



COMMONWEALTH CONVERSATION ON RESTORING CHILDHOOD THROUGH COMMON SENSE APPROACHES TO SOCIAL MEDIA AND CELL PHONES

Event Guide



This document can serve as your guide for the facilitation portion of your event. Your school can structure the second half of the evening to work for your community; this serves as a template for your planning purposes. The facilitator is responsible for keeping discussions going – you do not have to have the answers. Please reach out to communications@doe.virginia.gov if you have any questions or needs for information.

OVERVIEW

Thank you to your school for hosting a Commonwealth Conversation on Restoring Childhood through Common Sense Approaches to Social Media and Cell Phones!

The goals of this event are to:

- 1** Learn from leading researcher Dr. Jonathan Haidt about the negative effects of cell phones and social media on student well-being;
- 2** Discuss Governor Youngkin’s Executive Order 33 and the best practices from Dr. Haidt to shape the policies and practices in our schools and communities; and
- 3** Talk as a community about how we can work together to take actions to restore childhood by limiting the use of cell phones and social media for our students and increase more time for free play.

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EVENT CHECKLIST

Use this checklist for before, during, and after the event to guide your work. You can tailor this checklist to best suit the needs of your school community, but we suggest the following actions for consideration:

I) BEFORE THE EVENT

- Invite your school community to participate in this event. Invite parents, students, teachers, school board members, elected officials, and community members.
- Identify a space that is capable of streaming the recorded broadcast and can accommodate a large audience.
- Plan technology to ensure you have microphones, screen, and computers that will work with the video.
- Consider inviting local press and media to cover the event.
- Create a registration link and page to track predicted attendance.
- Plan for parking, signage, and clear directions to your school and to the event space.
- Consider providing refreshments before the event during sign-in.
- Consider printing out resources for community members, including the Executive Order, the Back-to-School list (which is formatted to be a bookmark or a magnet if you want to print up for participants!), and the guidance.
- Consider co-hosting the event with your local PTA or other parent or community organizations.
- Line up facilitators for the community conversation. Consider teachers, parents, or students.

II) DAY OF THE EVENT

- Consider the format for your community conversation. This can be small group discussions at tables, a question-and-answer style format, or a full group discussion.
- Have an area for attendees to sign-in using the QR code from VDOE.
- Load the video early to establish connection and address any potential issues.
- Start welcoming attendees at 6:30pm. Consider adding a meet and greet from 6:30-7:00 pm with refreshments.
- During the second hour of conversation, consider having a member of the school or division leadership or school board share current policies around social media and cell phones so everyone knows the current policy.

III) DURING THE EVENT

- Take notes on the video and on the comments from the community to inform your school board.
- Have the facilitators prepared to lead the community conversation as the livestream is wrapping up.
- At the conclusion of the event, be sure to include next steps for community members to stay involved.

ITEMIZED RUN OF SHOW FOR THE EVENT:

6:00 PM:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Arrive at the school for event setup, including setting up parking signage and sign-in area• Set out hand-outs for community members as they arrive
6:30PM:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Begin welcoming community members; have name tags to facilitate community building• Provide refreshments and a space for conversation
6:45 PM:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Load the video early to establish connection and address any potential issues• Welcome community members into the event space to take seats
6:55 PM:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide welcome remarks, including thanking the participants for coming and discussing why this topic is important• Acknowledge and recognize any VIPs in the room
7:00 PM:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Begin watching the video
8:00 PM:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Facilitators begin community conversation after conclusion of the video• Consider having school board members, division leadership, school principal share the current policies in place around social media and cell phone use
8:50 PM:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Thank participants for the conversation and include steps for follow-up and continued involvement
9:00 PM:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Event conclusion

FACILITATOR QUESTIONS

Following the video, facilitators should serve as guides for discussion and feedback. Consider the following questions:

1. Reflection: What is the most important or surprising thing you heard from the conversation between the First Lady and Dr. Haidt?
2. What are the current policies of the school and division? How have we approached cell phone and social media use in our classrooms?
3. Given this policy, what questions do you have that we can answer and talk about and what do you want to see in our policy?
4. In general, what are the challenges that you are facing in your homes around social media and screens? What is working for your family and what is not working?
In general, what are challenges that teachers are facing in our classrooms? How do students' online activities inside and outside of the classroom impact what happens inside your classroom? Have you seen indications that students may be using smartphones to cheat during class?
5. What are the most important actions to take inside our schools to begin this culture change?
6. What are the most important things we can do in our community as parents, neighbors, friends, and families?
7. In what ways can we better prepare our kids and the future generation to wisely navigate the virtual world? In what ways can we better prepare our kids to wisely navigate the real world?
8. Haidt's book says that one problem with a phone-based childhood is that it replaces the hours children would otherwise spend playing in the real world: "Children are, in a sense, deprived of childhood." Do you agree? What exactly are kids missing out on?
9. How do we navigate communications during both family emergencies and school-based emergencies?
10. How do we approach communication between parents, students, and teachers? How can we ensure that communication streams are stronger than ever?
11. Our school board is tasked with creating a policy. What are the most important things that should be included in the new policy?

D) CLOSING:

As the discussion comes to a close, include the following:

1. Thank the facilitators, participants, and any VIPs for the discussion.
2. Outline the timeline of new policy, including review of the current policy and development, feedback, and implementation of new policy by January 1, 2025.
3. Include steps on how community members can stay involved in the process and provide feedback.

ADDITIONAL CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

I) STATISTICS AND DATA

Some facts you may want to use in your introduction and background as a facilitator:

1. Children spend an average of 4.8 hours a day on social media, and recent studies indicate that spending more than three hours a day on social media doubles the risk of poor mental health for adolescents.
2. Most alarming is the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention data from 2019-2021, reporting that the rate of suicide has increased 167% since 2010 for girls and 91 % since 2010 for boys.
3. In the same timeframe, boys and girls experienced a spike in depression of 161 % and 145%, respectively.
4. In addition to the worsening state of youth mental health in the past decade, the state of academic achievement also suffered, as measured by the precipitous drop in the National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP) scores beginning in 2012.
5. Studies indicate that students who use their phones during class learn less and achieve lower grades.
6. The issue extends beyond mere distraction; substantial phone and social media use can have a cumulative, lasting, and detrimental impact on adolescents' ability to focus and engage in their studies.

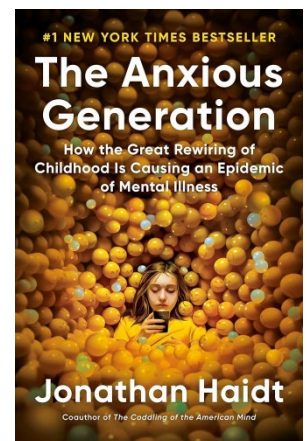
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2. U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (n.d.), National Center for Injury Prevention and Control. (n.d.). Additional notes and figures from The Anxious Generation here.
3. National Survey on Drug Use and Health conducted by federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (n.d.), U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (n.d.). Additional notes and figures from The Anxious Generation here.
4. Clayson, D. E., & Haley, D. A. (2013). An Introduction to Multitasking and Texting: Prevalence and Impact on Grades and GPA in Marketing Classes. *Journal of Marketing Education*, 3 5(1), 26-40.
5. Kuznekoff, J. H., & Titsworth, S. (2013). The Impact of Mobile Phone Usage on Student Learning. *Communication Education*, 62
6. Glass, A. L., & Kang, M. (2018). Dividing Attention in the Classroom Reduces Exam Performance. *Educational Psychology*, 39(3), 395--408.

II) THE ANXIOUS GENERATION: HOW THE GREAT REWIRING OF CHILDHOOD IS CAUSING AN EPIDEMIC OF MENTAL ILLNESS

In *The Anxious Generation: How the Great Rewiring of Childhood is Causing an Epidemic of Mental Illness*, social psychologist Jonathan Haidt lays out the facts about the epidemic of teen mental illness that hit many countries at the same time. He then investigates the nature of childhood, including why children need play and independent exploration to mature into competent, thriving adults. Haidt shows how the "play-based childhood" began to decline in the 1980s, and how it was finally wiped out by the arrival of the "phone-based childhood" in the early 2010s. He presents more than a dozen mechanisms by which this "great rewiring of childhood" has interfered with children's social and neurological development, covering everything from sleep deprivation to attention fragmentation, addiction, loneliness, social contagion, social comparison, and perfectionism. He explains why social media damages girls more than boys and why boys have been withdrawing from the real world into the virtual world, with disastrous consequences for themselves, their families, and their societies.

Most important, Haidt issues a clear call to action. He diagnoses the "collective action problems" that trap us, and then proposes four simple rules that might set us free. He describes steps that parents, teachers, schools, tech companies, and governments can take to end the epidemic of mental illness and restore a more humane childhood.

Haidt has spent his career speaking truth backed by data in the most difficult landscapes-communities polarized by politics and religion, campuses battling culture wars, and now the public health emergency faced by Gen Z. We cannot afford to ignore his findings about protecting our children-and ourselves from the psychological damage of a phone-based life.



For any questions about the video or event materials, please reach out to communications@doe.virginia.gov

ABOUT THE SPEAKERS

I) Jonathan Haidt, Author of *The Anxious Generation*



Jonathan Haidt is an award-winning social psychologist at New York University's Stern School of Business. He received his Ph.D. from the University of Pennsylvania in 1992.

Haidt's research examines the intuitive foundations of morality, and how morality varies across cultural and political divisions. Haidt is the author of *The Happiness Hypothesis* (2006) and of the New York Times bestsellers *The Righteous Mind* (2012) and *The Coddling of the American Mind* (2018, with Greg Lukianoff). He has given four TED talks. In 2019 he was inducted into the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. Since 2018 he has been studying the contributions of social media to the decline of teen mental health and the rise of political dysfunction. His most recent

book is *The Anxious Generation: How the Great Rewiring of Childhood is Causing an Epidemic of Mental Illness*, published on March 26, 2024.

II) Suzanne S. Youngkin, First Lady of Virginia



A Texas native but a Virginian at heart, Suzanne S. Youngkin is proud to serve alongside her husband, the 74th Governor of Virginia as the First Lady.

While together they are committed to uplifting all persons and communities in Virginia, the First Lady is laser focused on the needs of Virginia's women and girls – including, fighting the scourge of fentanyl, improving access to mental and behavioral healthcare, encouraging workforce preparedness, and connecting Virginians with resources for wellbeing.

With a background in communications and a heart for all persons made in the image of God, Suzanne is committed to using her voice to shine a light on the goodness happening in the Commonwealth as well as standing up for the disenfranchised. She also cherishes welcoming people to Richmond's Executive Mansion and traversing Virginia meeting with and listening to constituents.

As the mother of four, young adult children and an active participant in charitable activities that benefit youth, faith-based organizations, higher learning institutions, artists and arts education, as well as animals and nature, Suzanne prioritizes service to others.

In representing the people of the Commonwealth, Suzanne hopes to leave a legacy of kindness and hope throughout Virginia. Knowing it would not be possible without the love and support of all who live, work and raise their families here, Suzanne is humbled to serve as your First Lady.

TECHNICAL GUIDANCE

The Fireside Chat was recorded and is now available via YouTube. Please use this link to access the livestream recording for your event.



<https://youtu.be/1w287BCT4Mw>

I) Schools Will Need:

- A tv or projector screen that is suitable for the event space and number of attendees. In some cases, 1-2 screens may be needed.
- A computer or other means to access YouTube.
- Strong internet connection.
- Microphones may be needed depending on event size.

II) Technology Tips and Best Practices:

- Designate a person to oversee all technology aspects of your event. They should have all the relevant passwords and permissions to access your school's IT system.
- Load the video early. We recommend getting the equipment needed for the event set up at least one hour prior to event start time and having the video loaded 15 minutes before event start time.
- For the discussion portion of the event, you may choose to have a presentation to display questions or other facts and figures.
- VDOE has created a registration form for all participating schools to use at their events. Please display or share the QR code at a registration desk at your event. You can also have the QR code displayed in numerous locations at your event. The printable QR code can be found at the end of this document.

EVENT REGISTRATION

Commonwealth Conversation on Restoring Childhood Through Common Sense Approaches to Social Media and Cell Phones

Please scan the QR code below to sign in for this event



For any questions about the video or event materials, please reach out to communications@doe.virginia.gov

LINKS TO HAND-OUT ATTACHMENTS

- [Governor Youngkin's Executive Order 33 on Establishing Cell Phone-Free Education to Promote the Health and Safety of Virginia's K-12 Students](#)
- [Final Guidance for Cell Phone-Free Education Pursuant to Executive Order 33](#)
- [Top 10 Proven Actions to Ensure Your Student is Ready to Soar This School Year \(document\)](#)
- Top 10 Proven Actions to Ensure Your Student is Ready to Soar This School Year (graphic)
 - This data-based list of tips for parents is set up to be printed as a bookmark or magnet
 - Consider printing up and distributing to participants!



TOP 10 PROVEN ACTIONS TO ENSURE YOUR STUDENT IS READY TO SOAR THIS SCHOOL YEAR

1. ATTENDANCE MATTERS, EVERY DAY.

- [Missing 10%](#) of school days, or only 2 days a month, over the course of the school year can affect a student's academic success.
- We know that students who are chronically absent score 19 percentage points lower in reading and 26 percentage points lower in math than their peers who attend school regularly.
- Starting in preschool and kindergarten, too many absences can cause children to fall behind in school. By 6th grade, [absenteeism](#) is one of three signs that a student may drop out of high school. By 9th grade, attendance is a better predictor of graduation rates than 8th grade test scores.
- Parents can help keep their children in the classroom by sticking to a routine, developing backup transportation plans, and scheduling appointments and extended trips when school isn't in session. If parents are struggling to get their child to school, they should reach out to their child's teacher or counselor.
- Together we can be ALL IN on overcoming chronic absenteeism! Stay connected with us. [#AttendanceMattersVA](#)

2. PARTNER WITH YOUR CHILD'S TEACHER AND SET LEARNING GOALS.

- Learn about your child's academic performance over time and set goals with your child's teacher for the school year through the Student Assessment Summary report, part of the new [VVAAS - Virginia's Visualization and Analytics Solution](#).
- As a caregiver and your child's first teacher, you are the most important partner and champion for your child's success in school and life. The VDOE strives to provide the best resources to parents, such as these grade-level specific charts for [literacy](#) and [mathematics](#) you can use to support your learners at home.
- Invest in your child's learning and, if needed, take advantage of free, flexible, and intensive small group [tutoring](#) for students in Grades 3-8 for both math and reading.
- Parent-Teacher involvement has been shown to increase [academic performance and strengthen a student's sense of cognitive competency](#).

3. PRACTICE MATH AND READING TWENTY MINUTES A DAY.

- Students who are not proficient in reading by the end of third grade are 4x more likely to drop out of high school than proficient readers.

- The Institute of Education Sciences [recommends](#) regularly helping your child sound out words smoothly and practicing breaking sentences into words and words into syllables.
- The [Literacy Resources for Families and Communities](#) site provides activities and tips to support reading and language learning during everyday activities for students in Grades K-2, 3-5, 6-8, and 9-12.
- One way parents can support their younger children in mathematics is by providing opportunities to look for repeating and growing patterns when doing daily tasks such as preparing meals, dressing for the day, and going shopping. [Numeracy at Home](#) shares other tips for supporting mathematics learning during everyday activities for children in Grades K-2.

4. LIMIT SCREEN TIME.

- Children spend an average of 4.8 hours a day on social media. [Recent studies](#) indicate that spending more than three hours a day on social media doubles the risk of poor mental health for adolescents.
- Emphasize [digital wellness](#) by establishing healthy screen time limits, encouraging a balance between screen-based activities and other pursuits, and promoting activities that support emotional, physical, social, and cognitive development.
- Parents can set reasonable screen time limits, restrict use at least one hour before bedtime and ensure phones are out of the bedroom, set family “device-free” times, monitor their children’s accounts, and talk about social media including what is not okay. Parental resources are available through [#GoOpenVA](#).
- To promote a healthier and more focused educational environment, [Virginia’s public K-12 schools will commit to cell phone-free education by January 1, 2025](#).

5. BUILD HEALTHY SLEEP HABITS.

- How much sleep do children need? Generally, teenagers need 8-10 hours, school-aged kids need 9-11 hours, and 10-14 hours of sleep is ideal for preschoolers and toddlers.
- Getting the right amount of sleep can reduce risks of illness, promote healthy growth, lead to greater self-esteem, reduce stress, and build friendships. Set a regular bedtime and morning routine, lay out clothes, and pack backpacks the night before.
- Creating a consistent sleep schedule, with the same bedtimes and wake times every day, even on weekends, can help increase the time kids are asleep.

6. START THE DAY WITH A GOOD BREAKFAST AT HOME OR AT SCHOOL.

- Healthy food at the beginning of the school day is essential for your child to be ready to learn and thrive. [Students who eat breakfast](#) demonstrate better academic achievement, attendance, and overall health outcomes.
- A study of the [impact of breakfast on chronic absenteeism](#) found that [Breakfast After the Bell](#) programs can reduce chronic absenteeism by 6% and improve reading achievement by 1.5%.

- In Virginia, every public school is required to offer the [School Breakfast Program](#) and encouraged to offer Breakfast After the Bell to ensure a healthier start to the day, and to put your child in the best position to succeed in the classroom.
- On average, students who participate in Breakfast After the Bell eat a breakfast of [higher nutritional quality](#) than students who eat breakfast elsewhere. Contact your school to get additional information.

7. GET MOVING AND PLAY!

- [Physical activity](#) increases attention and memory, reduces risks of depression, builds strong muscles and endurance, and supports long-term health.
- Time to play! [Children ages 3-5](#) need to be active throughout the day. Children and adolescents ages 6-17 need to be active for 60 minutes every day.
- [Free play](#) is a healthy, essential part of childhood that offers important developmental benefits. When planning school activities and schedules, make sure to allot time for ample, independent, non-screen time for your kid to be creative, reflect, and decompress.
- Playing outdoors can also have significant mental and physical health benefits. Plan playdates at a [local park](#)!

8. TALK WITH YOUR CHILDREN ABOUT THE DANGERS OF DRUGS AND ALCOHOL.

- Underage drinking poses a [range of risks](#) and negative consequences. As parents, you play a significant role in supporting and guiding your children's overall health and learning. You can help your child avoid the dangers of alcohol and drugs by serving as a positive role model, getting to know your children's friends, and connecting with other parents to send a clear message on the importance of youth not drinking or using drugs.
- It's never too early to [talk with your children](#) about the risks of underage drinking and other drug use. Research suggests that one of the most influential factors in healthy childhood development is a strong, open relationship with a parent.
- As a parent, it is critical to learn more about the opioid problem, recognize warning signs, and open lines of communication with your child and those in your community about the dangers of taking a pill or substance not prescribed by a doctor. [Learn the facts](#) and consider being trained in [REVIVE!](#), the Opioid Overdose and Naloxone Education (OONE) program for the Commonwealth of Virginia. REVIVE! provides training on how to recognize and respond to an opioid overdose emergency using naloxone.
- The First Lady of Virginia Suzanne Youngkin and Attorney General Jason Miyares are leading the fight against fentanyl in Virginia through the ["It Only Takes One"](#) campaign, which aims to warn families that just one bad mistake with the drug can cost someone their life.

9. SUPPORT YOUR CHILD’S MENTAL HEALTH.

- It can be hard to detect mental health conditions in children because typical childhood growth is a process that involves change. But knowing the [warning signs](#), and being prepared to have conversations about mental health can protect your child, build a trusting relationship, and grow their resilience.
- Your school has [behavioral health services](#) available to assist in creating the best learning experience and environment for your child. School-based mental health professionals include school counselors, school social workers, and school psychologists. They support classroom instruction by helping to remove barriers to learning. They can also be a connector to services in your community if you feel you need additional help. Reach out to your child’s school counselor for more information.
- If your child, or someone you know, needs immediate assistance with a mental health or substance use issue, [get help](#) immediately by going to your local emergency room or calling or texting the “988” Suicide & Crisis Lifeline. You can also access the [2-1-1 Virginia](#) resource portal to find local mental health and other resources in your area.

10. TALK WITH YOUR CHILD—ANYWHERE YOU CAN.

- [When](#) a family sits down together, it helps them handle the stresses of daily life and strengthen connections. Eating together gives families a great opportunity to talk about their day at school and what they are learning in school, as well as promotes more sensible eating habits.
- Talking with your child [helps them build language skills](#). Some great ways to help your child develop speaking and listening skills at home include talking about what they are learning in school and reading books together and discussing what's happening in the story.
- [According to research](#), teens who dined with their families 5 or 7 times a week were 4 times less likely to smoke, 2.5 times less likely to use marijuana, and half as likely to drink alcohol than families who ate together twice or less.
- You can make a huge difference by letting your child know they have your unconditional love and support. Helping your child feel connected not only promotes mental health, it also prevents a range of negative experiences like drug use and violence. Building strong bonds and relationships with adults and friends at school, at home, and in the community provides youth with a sense of connectedness. Take the time to check in regularly with your child and encourage them to communicate what they are feeling. Also remember to let your child know they are appreciated and that you are proud of them.



TOP 10 TIPS

FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

1 Attendance Matters, Every Day



6 Start the Day with a Good Breakfast at Home or at School



2 Partner with your Child's Teacher and Set Learning Goals



7 Get Moving and Play!



3 Practice Math & Reading 20 Minutes a Day



8 Talk with your Children about the Dangers of Drugs and Alcohol



4 Limit Screen Time



9 Support your Child's Mental Health



5 Build Healthy Sleep Habits



10 Talk with your Child - Anywhere You Can



SCAN HERE FOR MORE