



## Technology at Ambleside

At Ambleside, we utilize technology in a manner that supports our students being prepared for all of life.

Our junior high students use school-provided laptops to do composition, create spreadsheets, appropriately search the Internet in relation to their studies, and connect with ideas in creative ways. In preparation for this, students in grades five and six are given home assignments to learn keyboarding, rather than taking class time. Frequently Ambleside students also choose to use their time at home to use technology to further explore things they have learned at school.

At Ambleside we are intentional to prioritize class time for "face to face" relational interactions, rather than "face to screen" interactions. The emphasis in our classrooms is on the education our students will not likely receive elsewhere -- great books, writing, neat calculations, deep discussions, frequent contact with nature, art, music, handwork, and relationships to persons and ideas from throughout history. These have proven and worthy academic value, whereas many "projects" can consume much time but return little academic value.

We are also very intentional to use school time to foster academic habits, such as the habit of sustained attention. We are aiming at a student who can listen to others attentively, consider and retell a complex passage, discuss the material thoughtfully, and relate with ideas creatively. In contrast, much educational software and use of technology in school today employs entertainment and immediate gratification to encourage learning, which can work against the very habits that will help students thrive in high school and beyond.

Current brain research is concluding, "developing brains can become more easily habituated than adult brains to constantly switching tasks — and less able to sustain attention. '[Students'] brains are rewarded not for staying on task but for jumping to the next thing,' said Michael Rich, an associate professor at Harvard Medical School and executive director of the Center on Media and Child Health in Boston. And the effects could linger: "The worry is we're raising a generation of kids in front of screens whose brains are going to be wired differently.'" According to the New York Times, students age 8 to 18 spend more than seven and a half hours a day on electronic devices, and with multitasking, they consume nearly 11 hours of content during that time. We don't think that elementary students are in need of more time spent giving "continuous partial attention."

One of our posted articles quotes Alan Eagle, a graduated from Dartmouth with a degree in computer science, who now works at Google and uses an iPad and Smartphone in his daily life. He states, "Technology can be useful when children are older, but it has to be introduced at the appropriate time and place...At Google we make technology as brain-dead easy to use as possible...There's no reason why kids can't figure it out when they get older." His children, as many children of Silicon Valley executives, attend a Waldorf school that fosters creativity, and uses no computers at all.

Ambleside students are surrounded by technology, and our graduates are immersed in it and excel at it (many are on advanced math/science/engineering/technology tracks in high school and college). The most valuable preparation we give them for that future is the gift of time preserved for deep thinking, concentrated reasoning, creativity and broad interests. These cultivate things of lasting import in our students; things they can use and enjoy, whatever their future pursuits.

For further insights on technology, we invite you to read the articles posted at the bottom of the "Resources" page.