

WCPS | Washington County Public Schools



**COMMUNITY
MATTERS**

TONIGHT'S TOPIC:

RAISING RESPONSIBLE DIGITAL CITIZENS

Topics That Matter. Community That Matters.

THANKS FOR JOINING US TONIGHT!

Tonight's Topics



Reduced screen time in schools

Teaching digital citizenship

Parent tools for monitoring & limiting screen time

Screen addiction

Community input on cell phone regulation

INTRODUCTION: WHY I GOT INTO EDUCATION

I enjoyed history, government, and social studies.

I loved high school, sports, and coaching.

I was a good student — not great.

I learned the value of hard work.

I moved into leadership because I enjoy working with others to make things better.

Others saw potential in me before I fully saw it in myself.

WHAT FAMILIES AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS SHOULD EXPECT FROM WCPS

DIRECTION

A Clear Direction

We are guided by the Strategic Plan, *Your Journey. Our Commitment.*, with student success as our destination.

LEARNING

A Focus on Learning

We are strengthening instruction so students do more than complete work — they think deeply, practice, remember, and apply what they learn.

ENVIRONMENT

A Strong Learning Environment

We are creating schools where students feel safe, supported, focused, challenged, and connected.

WHAT FAMILIES AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS SHOULD EXPECT FROM WCPS

OPPORTUNITY

A Commitment to Opportunity

We are removing barriers so students have access to:

- Rigorous courses
- Dual credit & career pathways
- Extracurriculars
- Meaningful support

PARTNERSHIP

A Partnership with Families

We help families understand and support their children:

- What they are learning
- How they are progressing
- Why attendance matters
- How to practice at home

BELIEF

A Belief in Washington County

We are proud to invest in our strong community assets:

- Talented students
- Committed staff members
- Strong, supportive families
- A community worth backing

WHY CELL PHONES?

Technology is amazing and has many benefits.
Schools use technology every day.

THE REAL CHALLENGE

Usage, Not Technology

The issue is not technology itself, but
when, where, and how it is used.

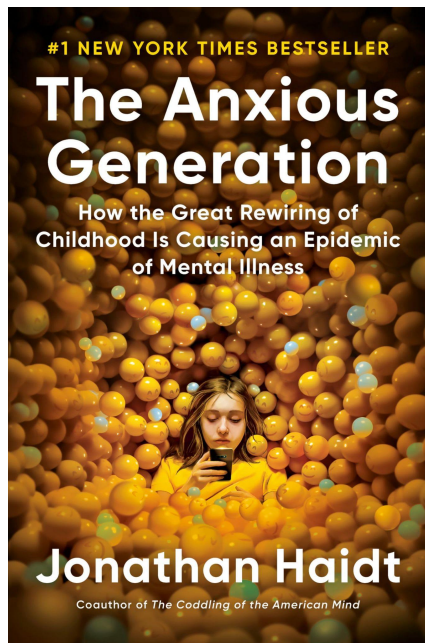
DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP

Wisdom & Guidance

It is not about being anti-technology. It's
about **helping our students use it**
wisely.

THE ANXIOUS GENERATION

BY JONATHAN HAIDT



Research suggests childhood has shifted in two major ways:

1. CHILDREN HAVE LESS

- Independent Play
- Face-to-Face Interactions
- Opportunities to solve problems on their own

2. CHILDREN HAVE MORE

- Smart phones
- Social media
- Screen time
- Virtual interactions & relationships

Both of these shifts are “Experience Blockers”

- Children grow through experiences
- Phones often replace experiences instead of adding to them.

RAPID RISE OF SMARTPHONES & SOCIAL MEDIA

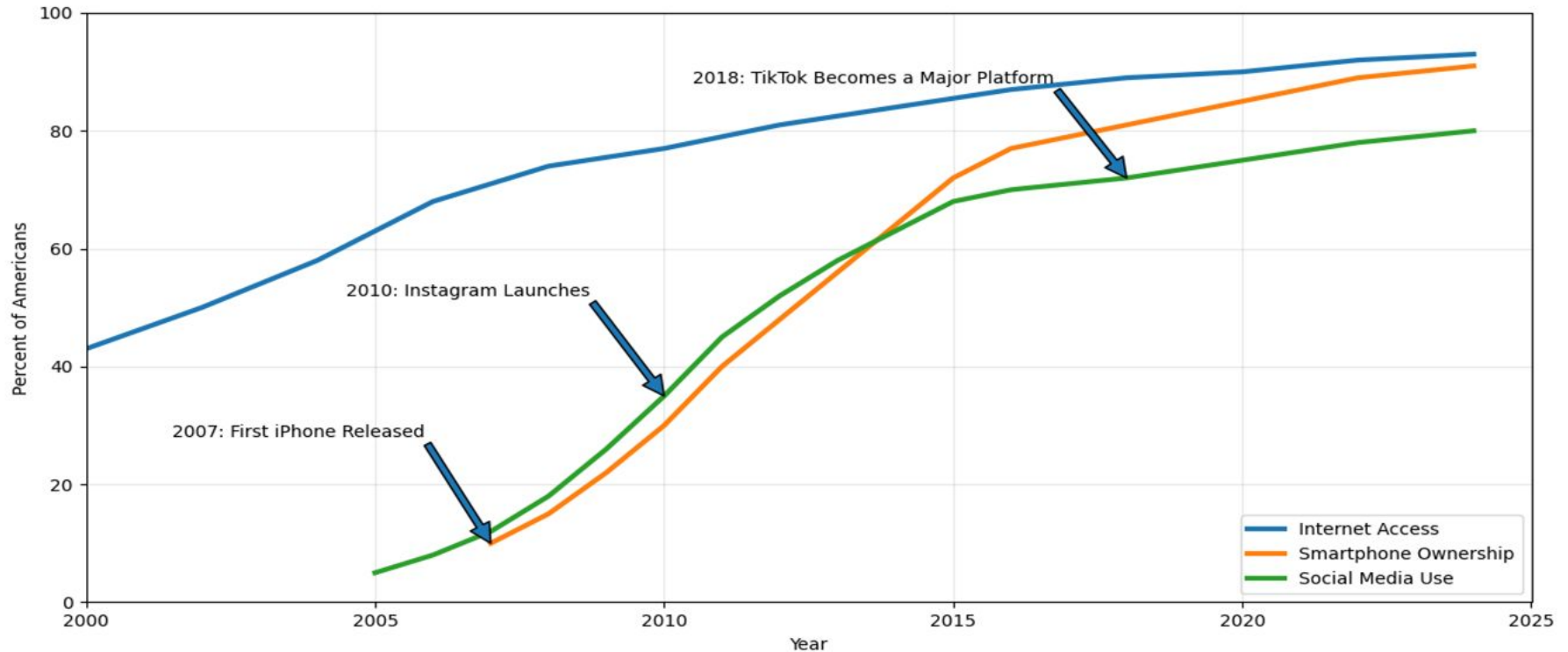
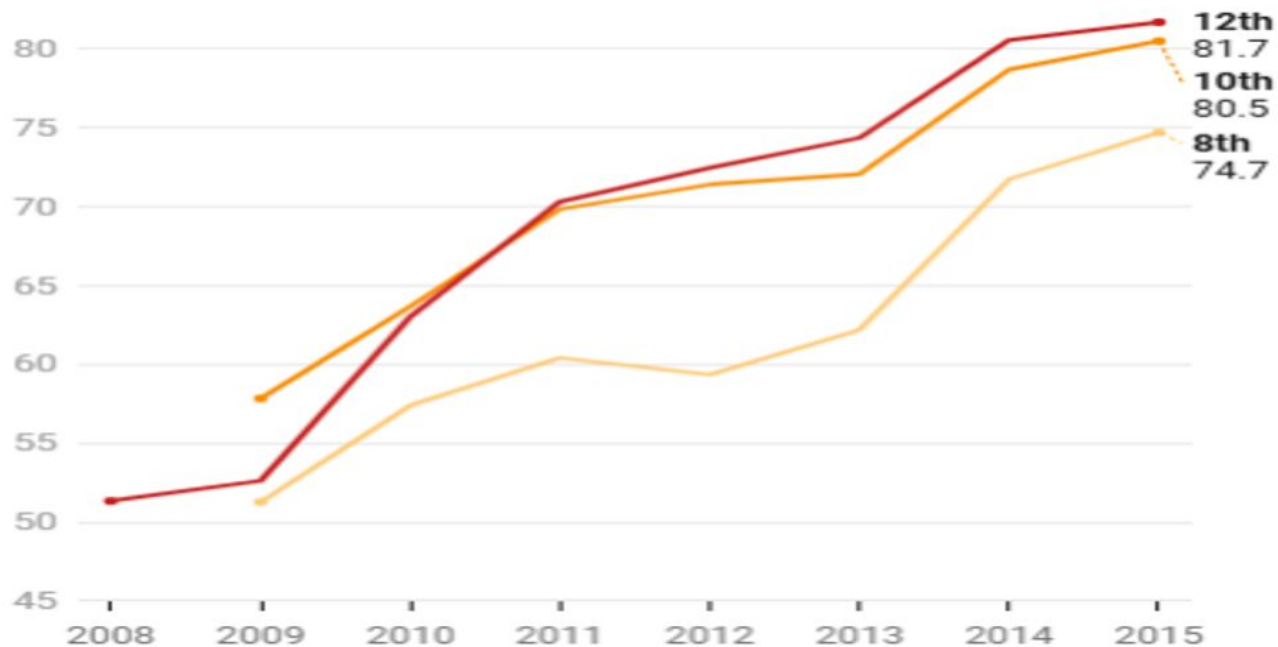


Chart: Zach Rausch Source: [Our World in Data](#)

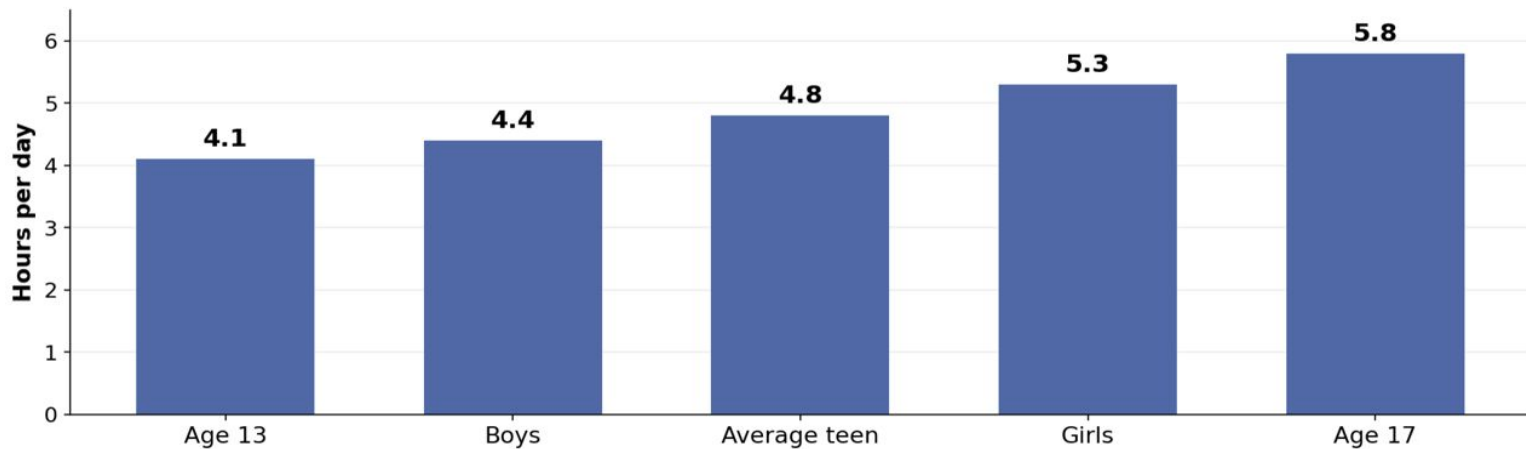
DAILY SOCIAL MEDIA USERS (U.S. ADOLESCENTS)

Percent of high schoolers using social media "nearly every day"



YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS

AVERAGE DAILY SOCIAL MEDIA USE AMONG U.S. TEENS



Source: Gallup, Teens Spend Average of 4.8 Hours on Social Media Per Day, 2023



PERCENT OF U.S. UNDERGRADUATES WITH A MENTAL ILLNESS

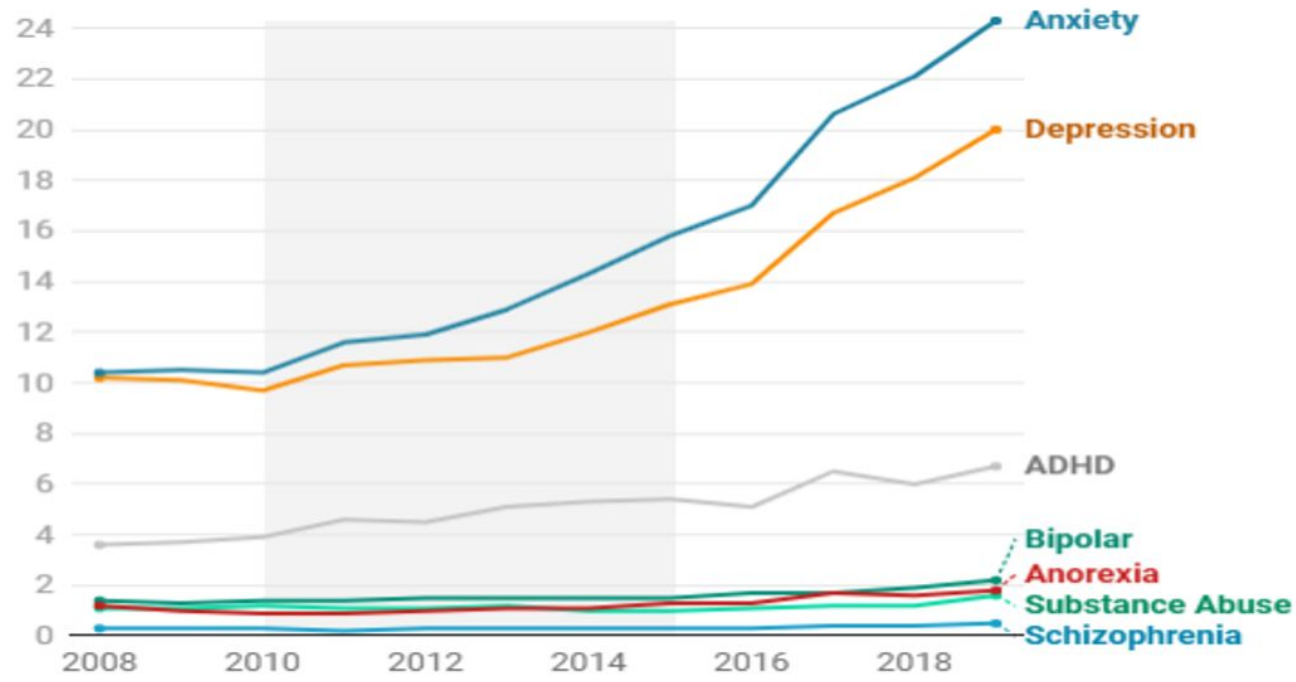
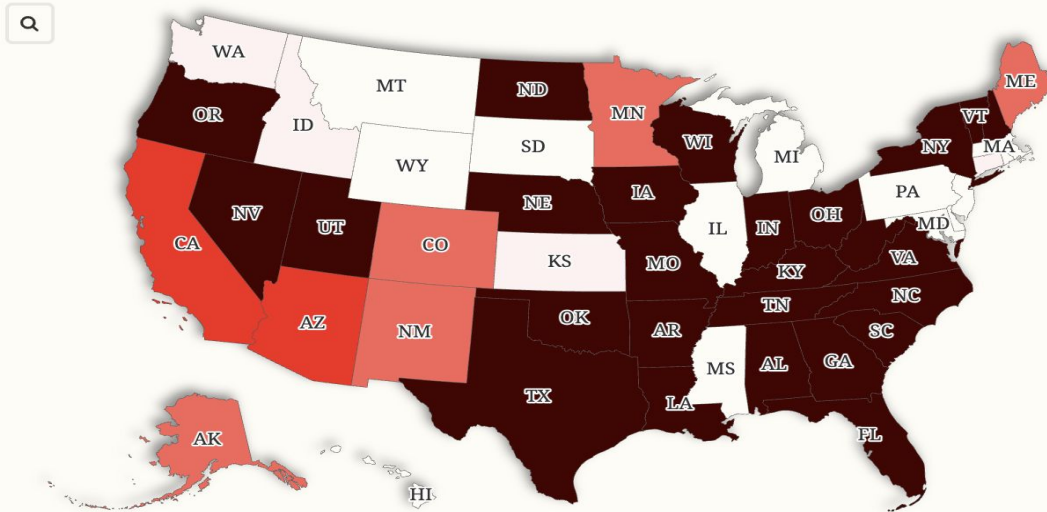


Chart: Zach Rausch Source: American College Health Association (ACHA-NCHA II)

U.S. STATES WITH SCHOOL CELL PHONE BANS IN 2026

States with School Phone Bans

- Statewide ban
- Limits cellphone usage in classrooms
- Requires districts to establish cellphone policies
- Encourages districts to limit cellphones in classrooms
- N/A



Source: Newsweek, [Ballotpedia](#)

Newsweek

MARYLAND PHONE-FREE SCHOOLS ACT

STATE MANDATE

Required by Law

WCPS is required to adopt a policy that prohibits the use of electronic communication devices *and social media* during the entire academic school day.



No Cell Phone Use

Prohibited from the first bell to the last bell of the day, including lunch, recess, and between classes.



Device Storage

Phones and all other smart devices must be deactivated and securely stored during school hours.



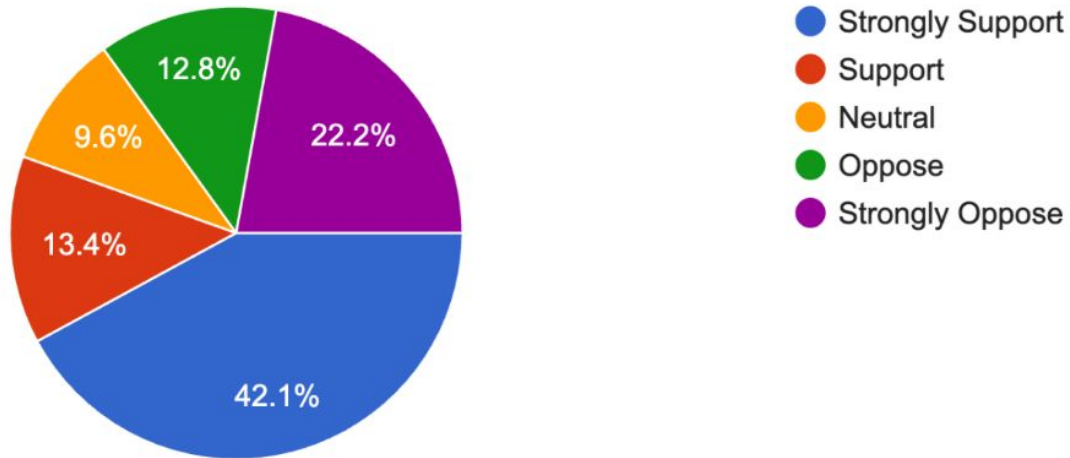
Social Media Access

Prohibits students from accessing or utilizing social media networks throughout the entire academic school day.

SURVEY RESULTS

How supportive are you of limiting student cell phone use during the school day?

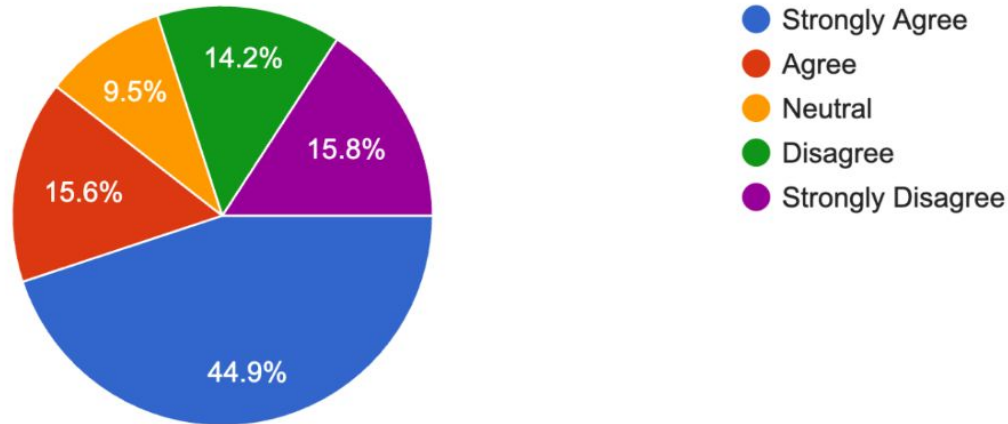
3,565 responses



SURVEY RESULTS

Do you believe limiting student use of student cell phones, personal devices, and social media during the school day would help improve the learning environment and reduce distractions?

3,565 responses



SURVEY RESULTS

- Strongest supporters of changes are staff (over 90% at secondary level)
- Student support declines with age (fewer high school students approve)
 - Elementary Students: **61.40%**
 - Middle School Students: **32.45%**
 - High School Students: **23.01%**
- Parent support for change is higher at elementary (69%) compared to high school (53.5%)
- Community supporters generally approve changes (70%)

UNLOCK THE BENEFITS OF DISCONNECTING

UNLOCK the benefits of
ACADEMICS, **MENTAL HEALTH**,
RELATIONSHIPS, **PERSONAL GROWTH**,
CREATIVITY, & **PHYSICAL HEALTH**
by disconnecting
& being present!

**FIND YOUR
FOCUS**
...phones later

ACADEMICS

Maximize your learning by staying attentive and engaged in class. Without the distraction of devices, you can better absorb lessons, contribute to discussions, and achieve academic excellence.

MENTAL HEALTH

Give your mind a break from screens to enhance your mental health. Enjoy lower stress and anxiety levels by connecting more with your surroundings.

RELATIONSHIPS

Deepen your bonds with friends and family by being truly present. Authentic conversations and shared moments lead to stronger, more meaningful relationships.

PERSONAL GROWTH

Invest in your personal growth by taking time to reflect, set goals, and explore new opportunities. Disconnecting from devices allows you to focus on self-improvement and developing essential life skills.

CREATIVITY

Unleash your creative potential by minimizing digital distractions. Dive into artistic projects, innovative thinking, and problem-solving to explore new ideas and achieve creative success.

PHYSICAL HEALTH

Boost your physical performance by focusing fully during activities and sports. Without the interruption of devices, you can improve your abilities, teamwork, and overall fitness.

DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP CURRICULUM



Library Media

Essential Curriculum

PreK-12



Social Studies

Essential Curriculum

Grades 3-5



CTE

Essential Curriculum

Middle School

REDUCED SCREEN TIME IN CLASSROOMS

WCPS is no longer a 1:1 student:device district



Elementary

- Chromebook carts in grades 2–5
- 1st grade: 6 Chromebooks per classroom
- Pre-K & K: No Chromebooks assigned



Middle

Chromebook carts available in core classes:

- Math & Science
- Social Studies
- English Language Arts (ELA)



High

- **1:1 Device Ratio**
- Chromebook provided for every student

SUPPORT FROM FAMILIES



Parent Resources

Commonsensemedia.org

- Social Media: Parents' Ultimate Guides

Common Sense Media

Scan to access guides and resources

SCAN ME



TABLE DISCUSSION & GALLERY WALK



1. Discuss

- Discuss each of the three questions as a table.
- Record collective responses on the chart paper & post on an adjacent wall/window
- Prioritize your most important recommendations.



2. Gallery Walk

- Review other tables' responses posted around the room.
- Use sticky dots or sticky notes to identify ideas you support and provide additional feedback.



3. Reflect

- Return to your table to reflect on new feedback.
- Refine your final recommendations before starting the whole-group discussion.

ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITY

Question 1 – Clarity (10 minutes)

Is anything in the regulation unclear or difficult to understand?

Consider:

- Expectations for students
- Expectations for parents
- Expectations for staff
- Language that should be clarified

ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITY

Question 2 – Fairness & Practicality (10 minutes)

Does this regulation seem practical and fair to implement across all WCPS schools? Why or why not?

Consider:

- Student age differences
- Consistency across schools
- Exceptions
- Progressive discipline
- Day-to-day implementation

ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITY

Question 3 – Recommendations (10 minutes)

If you could recommend three improvements before this regulation is finalized, what would they be?

- Prioritize your recommendations.

LEARN • REFLECT • REFINE

GALLERY WALK (*15 minutes*)

Directions

- Visit each table and review their responses to the three discussion questions.
- Use the sticky dots to identify ideas and recommendations you **strongly support**.
- Use sticky notes to add questions, suggestions, or additional ideas.
- Look for common themes, unique perspectives, and innovative solutions.
- Return to your table and discuss:
 - What surprised you?
 - What ideas gained broad support?
 - Would you revise your recommendations based on what you learned?

JOIN US FOR MORE CONVERSATIONS...

Topics That Matter. Community That Matters.



WCPS | Washington County Public Schools

COMMUNITY MATTERS



PLANNING
TO ATTEND?



TOPIC	DATE	LOCATION	FOCUS
UNDERSTANDING THE SCHOOL BUDGET	September 8, 2026	Center for Educational Services	<i>Funding, priorities, transparency, community input</i>
PREPARING STUDENTS FOR THE FUTURE	October 28, 2026	North Hagerstown High School	<i>Academic achievement, career readiness, life skills, community input</i>
SAFE, SUPPORTIVE, AND CONNECTED SCHOOLS	November 12, 2026	Williamsport High School	<i>Attendance, inclusion, school climate, substance abuse, community input</i>

LET US KNOW: wcpsmd.com/community-matters