



Rouleau School

Dear parents and community members:

I'm excited to share that the Rouleau School Staff and Rouleau School Community Council are reading *The Anxious Generation* by Jonathan Haidt as part of a professional development opportunity. The central claim of the book is an overprotection in the real world and underprotection in the virtual world. This book aims to identify how widespread use of smartphones, particularly since 2010, has had a negative impact on our youth.

Since the late 1980s, childhood has shifted from a play-based one to a technology-based childhood. This transition marked a shift from a "come home when the street lights come on" attitude to an overprotection of children in the real world. This brought children indoors and has been amplified since 2010 when youth started using phones with front facing cameras. Combined with widespread social media use, online based video games, and the use of cell phones late at night, the statistics regarding youth mental health, along with a variety of other metrics have moved in the wrong direction. Social media has evolved to become more addictive and mainstream smartphone usage has become more common among younger children.

Statistics presented in the book show a significant increase in nearly every marker of mental health from 2010 onwards. Levels of depression, anxiety, self harm, suicide, hospitalizations due to mental health episodes have all increased rapidly.

The author suggests that parents, educators, and communities play vital roles in creating environments that promote resilience and healthy social development. The author proposes four strategies for improving youth's mental health. These include:

- No smartphones before high school
- No social media before 16
- Phone-free schools
- Far more unsupervised play and childhood independence.

Our K-4 Play Hall program is a solid start and further strategies will be implemented throughout the school year. We will be hosting parent information nights throughout the Winter to work towards committed, positive change.

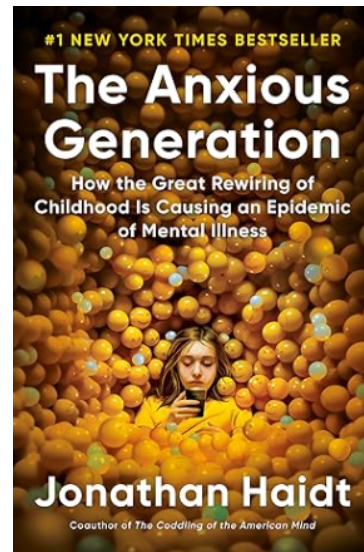
A community approach is the best strategy for us to implement actionable, positive change both at school and at home, for our current and future students. We're inviting all stakeholders to join us in the reading of this book to learn more about these issues, reflect on our current practices and make positive steps forward.

Please view the following links (or ironically) scan the QR code with your smartphone to view an introduction to the book.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MDvU6nNeeas>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ui0UNXsEGJ8>



Novels can be requested at the Palliser Library in Rouleau, are available as an audiobook through the Palliser Library and Audible as well. If you wish to purchase a copy, they are available on Amazon for \$25 and at Indigo for \$40.

We hope you join us in this book study. Thank you for joining us in this important conversation. Together, we can make a difference in our students' lives, empowering them to thrive in an increasingly complex, overwhelming digital world.

Mitch Singleton

Principal

Rouleau School