HERMMES: COMMUNITY AND CULTURE (C&C) GUIDE

Whilst the HERMMES curriculum gives guidance on children and young people's learning within the educational setting (kindergarten, school,…), the Community and Culture guide supports teachers and parents/caregivers to make changes to (digital) media across many aspects of the wider community, supporting children´s well-being more broadly.
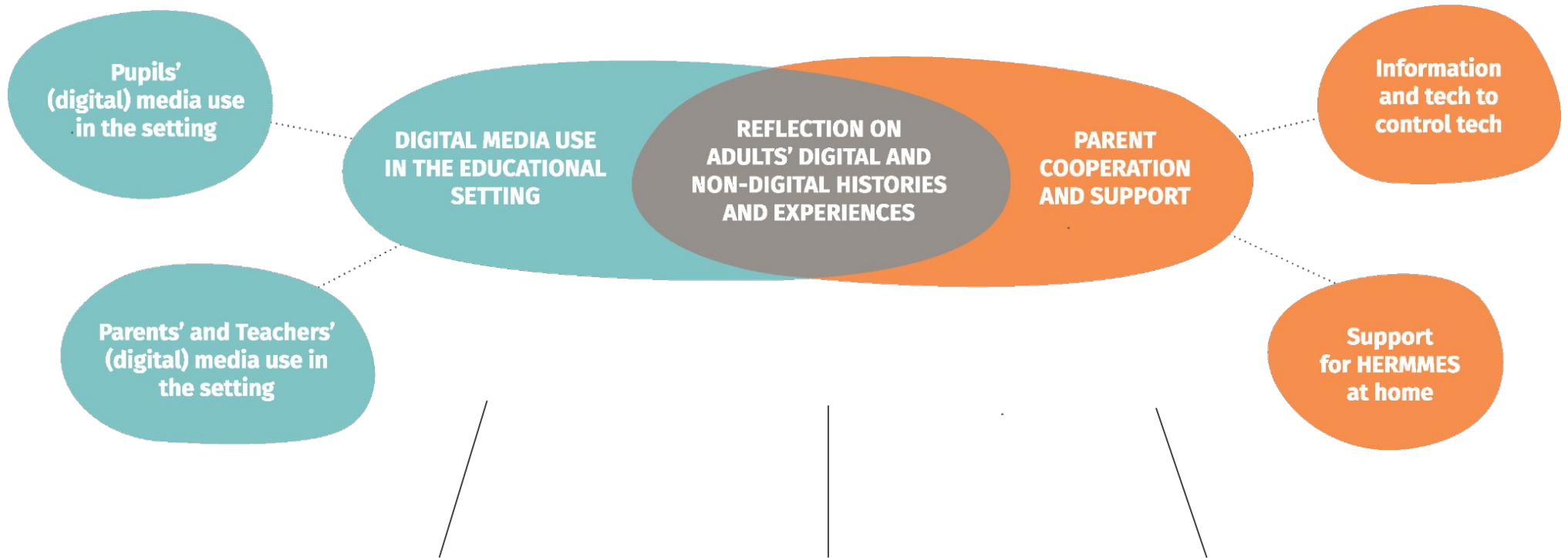
THE STRUCTURE

Pupils' (digital) media use in the setting

DIGITAL MEDIA USE IN THE EDUCATIONAL SETTING

REFLECTION ON ADULTS' DIGITAL AND NON-DIGITAL HISTORIES AND EXPERIENCES

PARENT COOPERATION AND SUPPORT

Information and tech to control tech

Parents' and Teachers' (digital) media use in the setting

Support for HERMMES at home

Support for managing and regulating (digital) media use in the educational setting

For all adults working with children, there are empowering questions and resources, which include reflecting on adult digital distraction in the presence of children.

For parents and caregivers directly, but also for teachers wanting to get involved more in this area

First level

EMPOWERING QUESTIONS (EQS)

On the first level, the Community and Culture (C&C) guide offers questions rather than answers. After a brief introduction, each of the areas is structured by a number of HERMMES C&C Empowering Questions (EQs). Each of the EQs can be used to foster discussion within the respective area.

Many of the EQs have been pre-tested, changed, validated in an expert survey and revised again in the course of a PhD thesis by Denzl (2025). In the HERMMES version, they are designed to foster a culture of communication and acceptance between pedagogical teams and families within the educational settings.

You can use the HERMMES EQs:

As a topic for a parent/caregiver partnership workshop

For a pedagogical staff meeting

To frame discussions around the creation of policies

Or in any other way that helps to drive change in a collaborative way

EMPOWERING QUESTIONS (EQs)

DIGITAL MEDIA USE IN THE EDUCATIONAL SETTING

Pupils' (digital) media use in the setting

- How do we ensure that children and young people participate in an age-appropriate way in shaping and communicating our guidelines and regulations regarding (digital) media use in our school or kindergarten?

- Which policies, rules and contracts to regulate the PRIVATE digital device use of LEARNERS (children, young people) are appropriate for our setting?

- Do (young) children have a right to non-participation in the digital world? How do we create an offline "village" around the child?

- Are students using EdTech or is EdTech using students? What are age groups, spaces, goals, contexts, learning phases where EdTech (Educational Technology) use is more suitable - and less suitable?

- How does the school/setting regulate students' school-related digital media use for documentation and communication?

- When and how do we want to teach students about a critical, reflected use of genAI (e.g. ChatGPT)? How can we make is less attractive for students to use it (for cheating)?

- How can HERMMES CASA media policies be represented and communicated to children and young people appropriately? And how do we deal with non-compliance?

Parents' and Teachers' (digital) media use in the setting

- How do we ensure that staff, parents and other relevant stakeholders are appropriately involved in shaping guidelines and regulations regarding (digital) media use in our school or kindergarten?

- What experience and expertise is accessible within our school/setting and family communities across all media and computer education domains? How can we activate these resources without exploiting teachers'and parents' good will?

- How do we establish and implement policies, rules and contracts regarding the PRIVATE digital device use of STAFF and PARENTS/CAREGIVERS in our setting?

- How do we establish and implement policies, rules and contracts regarding the EDUCATIONAL digital device use of STAFF (both for preparing lessons and for presenting during lessons)?

- What policies and regulation are appropriate for media use by teachers and parents for (digital) documentation and (digital) communication in the context of our setting?

- How can schools/settings ensure that the topic of (digital) media remains a priority in spite of other pressing demands?

- How do we communicate our approach to media education to ensure that parents and staff (especially if new to the school/setting) are aware of it, and are brought onboard? How do we react to repeated non-compliance?

REFLECTION ON ADULTS' DIGITAL AND NON-DIGITAL HISTORIES AND EXPERIENCES

- What can we do to create a non-judgemental, open and honest communication space for parents/caregivers and teachers/staff?

- What different motives and needs (e.g. social contact, stress management, information search,...) can we identify that drive our own adult digital media use? As a strategy to change unhealthy adult digital media use patterns, how can we support each other in finding offline/analog ways for meeting the same needs?

- Do children use (digital) media because WE need them to use them or because THEY do? What function (reward, surveillance, distraction, babysitter,...) etc. Do digital devices have in navigating the interactions between adults and children in family and school/kindergarten life?

- Are we aware that technoference (adults'digital distraction in the presence of children) can be harmful to them? Can reflecting on motives (EQ 3.2 and EQ 3.3) and finding analog alternatives help us to minimize negative impact on children?

- Children are "copy cats". What analogue technologies (wristwatch, analog birthday calender or bus timetable,...) would we consider using just to be healthier "role models" for children? And are we aware that we may profit from this in terms of a healthier digital balance, too?

- What were my routines of using analog and digital media during my own childhood and how was this regulated by parents/caretakers? Which parts of these memories do I value or reject in retrospect? How does this affect my attitudes and values on media education today?

PARENT COOPERATION AND SUPPORT

Support for HERMMES at home

- What do we know as kindergarten or school teachers about children's and young people's (private and educational) digital device use at home and their motives?

- What do we know as kindergarten or school teachers about the motives of parents/caregivers for the (digital) media use patterns in the family? How can we support parents in changing unhealthy patterns?

- What are parent/caregiver beliefs around the educational value of digital media? How can we reduce the perceived pressures for early high tech education created by marketing and advertising?

- How can parents support each other to delay children´s digital device ownership and limit device use at home? How can the school support parents in this - without putting pressure on them?

- How can parents support their children to develop a healthy offline social life? How can the school support parents in this?

- How do teachers recognise the limits of their direct professional responsibilities and where do they need to call on outside agencies?

Information and tech to control tech

- How can schools and kindergartens help parents to use technology to limit technology on the level of device configuration (time limitation and filter software, router configuration) and on the level of using specific apps?

- What are the positives and limitations of tech to control tech, compared to a pedagogical approach of rules, guidance, and discussion at different ages?

- How do we ensure that parents/caregivers and schools/settings are aware of and up to date with relevant media trends and can evaluate any associated benefits and risks (e.g. apps, games, influencers, cartoons, music, etc.)?

- How do we let parents/caregivers know about the real-life resources, services and alternatives to digital media/entertainment that are available to them and their children?

Second level

HERMMES CASA POLICIES, DOOR OPENERS AND MORE...

The second level addresses HOW to realize the goals that were agreed on within processes at the first level. Every EQ is linked to a number of documents with Support and Information. Where applicable these are arranged by age group/developmental stage of the learners for quick navigation to the most relevant documents*.

* This preliminary version of the HERMMES Community and Culture guide contains the first level, i.e the introduction and the EQs (Empowering Questions) for all five areas, but the full Community and Culture Guide for one area only. In the remaining four areas, work is in progress and will be published on the HERMMES website in summer 2025.

There are more than 25 HERMMES „Door Openers" for ages between 0 and 18. On the front side, they each contain a very short description of an often problematic everyday situation with children. On the back side, there are three continuations of the story, plus a number of tips and resources related to the situation.

There are checklists, self-reflection exercises and more questions to dive deeper into certain aspects of the EQs.

There is one HERMMES CASA* media policy template for school and also one for kindergarten, going far beyond "smartphone bans".

* CASA stands for a setting that is conscious of the age-dependent balance of opportunities and risks of digital media use and puts a high priority on:

C Connection **A** Attention **S** Safety **A** Academic Success

PARENT COOPERATION AND SUPPORT

The area of "Parent cooperation and support" within the HERMMES Community and Culture guide addresses many ways in which a kindergarten or school community can cooperate with parents and support them in their efforts to raise healthy and media mature children. A number of EQs from the previous section are closely connected to this, as self-reflection of adults regarding their own media use is an important part of accompanying children in a digitally imprinted world.

Compared to many online resources on supporting parents to accompany their children´s media maturity journey, HERMMES takes a more age-dependent, multi-layered approach, which puts more focus than other approaches on the activities marked in bold text. This opens up more (and especially more non-digital) options. The idealized sequence of steps would look like this:

- **delaying device ownership to foster CASA (C - Connected, A - Attention, S - Safety, A - Academic success)**

- **fostering screen-free joint activities of pupils and families**

- **building durability (digital universal resilience) in real life**

- use of digital media under adult supervision and with an interest in children´s perspective

- if not feasible, under technical protection (filter and time limitation)

- **when devices come, regulate their use in family and community agreements**

- unsupervised use last

At the same time, it is crucial for educational settings to be well aware that raising children in a media-saturated world is a challenge for parents. The HERMMES Community and Culture guide offers an ambitious orientation towards goals that are unlikely to be reached. But to make it better together, or even "make it a little less bad" (Diane Levin) is something to be proud of.

PARENT COOPERATION AND SUPPORT – Support for HERMMES at home

Saying YES to healthy childhood and resilience is often a good reason for saying no to screens. You are a facilitator, not an opponent.

EQ 4.1	EQ 4.2	EQ 4.3	EQ 4.4	EQ 4.5	EQ 4.6
What do we know as kindergarten or school teachers about children's and young people's (private and educational) digital device use at home and their motives?	What do we know as kindergarten or school teachers about the motives of parents/caregivers for the (digital) media use patterns in the family? How can we support parents in changing unhealthy patterns?	What are parent/caregiver beliefs around the educational value of digital media? How can we reduce the perceived pressures for early high tech education created by marketing and advertising?	How can parents support each other to delay children´s digital device ownership and limit device use at home? How can the school support parents in this - without putting pressure on them?	How can parents support their children to develop a healthy offline social life? How can the school support parents in this?	How do teachers recognise the limits of their direct professional responsibilities and where do they need to call on outside agencies?

EQ 4.1

Staying informed on current media trends from toddler to teen: Sources and limitations

ALL AGES | READ →

Guide for talking to children about their digital media use (but: parentification alert)

ALL AGES | READ →

Regulating children´s digital media use to support healthy sleep

AGE 0 - 12 | READ →

DOOR OPENER 3.4
Sam (9): "I tell my teacher I need the loo but it's really because of my rabbits"

AGE 3 - 12 | READ →

DOOR OPENER OR OPENER 4.1
Yamila (10): "I can't join you! I can't risk losing my streak."

AGE 6 - 15 | READ →

DOOR OPENER 4.4
Lou (12). "I hate being the new kid in class. I wanna meet my old mates online

AGE 6 - 15 | READ →

DOOR OPENER 4.3
Enrico (11). "My plan for Christmas is to loot Grandma for LoL lootbox money."

AGE 9 - 18 | READ →

DOOR OPENER 5.3
Bill (13) watching a pornography movie when Mom enters the room

AGE 9 - 18 | READ →

DOOR OPENER 5.4
Summer´s (13) mother Nora wonders: "Ed Sheeran? Sounds more like an X-rated movie soundtrack!"

AGE 9 - 18 | READ →

EQ 4.2

Remove crutches or stabilize upright walking? Is digital media use the problem, or a solution for something else?

ALL AGES | READ →

Solution-focused counseling can activate parents' resources instead of focusing on their weaknesses.

ALL AGES | READ →

DOOR OPENER 1.6
Ruben (15 months) refuses to eat in kindergarten

AGE 0 - 6 | READ →

DOOR OPENER 3.1
Sally (6) is distracted via gaming by a "child-friendly" dentist

AGE 0 - 6 | READ →

DOOR OPENER 1.7
Anna (3) cries for her Mum´s smartphone in a restaurant

AGE 0 - 9 | READ →

DOOR OPENER 2.3
Ben (5) und Mia (5): „...only if we are allowed to watch Shaun the Sheep as a reward!"

AGE 0 - 12 | READ →

DOOR OPENER 2.5
Has Rowan (5) been kidnapped? Tracking device alarms parents

AGE 3 - 12 | READ →

EQ 4.3

Sensorimotor deprivation during screen media use: Experiment with 10 senses while eating chocolate

ALL AGES | READ →

DOOR OPENER 2.2
Julia (4): „I want to go to Paw Patrol Academy, too!"

AGE 0 - 9 | READ →

Real vs. Virtual - Dare to Compare! A humorous and critical role play on advertising digital media products to children

AGE 0 - 9 | LINK →

ANALOGUE BEFORE DIGITAL
Engaging activities that illustrate central principles of the HERMMES curriculum for kindergarten parents.

AGE 0 - 6 | PRACTICE 1 → | PRACTICE 2 →

PRACTICE 3 →

PRODUCING BEFORE CONSUMING
Engaging activities that illustrate central principles of the HERMMES curriculum for elementary school parents.

AGE 6 - 12 | PRACTICE 1 → | PRACTICE 2 →

PRACTICE 3 →

TRANSPARENCY BEFORE BLACK BOX
Engaging activities that illustrate central principles of the HERMMES curriculum for upper school parents.

AGE 12 - 15 | PRACTICE 1 → | PRACTICE 2 →

PRACTICE 3 →

DOOR OPENER 5.1
Edward (13):"But ChatGPT saves sooo much time, and I do proofread!" (see also EQ 1.6)

AGE 9 - 18 | READ →

EQ 4.4

How to avoid information overkill and problem fatigue, and provide relevant information on media effects research.

ALL AGES | READ →

Annual parent evenings with input and exchange on media education topics.

ALL AGES | LINK →

"Less is more": Supporting parents in saying "no" to digital overstimulation

AGE 0 - 12 | READ →

Online pacts to support parents in delaying device ownership (example: www.waituntil8th.org).

AGE 0 - 15 | READ →

World Cafe Method to support the process for establishing digital media use agreements (incl. Delay of Smartphone ownership) between families

AGE 3 - 12 | READ →

DOOR OPENER 3.2
Clara (7): "Yippieh, I won an iPhone in a prize contest!"

AGE 3 - 12 | READ →

Support parents in establishing media guidelines in the family German and English. (examples: OR).

AGE 3 - 15 | READ →

DOOR OPENER 4.2
Chris (9): "Everyone else has a smartphone in my class!"

AGE 6 - 14 | READ →

EQ 4.5

Ask parents about screen-free activities they enjoyed as a child. (see also EQ 3.7)

ALL AGES | READ →

Let´s organize an annual screen-free week (or regular screen-free Saturdays) together!

ALL AGES | READ →

DOOR OPENER 2.4
Anton (5) is jealous: "I want to watch SpongeBob like my older sister!"

AGE 0 - 12 | READ →

Lists with ideas for: screen-free birthday presents and parties, board games, other low-budget, low-budget screen-free leisure activities.

AGE 3 - 15 | READ →

DOOR OPENER 3.3
Emilio (8): "I want a Roblox account for my birthday"

AGE 6 - 12 | READ →

DOOR OPENER 4.4
Lou (12). "I hate being the new kid in class. I wanna meet my old mates online.

AGE 6 - 15 | READ →

Encourage meetings outside school/ kindergarten for screen-free family activities (meals!) and mutual support for pickup and childcare.

AGE 6 - 15 | READ →

EQ 4.6

Suggest professional treatment in case of parental digital addictions or other severe mental health conditions

ALL AGES

Involve the police, e.g. in severe cases of cyberbullying

AGE 6 - 18

Invite external experts to parent evenings (doctors, police, psychologists) - or host a film screening

ALL AGES | READ →

DOOR OPENER 4.5
"Betty, you are 12, tell us where and why you got those expensive low-cut shirts!"

AGE 9 - 18 | READ →

DOOR OPENER 5.2
Frank (14), exchanging pics with his virtual girlfriend

AGE 9 - 18 | READ →

Regular check-ups for pupils' risky online behaviour (e.g. Cyber-Risk counsellor)

AGE 9 - 18 | READ →