Talking about qualities

C Ways of learning

BEFORE YOU READ

1 Talking about different ways of learning

a Do you know what the Waldorf method of education is? Go online and research what characterises it and what its aims are.

b Make a list of the aspects that are different in a Waldorf school in comparison to your school. Think about the subjects, tasks, people, equipment and atmosphere.

c Discuss with a partner why parents might send their children to a Waldorf school. Would you like to attend one? Why or why not?

Silicon Valley's tech-free Waldorf School is a hit

Deep in the heart of Silicon Valley, a short drive from the headquarters of Google and LinkedIn, stands a small, secluded school unlike any other. It has impressed executives at some technology companies so much that they spend up to $40,000 a year to send their children there. For here, where self-driving cars are common, technology is banned. In a seeming paradox, the Waldorf School of the Peninsula in Mountain View, California, maintains that technology is stifling children's creativity, human interactions and attention spans. And senior tech executives seem to agree. The Waldorf insists on blackboards, chalk and paper as others pour money into iPads. Pupils have included the children of the chief technology officer of eBay and executives at Google, Apple and Yahoo.

Inside a classroom in the Waldorf's primary school there are no screens. No digital technology is allowed and parents are encouraged to restrict it at home. It is not until 13 that children are gradually introduced to screens. Instead, children are taught to develop their brains with movement and co-ordination. In a third-grade class on a sunny Wednesday morning, Cathy Waheed, a former computer engineer, stands at a chalk board where she points to a colourful hand-drawn musical scale, getting the children to sing eac h note. The pupils sit at wooden desks with workbooks and pencils, surrounded by shelves stuffed with encyclopedias and atlases; green plants line the windows.

The two-hour lesson goes by in a flash, as Ms Waheed keeps the children moving, combining maths and grammar skills with hand-eye co-ordination such as catching balls as they recite the six-times table or sing their way through grammar rules: "I am the comma, so nimble and busy, without me some sentences would make me quite dizzy." When they get restless she makes them kick back their legs from the desk like a donkey while they count to four in languages including Farsi, Mandarin, German, Italian and Filipino.

There are about 160 Waldorf Schools in the US and 35 in the UK and Ireland, all believing that teaching is about physical activity and learning through creative tasks not screens. It is in Silicon Valley where the debate about the use of technology in education is most intense. Three quarters of the pupils have parents in technology, yet few teachers see a contradiction. Alison Davis, 34, head of

4 **secluded** abgeschieden, einsam
10 **seeming paradox** scheinbarer Widerspruch
13 **to maintain** aufrechterhalten
13 **to stifle** ersticken, erdrücken
15 **attention span** Aufmerksamkeitsspanne
17 **to insist (on sth)** (auf etw) bestehen
17 **chalk** Kreide
19 **chief technology officer** Technikvorstand
26 **gradually** allmählich, nach und nach
34 **hand-drawn** handgemalt
38 **encyclopedia** Enzyklopädie, Lexikon
40 **to go by in a flash** im Nu vorbeigehen
44 **to recite** vortragen, rezitieren
46 **nimble** wendig, flink
49 **restless** unruhig
50 **donkey** Esel
60 **intense** intensiv, heftig
63 **contradiction** Widerspruch, Widersprüchlichkeit

humanities at the high school, said that it was like a parent working at a fast food chain. You do not ban junk food but do not have it for every meal. [...]

Pierre Laurent, 55, who has worked at Microsoft and Intel, and who sent his three children to the school, said: "I think it's very good that it starts here. You want that group of people to really be asking these questions and it's natural they are also the first to answer them." He said the industry was having its "seatbelt moment".

Monica Laurent, his wife, who teaches children at the school from the ages of five to 12, said: "We really don't know what kind of world the children are going to find in ten to 20 years down the road. Who knows what kind of technology we are going to have then?" She added that they were, therefore, teaching children to be able to face an unknown world.

Mr Laurent said that parents had jobs that did not exist when they were in school "so they understand it is their own personal human capacity that has brought them there, like creativity and resilience and the ability to jump into something new".

It is hard to know whether the school's method leads to better results as, being private, it does not do standardised primary tests. A global report by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development suggested that schools investing heavily in computers had seen "no noticeable improvement" in their results for reading, maths and science in the Programme for International Student Assessment tests.

Teachers at the Waldorf stay with the same class from the age of five to 14, before specialists take over for its secondary school. Subjects are designed to reflect a child's development, from historical revolutions at 13 when pupils begin to question their parents, to Dante's Inferno at 17 as they emerge from puberty.

Ms Davis was inspired by a pupil bringing in two phones in case one was confiscated and made a digital literacy class for pupils aged 17 and 18. They discuss who they are, their community in the digital world and how to stop becoming reliant on technology.

Back in Ms Waheed's third-grade class the children are learning fractions and to demonstrate, she has brought out a large cake. As she prepares to divide up the cake into slices, the pupils seem more rapt than they could for any computer game.

(809 words)

Tom Knowles, *The Times*, 2018

75 **seatbelt** Sicherheitsgurt
85 **to face** gegenübertreten
89 **human capacity** menschliche Fähigkeit, Vermögen
90 **resilience** Widerstandsfähigkeit
109 **to emerge** herauskommen
111 **to confiscate** konfiszieren, einziehen
112 **digital literacy** digitale Bildung, digitale Kompetenz
115 **reliant on** abhängig von
118 **fraction** Bruch (Mathematik)
121 **slice** Stück, Scheibe
121 **rapt** hingerissen

WORKING WITH THE TEXT → WB, pp. 9–10

2 Reading for gist

Describe the main differences between the use of technology at a traditional school and at Waldorf School of the Peninsula.

3 Reading for detail

a Explain the paradox of how the school works and which children attend it.

b Summarise Monica Laurent's argument for the lack of technology in the classroom.

4 Words matter → S 15

The following nouns are taken from the text. Copy them and write down their corresponding verb and adjective.

1. executive (l. 6)
2. creativity (l. 14)
3. interaction (l. 14)
4. activity (l. 57)
5. education (l. 60)
6. contradiction (l. 63)

5 Focus on grammar → G 10

Talking about passing on information

a Look at lines 68–76. The first part is in direct speech and the second is in indirect speech. Note the difference in the tenses.

- Pierre Laurent […] said: "I think it's very good that it starts here. You want that group of people to really be asking these questions and it's natural they are also the first to answer them" (ll. 68–74).
- He said the industry was having its "seatbelt moment" (ll. 74–76).

b Rewrite the following sentence in indirect speech, remembering all of the necessary changes.

- The teacher said, "We have been using screens here for years. They're so great for teaching, I will never go back to using blackboards."

6 Focus on analysis → S 7 → Self-check 1.1

a Note down the parts of the text where the author quotes other people. Examine what function the direct quotes have.

b Identify passages where the author states his own opinion.

c Analyse to what extent the author gives his own opinion on the use of technology in schools.

Talking about ability, permission and necessity

7 Writing a comment → ○ 3 → S 5.1 → G 8 → Self-check 3.1

Read the following online comments on the article, and add your own comment on the effectiveness and suitability of technology-free learning in schools.

Comments (207)

matilda 15:07
This is an interesting article. It made me think about my own children.

Neil84 15:14
What a load of rubbish. The fact is, technology is a huge part of our lives and will only become more important. What's the point of shielding us from it and making us paint our feelings and count to four in 20 languages? We need to start learning about the real world, where we'll be living and working!

Tim → Neil84 15:24
This is the real world. Anybody can be taught how to use new technology and devices, but it is harder to teach emotional intelligence, and that is what young people (and the rest of society) need. And anyway, where does it say that they aren't using technology outside of school?

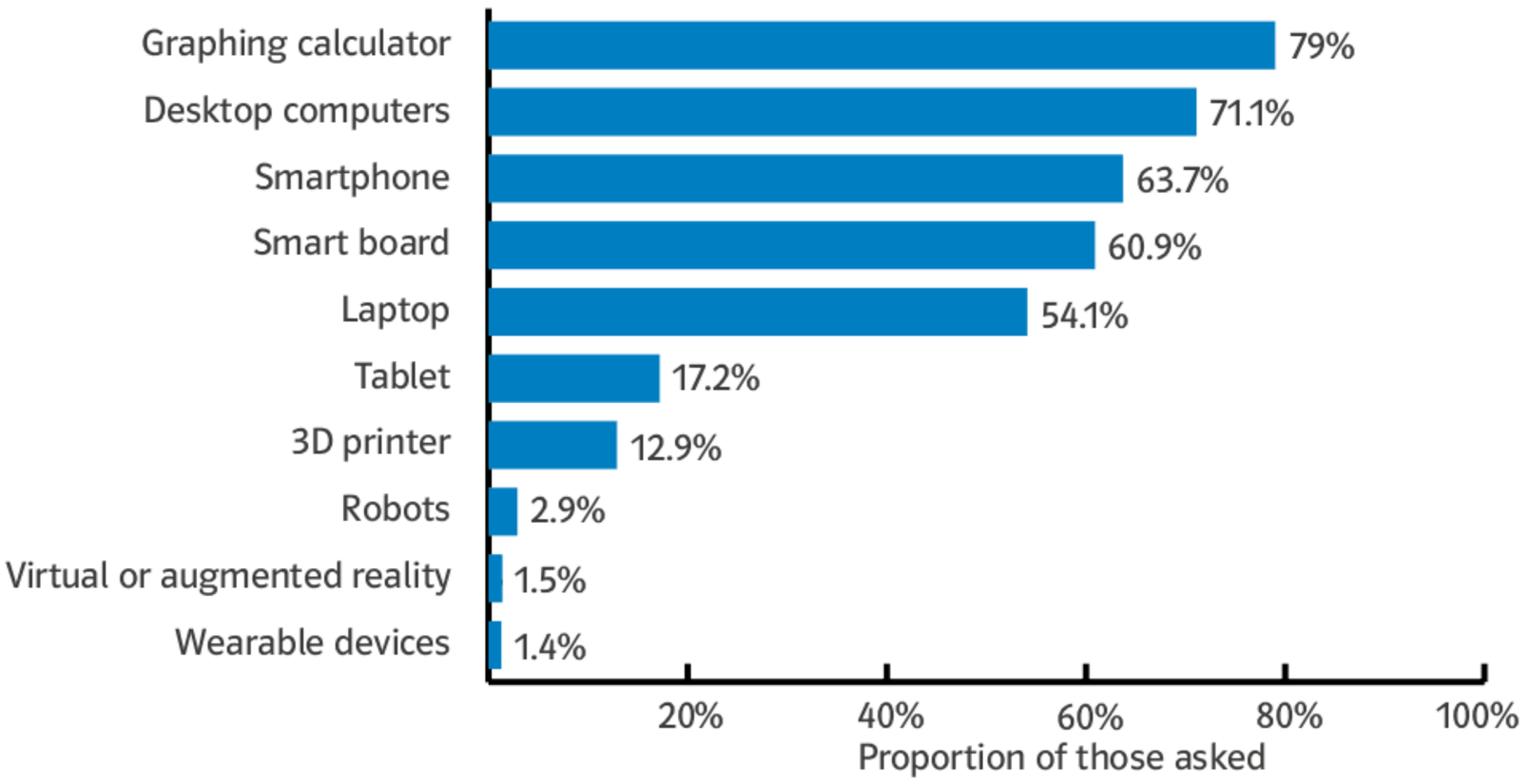
bluesky → Tim 15:28
I agree 100%. Well said!

A STEP FURTHER

8 Working with a diagram → S 10.4 → Self-check 1.6

Describe and analyse the bar graph and relate it to the text.

Devices commonly used in class (in the Netherlands)



Source: Statista, 2020

9 Talking about the use of electronic devices in your school → G 1.1, 13

Talking about quantities

a Work with a partner. Together, discuss the following questions. Take notes.
- In what subjects do you use electronic devices in class?
- Which ones do you use?
- How often do you use them (every lesson, once a week, once a month, …)?
- How much time do you usually spend with them?
- How often does your homework require using technical devices?
- Would you prefer to use electronic devices more often in class? Why / Why not? Which ones?

b Report back to the class and discuss the results. What conclusions can be drawn from them?

10 Listening comprehension → S 2 → Self-check 4

A1

Listen to the podcast "Forward Thinking: Edutainment". Identify keywords and take notes on the following aspects:

- the meaning of edutainment
- how edutainment can help in the classroom
- examples of edutainment
- how edutainment could affect interpersonal skills
- the importance of fun in learning