

SCREEN SMART

LOG OUT

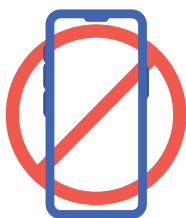
HOW SCHOOLS
CAN HELP
CHILDREN THRIVE
IN A
SCREEN-CENTERED
WORLD

Childhood has changed. While previous generations grew up with a *play-based* childhood, the current generation is growing up with a *phone-based* childhood. When smartphones and tablets were introduced into daily life, they were widely accepted as a way to keep children happily engaged and quiet for hours. No one knew at the time what the long-term impact would be.

Now research is revealing what parents and teachers are noticing every day: a childhood centered around screens isn't harmless. A child's brain is rewired when screens are a constant companion. As screen dependence is increasing, so are the rates of anxiety, depression, and self-harm. **Children are struggling in a wide range of areas, including focusing, sleeping, socializing, and building resilience.**

Jonathan Haidt, a social psychologist and author of *The Anxious Generation: How the Great Rewiring of Childhood Is Causing an Epidemic of Mental Illness*, is one of the most influential voices in the conversation about how smartphones affect kids and teens. He says the problem is collective, not individual, so the solution requires all of us to work together.

Haidt offers the following two recommendations as a starting point for educators:



1| Go phone-free—really.

Approximately 80 percent of public schools say they ban phones, but that usually just means the school forbids phone use during class time. Students still stare at their phones in between classes



and hide them in their laps or behind books during class, giving teachers the additional job of patrolling phone use and fighting to regain students' attention. A true phone ban requires a dedicated phone locker or system where students do not have their phones in their hands or pocket during the entire school day. **Totally removing the students' access to phones while at school helps minimize three threats: attention fragmentation, social deprivation, and phone addiction.**



2| Add more play.

Kindergarteners aren't the only kids who need free play to thrive.

Students of all ages need unstructured, screen-free time to build a sense of independence, confidence, and social skills.

Schools are finding that building in time for more off-screen playful activities increases students' happiness, reduces anxiety, and helps them learn how to interact with each other. For middle school students, try activities such as scavenger hunts, art projects, puzzles, board games, team trivia, Frisbee, capture the flag, or building challenges using LEGO bricks or recycled materials.



WHERE TO BEGIN

For specific recommendations and additional ideas for educators and parents, **visit Jonathan Haidt's website, anxiousgeneration.com.**

He shares detailed information about how to incorporate these and other suggestions into schools, homes, and communities.