

## School Health Advisory Committee November 15, 2023

Committee Members in Attendance	Committee Members Absent	Staff and Guest in Attendance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ayan Noor</li> <li>• Robert Goldel</li> <li>• Mary Rogers Kirby</li> <li>• Kelly Fernandez</li> <li>• Brenda Silvia-Torma</li> <li>• Emilee Pressman</li> <li>• Jen Steiner</li> <li>• James Jadallah</li> <li>• Catherine Stone</li> <li>• Katie Moyer</li> <li>• Ilana Yergin-Doniger</li> <li>• Dr. Tuc Nguyen</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ann Smith</li> <li>• Laura Jane Cohen</li> <li>• Kolette De La Cruz</li> <li>• Elvira Anadolu</li> <li>• Mary Rohmiller</li> <li>• Bethany Demers</li> <li>• Amanda Schlink</li> <li>• Kimberly Smith</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lea Skurpski</li> <li>• Saray Smalls</li> <li>• Dr. Terri Edmunds-Heard</li> <li>• Stephanie Sheridan – Laura Jane Cohen’s Designee</li> <li>• Keena McAvoy (public comment)</li> </ul>

### Call to Order

Meeting called to order at 7:12pm by Kelly Fernandez.

### Minutes

Approval of Minutes:

- September 2023 Minutes
  - Comments- did not include names of members of Group #3
  - Brenda Silvia-Torma motions to approve September 2023 minutes with addition of Group #3 names; Ilana Yergin-Doniger seconds; Motion passes
- October 2023 Minutes
  - Ilana Yergin-Doniger motions to approve; Ayan Noor seconds; motion passes

### Public Comment

- Keena McAvoy commented on cell phone use. Summary of comments:
  - Member of Fairplay’s Screen Time Action Network and Screens in Schools work group
  - Supports K-12 schools in US adopting phone free school policies
  - Reference to research regarding the effect of social media on mental health and immaturity of adolescents’ brains, combined with the complete disruption a smart phone may cause by just being in the vicinity of a student
  - Requests FCPS implement more strict policies, if not complete ban on cellphones. Teachers have enough on their plates, current policies are not consistently enforced.

- High School education is supposed to be academically challenging, enriched by building and nurturing personal relationships and engaging in dynamic conversations. High school students are often using cell phones to avoid the discomforts of the growth and challenges this time brings to adolescents.
- It may be difficult, but our schools need to be grounded in science and reality, look to other countries that have successfully banned cell phones and model our programs similarly before we are left behind.
- Based on a letter to Dr. Miguel Cardona, US Secretary of Education, the public commenter wants FCPS to join the discussion/fight to ban cell phones in school or at least have a meaningful discussion with the stakeholders in stricter more consistently enforced policies on limited use

### **FCPS Updates**

- FCPS Staff Response to 2023 Recommendations SHAC released publicly
- School Board calendar link shared with the Committee
- Proposed legislation for School Health Nurses, including RN certification requirements, as well as requirements for stock glucagon
- Virginia Department of Health imposes standards for students only

### **Staff Response to SHAC 2023 Report**

- Ilana Yergin-Doniger categorizes responses as 'non-responsive' akin to adversarial interrogatories i.e.:
  - 1(e) Response to combat overuse of technology inadequate
  - Teacher 1-pager
  - 6(c) Free Screen Day
- Response is provided by FCPS Central Office – Department of Instructional Technology, Safety and Security
- Dr. Tuc Nguyen – Is there value in bringing SHAC 2023 Report responders to follow-up meeting?
- Dr. Terri Edmunds-Heard- Do proposals meet capacity? Does it match other initiatives?
- Robert Goldel – Proposes subcommittee to respond to SHAC 2023 Report responses
- Brenda motions to create SHAC 2023 Report subcommittee to review response; motion seconded by Ayan Noor; motion passes
  - Invitation to subcommittee will be emailed by Robert Goldel

### **School Wellness Survey Comments**

- Lea Skurpski – Submission to review and approve survey questions will be required before Winter Break
- Robert Goldel – Reminder that SHAC reviews the Wellness Survey to recommend updates if necessary
- Lea Skurpski – All Wellness Survey answers are reported pursuant to Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act and FCPS Wellness policy/regulation 2100; SHAC created survey, which has been implemented annually since 2017, although only required by the Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act every three years; some questions on survey are informed by the Virginia Department Of Education; there is a youth survey that may have wellness information about specific student issues like eating disorders
- Saray Smalls – Consider collecting data less frequently so that responses can be tailored, implemented, and assessed before responding to new data

- Robert Goldel – When is the Youth Risk Behavior Survey disseminated? Answer: November 2023, but subcommittee will follow up to learn window to add questions in future
- Robert Goldel – review recommendations, create subcommittee, and share recommendations next month
- Brenda motions to create School Wellness Survey Questions subcommittee, Jen Steiner seconds motion. Motion passes.
- Section on nutrition does not address eating disorder; add questions about correlation between eating disorders and social media
  - Dr. Tuc Nguyen observes increase in eating disorders since Covid-19 pandemic
    - School is a legitimate outlet for good information about eating disorders
    - Section on nutrition does not address eating disorder; add questions about correlation between eating disorders and social media
  - Subcommittee can check to see if information about eating disorders is held in a different survey – i.e., Youth Survey or Fairfax County Government surveys
- Subcommittee can consider expanding certain questions to include upper elementary students
- Subcommittee can consider fidelity of answers
- Principals may provide wellness survey responses or defer survey answers to designee; typically, the Wellness Committee responds to survey collectively, but not all schools follow that practice.
- Subcommittee queries how to get better data from schools if the answers don't mesh with 'on-the-ground' experience
- Ayan Noor – Consider using survey to define SHAC annual charge and stay consistent for years
- James Jadallah – Drafted Staff Wellness survey with hope that it can be implemented in the 2024-2025 school year; proposed survey would be different from Employee Engagement survey
- Subcommittee can find out how many surveys FCPS issues; can surveys be consolidated; what steps are being taken to reduce survey fatigue? Are there surveys capturing the same information?

### **December 13, 2023 Meeting**

- Meeting scheduled for December 13, 2023.
- Ilana Yergin-Doniger – Contingent upon school-board approval of committees meeting virtually, SHAC will meet virtually for December 2023. Brenda Silvia-Torma seconds motion. Motion approved.

### **Meeting Date Approvals**

- Ayan Noor motions to adopt Meeting Calendar for the School Year 2023-2024 with edit of December 2023 moved to December 13, 2023. Brenda Silvia-Torma seconds motion. Motion approved.

### **Co-Chair Miscellaneous**

- Notetakers for Rest of Year
  - Robert Goldel – Committee seeks rotating notetakers moving forward
- Topics for Future Meetings
- SHAC Recommendations Align with Budget

**Closing Remarks**

Brenda Silvia-Torma motions to adjourn. Ilana Yergin-Doniger seconds. Motion passes. Meeting adjourned at 8:58 pm following a motion of unanimous consent.

**Recorder**

Jennifer Steiner

My name is Keena McAvoy and I am a parent of 3 FCPS graduates and previously worked as a physical therapist in the county. I am a member of Fairplay's Screen Time Action Network and their Screens in Schools work group. The Screen Time Action Network recently sent a letter to Dr. Miguel Cardona, US Secretary of Education, that requests that he release an urgent official Advisory that urges K-12 schools in the US to adopt phone free school policies. I recently emailed this letter and accompanying press release to your committee. The letter is signed by 60 concerned members and supporters, myself included, many who are experts in the fields of psychology, early childhood development, education and technology. The letter contains the results of over 20 scientific studies that document the harms of social media and smart phone use by students. I am here tonight to suggest that FCPS has an opportunity to join the growing list of schools that have banned student cell phones.

Our country's surgeon general, Dr. Vivek Murthy, commented recently at the launch of Harvard's Center for Digital Thriving that QUOTE "If we don't put safety standards in place and provide more support for young people and their parents, we're going to look back 5, 10 years from now and say 'What were we thinking?'". END QUOTE With the wide availability of research about social media and mental health, the immaturity of adolescents' brains and the complete disruption that a smart phone causes for a student, even when it's just being held in a pocket or used by a classmate near by, it is imperative that FCPS takes this opportunity to ban cell phones. That we are content with school smart phone guidelines that just scratch the surface, and that are inconsistently enforced, is a grave disservice to students and families and a denial of facts and best practices. Teachers in our schools are doing the very best they can with cell phone policies and recommendations that simply don't go far enough.

An enriching high school experience involves academic challenge, trials of building and nurturing relationships and engaging in dynamic conversation. This growth and challenge can be uncomfortable. High school students are often using smart phones to avoid this discomfort and engagement and these valuable teachable moments are fading. Any teacher in today's high schools will agree. We are losing opportunities to support the development of skills that make us most unlike machines. We must continue to develop these skills in our students so that they maintain their value in the societies and economies of the future.

FCPS has a large collection of digital wellness resources online that ironically would help one to conclude that smart phones do not belong in schools. FCPS should openly acknowledge to families that, yes, students' developing brains, relationships and emotional wellness are at risk and there is more that we, together, can and must do. Schools must provide more authentic support to families with policies that are grounded in science and reality. And, yes, it may be difficult. As outlined in the Screen Time Action Network letter, the list of schools and even other countries that have instituted real and meaningful smart phone bans during the school day is growing. And FCPS, and it's students, are in the process of being left behind, subjects in a science experiment that should have been discontinued long ago due to adverse effects. Talented and dedicated educators consistently show us that they can do hard things. Together, we can and must do better for our children. In the future, we'll look back and wonder why it took us so long. Thank you.