteng

011 665 1033

principal@curamusschool.co.za
admin@curamusschool.co.za
finance@curamusschool.co.za
www.curamusschool.co.za

Dear parents and caregivers

Re: The use of screens by our children

We live in a world where screens are part of our daily life and most children enjoy watching TV, playing on a tablet and using a phone.

The School based Support Team is concerned about the amount of screen time our learners are exposed to. Screen time includes the use of the following devices:

-  Television screens
-  Laptops and PCs
-  Tablets
-  Cellphones



Many learners at our school are using screens on a daily basis for long periods of time. Many learners watch TV most of the afternoon and almost all day on weekends and in the holidays.

This worries us as research shows that children with Autism are at higher risk of the negative effects of screen time.

When a child uses a TV, tablet and phone they can do this without having to interact with another person. This is why children with Autism often prefer screen time to playing with a friend.

It is known that screens can be highly addictive and children with Autism are even more easily addicted to screens than others.

Use of screens by children can lead to:

- Concentration difficulties
- Sleep difficulties
- Weight gain
- Challenging behaviour and difficulties calming down
- Slow speech development



Gauteng West District • EMIS No: 700250977 • NPO No: 199-722

Banking Details: ABSA Key West • Branch code: 632005 • Curamus School • Acc no: 0310680966

TOGETHER IN UNCONDITIONAL LOVE

- Poor interactions with people (difficulties with eye contact and reading body language)
- Fine and gross motor difficulties
- Difficulties playing with toys and not knowing how to pretend
- Difficulties waiting and being patient
- Difficulties taking turns



At Curamus School we have observed that learners who have large amounts of screen time have poorer social skills, display challenging behaviour (such as aggression) and show withdrawal symptoms such as crying all day and demanding screen time. These behaviours are especially noticed after weekends and holidays, when kids have had even more screen time. The over exposure makes it harder for them to concentrate and learn.

Tips to help your child:

- We recommend a maximum of 1 hour of screen time a day, if possible split over 2-3 sessions (e.g. 20 minutes at a time). There is very little benefit and many disadvantages for a child to spend more than 1 hour a day on any screen.
- Let an adult or other child watch with your child so they can talk to them and laugh together
- Keep the TV off during mealtimes and when playing.
- Don't allow your child to use screens for 1 hour before they go to sleep.
- Carefully choose what your child is allowed to watch or play. Not all cartoons are good for children. If there is aggressive behaviour and bad language in the cartoon this is not child-friendly.

Try this instead of using screens:

- Encourage at least 30 minutes of outside play in your yard every day (e.g. water play, sand play, soccer, riding bikes)
- If you don't have a safe outside area you could go on a walk with your child or take them to a park
- Set up a small play area in a corner of a room with a box of different toys that your child would like (e.g. Puzzles, books, ball, blocks, dolls, cars, craft materials, card games)
- Spend at least 15-30 minutes a day playing with your child with these toys. Show them how to use the different items.
- Involve your child in chores such as watering plants, sweeping, dusting, peeling vegetables, feeding pets or hanging up laundry.
- Enroll your child in extra-murals (e.g. sports, music, dancing) or an aftercare where they can play with other children.

Sometimes a learner may need a device for communication. In these cases you will be informed and guided by the speech therapists.

To help you with ideas of what to do with your child you will be receiving a weekly activity to do at home from your class teacher from term 2 onwards. This activity must be completed and can be repeated throughout the week. If you are unable to complete the activity sent by your teacher please let them know.

Kind Regards,

Your Curamus School Based Support Team