

PHONE

PHONE-FREE SCHOOLS MOVEMENT

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Phone-Free Schools Movement Mission:

To provide youth the freedom to excel academically and develop socially without the pressures and harms of phones and social media during the school day.



Define the Problem



How do phones negatively impact students and the school day?

Phone Use by Teens



97%

of students use phones during school hours



35%

of teens admit to using their phone to cheat



43

minutes per school day spent on social media, YouTube and gaming



65%

of students report they are distracted by devices



1/3

of teens report being exposed to pornography during the school day



72%

of HS teachers say phone distraction is a major problem

Sources: [Common Sense Media 2023 Constant Companion Report](#), [Common Sense Media Teens and Pornography](#), [PISA 2022 results: The impact of digital distractions on classroom learning](#), [Pew Research Center](#)

2017 Brain Drain Study

The mere presence of a phone
reduces cognitive capacity

Students performed best when
the **phone was in a separate room**

Important when taking tests but
**even more crucial when learning
something new**

Brain Drain: The Mere Presence of One's Own
Smartphone Reduces Available Cognitive Capacity |
Journal of the Association for Consumer Research: Vol
2, No 2 (uchicago.edu)

2 minute video summarizing the study:
[https://www.edutopia.org/video/theres-cell-ph
one-your-students-head](https://www.edutopia.org/video/theres-cell-ph-one-your-students-head)



NEA Poll: Social Media, Personal Devices and Mental Health

83% of members support prohibiting cell phone/personal device usage during the entire school day.

Over **90%** of educators feel students' mental health is a serious issue at their school.



[nea-member-polling-on-social-media-personal-devices-and-mental-health-june-20-2024.pdf](#)

Social Media Use and Teen Mental Health



95%

of teenagers are on social media; **40%** of 8-12 year olds



134%

increase in teen anxiety since 2010



5 hours

teens spend nearly 5 hours per day on social media apps



106%

increase in teen depression since 2010



3+ hours

per day on social media doubles the risk of poor mental health



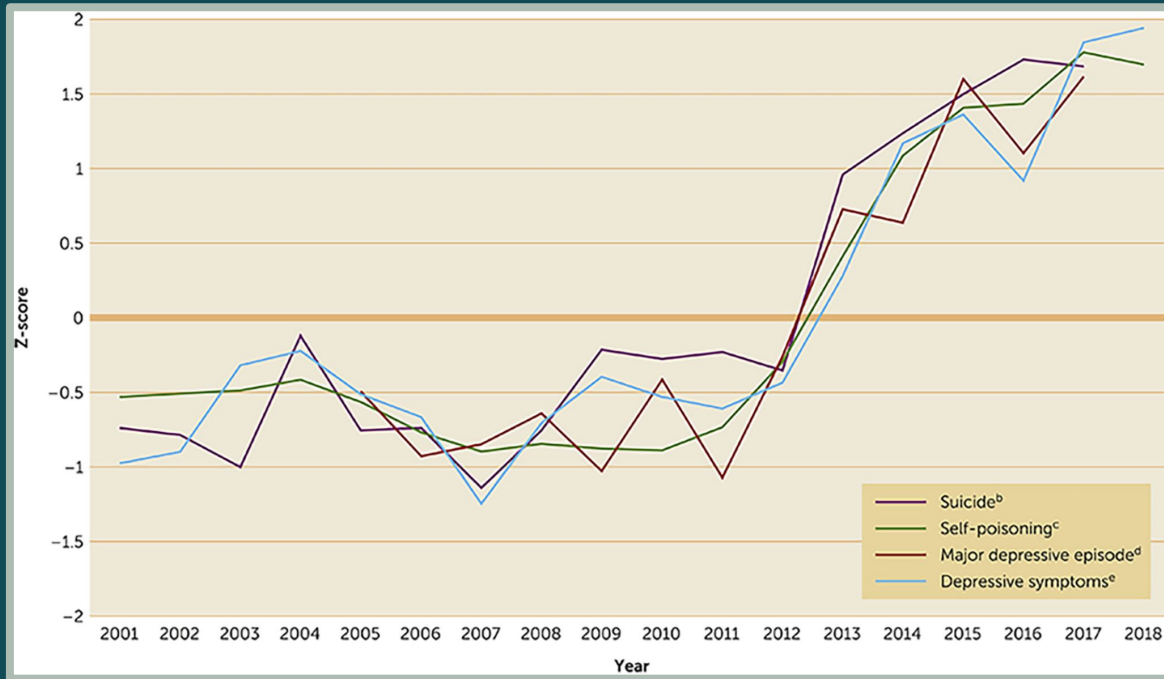
2x

rates of loneliness has doubled since 2012

Sources: [Surgeon General's Advisory: Social Media and Youth Mental Health](#), [American Psychological Association](#), [The Anxious Generation](#), [NIH: Worldwide increases in adolescent loneliness](#)

Since 2012

Steep increase in Depression, Self Harm and Suicide

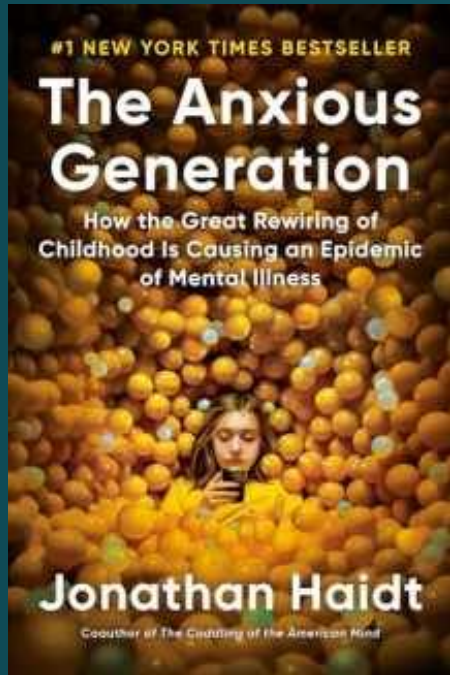


Dr. Jean Twenge:
Increases in
Depression, Self-Harm,
and Suicide Among
U.S. Adolescents After
2012 and Links to
Technology Use:
Possible Mechanisms

<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/cms/asset/8fe8ceb9-f8f2-4b15-bba5-5ba8effc4355/rcp21002-fig-0001-m.jpg>

The Anxious Generation:

How the Great Rewiring of Childhood Is Causing an Epidemic of Mental Illness

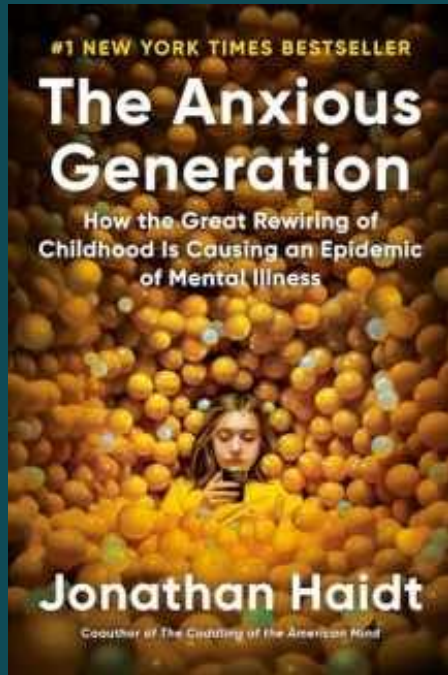


Social Psychologist, Dr. Jonathan Haidt:
Rates of depression, anxiety, self-harm, and suicide rose sharply, more than doubling on most measures around 2010.

- Moved from a play-based childhood to a phone-based childhood
- Overprotecting kids in the real world and under-protecting them in the virtual world

The Anxious Generation:

How the Great Rewiring of Childhood Is Causing an Epidemic of Mental Illness



Four collective action norms:

- 1 - No smartphones until at least high school
- 2 - No social media before age 16
- 3 - Phone-free schools
- 4 - More unsupervised play and childhood independence.

2023 – The U.S. Surgeon General issued an Advisory on Social Media and Youth Mental Health



“At this time, we do not yet have enough evidence to determine if social media is sufficiently safe for children and adolescents.”

–Dr. Vivek Murthy

2024 – The U.S. Surgeon General calls for warning labels on social media platforms



“ Schools should ensure that classroom learning and social time are phone-free experiences. ”

–Dr. Vivek Murthy

The New York Times

Opinion | Surgeon General: Social Media
Platforms Need a Health Warning - The
New York Times (nytimes.com)

Common Pushbacks to Phone-Free Policies

"Parents want to reach their children during the day."

Solution: Have clearly defined communication procedures utilizing the phone in the front office.

"Phones are essential for learning."

Solution: 1:1 – School issued devices that can be monitored are provided for learning.

"Students need phones for safety."

Solution: School security experts report phones can hinder crisis management.

Phones Compromise Student Safety During a Crisis

- Distract students from following safety instructions
- Could alert an intruder to their location
- Spread rumors, causing confusion and delaying the response
- Influx of parents to the school, interfering with evacuation efforts
- High call volumes can overwhelm communication systems

For more information, refer to:
[National School Safety and Security Services](#)



Define the Solution



How to protect students and the school day.

PFSM Best Practice Definition:

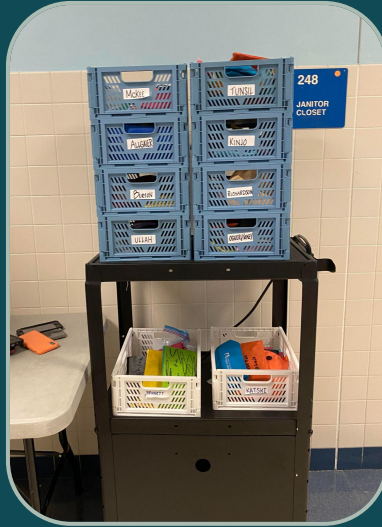
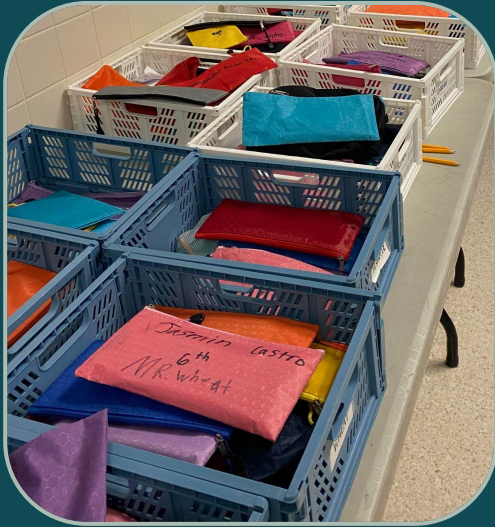
A **"first bell to last bell" policy** that requires all personal electronic devices to be turned off, securely locked away and inaccessible for the entire school day.

Personal electronic devices: cell phones, smartwatches, earbuds, AirPods, fitness trackers and Bluetooth connected headphones, etc.

Exceptions: Students with an IEP or 504 plan that requires the use of a personal device to manage their condition. The cell phone must be used exclusively for this purpose.

Phone Storage Options:

- Most cost effective - Secured baskets with phones stored in pencil pouches, padded envelopes, etc.



Phone Storage Options:

- Locked phone lockers



Phone Storage Options:

- Locked pouches such as Yondr
 - Over 2000 schools in the US, including:
 - 25 schools in Kansas, 12+ are looking to implement this school year



Schools — Yondr (overyondr.com)



83%

Saw an improvement in student engagement in the classroom.



74%

Saw an improvement in student behavior.



65%

Saw an improvement in academic performance.



Phone storage options that allow access:

- On the person
- Backpack
- Student's locker



Instructional Time ONLY Benefits



More Engagement
Increased Focus
Improved Academics
Less cheating

INSTRUCTIONAL TIME ONLY Benefits



More Engagement
Increased Focus
Improved Academics
Less cheating



ALL DAY Benefits

- Social Emotional skills develop
- Mid-class absenteeism decreases
- All day attendance improves
- Students practice independence
- Safety improves
- Teacher morale/retention improves
- Additional class time benefits
- Mental health improves

What are we hearing? The Anecdotal Evidence:



- Teachers report being ahead of schedule on their lesson plans because they aren't spending time policing phones
- Students are completing classwork and assignments faster
- More books are checked out from the library
- Lunchrooms/hallways are markedly louder because students are having face-to-face conversations with their peers
- School counselors are seeing a decrease in the rate of mental health related student visits
- Administrators report spending significantly less time on discipline referrals
- Peer conflicts are deescalating quicker as social skills improve
- More after school club participation
- Teacher morale and retention improve

2024 Norway Study

Smartphone Bans, Student Outcomes and Mental Health

- **46%** of girls and **43%** of boys experienced a reduction of bullying
- Girls from lower socioeconomic backgrounds saw the greatest benefits with **reduced visits for mental health care and improvement in grades**



Smartphone Bans, Student Outcomes and
Mental Health by Sara Abrahamsson :: SSRN

Common Concerns of Schools

Fear of Parent Pushback

Solution: Clear communication in advance of implementation, share the research and negative impacts of phones and host informational meetings

Overwhelmed by implementation process

Solution: Utilize resources such as the Phone-Free Schools Administrator Toolkit

Budget Concerns

Solution: Select economical storage tools like pencil pouches stored in baskets

Phone-Free Schools Administrator Toolkit



What's Included



Supporting Data

SECTION 1:

Research Infographic
Benefits



Implementation Materials

SECTION 2:

Rollout Timeline
Implementation Guide
Model Phone-Free Policy



Stakeholder Communications

SECTION 3:

Frequently Asked Questions
Common Pushbacks
Letters
Surveys

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