**Unit Two Social Networks**

**预习任务**：Read the 2 articles below and please:

1. think about the questions give in “Before reading”,
2. Give notice to the highlighted words and underlined sentences in **Reading 2**.
3. Mark the difficult sentences and words.

**Before reading：**

The following is a letter “Screen-based lifestyle harms children’s health” published by *The Guardian* on December 25, 2016, signed by 40 people — writers, psychologists, and charity leaders. Read the letter and think about the questions below.

Q1: What problems do these people worry about? Q2: What is the purpose of this letter?

**Screen-based lifestyle harms children’s health**

A decade ago our first multiple-signatory (多人签名的) “toxic childhood” press letter described how children’s health and wellbeing were being undermined by the decline of outdoor play, increasingly screen-based lifestyles, a hyper-competitive schooling system and the unremitting (持续的) commercialisation of childhood.

Despite widespread public concern, subsequent policymaking has been half-hearted, short-termist (短视的) and disjointedly (不连贯的) ineffective. The above factors continue to affect children adversely … Physical health problems like obesity continue to escalate (逐步上升), and mental health problems among children and young people are approaching crisis levels. As well as the intense distress caused to families, there are obviously longer-term social and economic consequences for society as a whole.

If children are to develop the self-regulation and emotional resilience (弹性) required to thrive in modern technological culture, they need unhurried engagement with caring adults and plenty of self-directed outdoor play, especially during their early years (0–7). We therefore urge the government to take immediate action, including:

•The development of a coherent, well-funded approach to care and education from pre-birth to age seven, including a kindergarten stage for three- to seven-year-olds emphasising social and emotional development and outdoor play.

• National guidelines on screen-based technology for children up to the age of 12, produced by recognised authorities in child health and development.

…

Without concerted (协同一致的) action, our children’s physical and mental health will continue to deteriorate, with long-term results for UK society that are frankly unthinkable.

The following passage you are going to read is actually an open letter signed by 81 professionals, as a response to the letter published on *The Guardian* on Dec. 25.

**Reading 2**

**Screen Time Guidelines Need to Be Built on Evidence, Not Hype**

1 Moral panic about the impact of new technologies on our behavior and development is not new. Socrates railed against the dangers of writing for fear that it would nurture “forgetfulness in the learners’ souls, because they will not use their memories.” One source of contemporary anxiety is “screen time”. Recently, a letter signed by a group of writers, psychologists and charity heads raised concerns that childhood health and well-being in the UK is declining, in part due to “increasingly screen-based lifestyles”. The signatories argued that the policy response to these concerns, first raised over a decade ago, has been half-hearted and ineffective.

2 As a group of scientists from different countries and academic fields with research expertise and experience in screen time, child development and evidence-based policy, we are deeply concerned by the underlying message of this letter. In our opinion, we need quality research and evidence to support these claims and inform any policy discussion. While we agree that the well-being of children is a crucial issue and that the impact of screen-based lifestyles demands serious investigation, the message that many parents will hear is that screens are inherently harmful. This is simply not supported by solid research and evidence. Furthermore, the concept of “screen time” itself is simplistic and arguably meaningless, and the focus on the amount of screen use is unhelpful. There is little evidence looking at the impact of the context of screen use, and the content that children encounter when using digital technologies — factors that may have a much greater impact than sheer quantity alone.

3 If the government were to implement guidelines on screen-based technology at this point, as the authors of the letter suggest, this would be on the basis of little to no evidence. This risks the implementation of unnecessary, ineffective or even potentially harmful policies. For guidelines to have a meaningful impact, they need to be grounded in robust research evidence and acknowledge that children’s health and well-being is a complex issue affected by many other factors, such as socioeconomic status, relational poverty, and family environment — all of which are likely to be more relevant for children’s health and well-being than screens. For example, there is no consistent evidence that more screen time leads to less outdoor play; if anything, the evidence indicates that screen time and physical outdoor activity are unrelated, and reductions in average time spent in outdoor play over time seem to be driven by other factors. Policy efforts to increase outdoor play that focus on screen time are therefore likely to be ineffective.

4 Any simplistic approach to issues facing childhood health and well-being is inappropriate, and a focus on screen time is not evidence-based. Divisive and disturbing rhetoric that takes a casual approach to evidence is unhelpful at best and, in our opinion, damaging. Digital technologies are part of our children’s lives, necessarily so in the 21st century. We agree that further research is necessary, and urge the government and research funding bodies to invest in this, so that clear policy and better guidelines for parents can be built on evidence, not hyperbole and opinion.

(516 words)