

November 13, 2019

Dear Parent(s)/Guardian(s):

RE: Vaping

We are writing to inform you of the School District's concern regarding the prevalence of students vaping on school property. Results from the 2018 BC Adolescent Health Survey show that 64% of students who had smoked used a vape pen or vape stick with nicotine, and 43% used a vape pen or stick without nicotine in the past month. This equated to 21% of all BC students vaping with nicotine and 19% without nicotine.

Recently, some students have had severe reactions to vapour products that required medical attention. District staff have a number of concerns and are asking for your help to stop a behavior that health officials are saying may lead to a new generation of youth addicted to nicotine.

What is Vaping?

Vaping is the act of inhaling and exhaling an aerosol, often called vapour, which is produced by heating a liquid with a battery-powered device known as a vape, e-cigarette or vapour product. The liquid is often referred to as e-juice, and comes in a variety of flavours. Most e-juice contains nicotine, the highly addictive chemical that is found in cigarettes. With an array of fruit and candy-like flavours, vapour products appeal to youth. Many vapour products are easily concealed to fit in the palm of your hand, and look like USB memory sticks, lipstick tubes or ballpoint pens. The latest "pod" type devices (ex. JUUL, Vype) contain as much nicotine as a pack of cigarettes in one pod. Newer generations of vapour devices can be used to inhale illicit substances such as cannabis or its components (THC, hash oil).

Health Risks

Health Canada advises that youth vaping is not safe and the long term negative health effects of vaping are still unknown. According to a Statement from the Council of Chief Medical Officers of Health on the increasing rates of youth vaping in Canada:

"Nicotine is highly addictive and can have harmful impacts on the brain, affecting memory and concentration in everyone and brain development in youth and young adults. It alters part of the brain that control attention, learning, mood and impulse control. Early exposure to nicotine in adolescence may increase the severity of future dependence and tobacco."

In addition, even small amounts of the "e-juice" can be poisonous to a young child if ingested and can be toxic if spilled on the skin. The vapour devices contain a heat source and these have malfunctioned causing a mini explosion or starting a fire in purses or backpacks.

Sales to Minors is Illegal

In BC, the rules around sales of vapour products are the same as cigarettes. It is against the law to sell or provide any vapour products to someone under the age of 19. In addition, vaping and smoking are banned on school property, both by school policy and the Tobacco and Vapour Product Control Act. Further, it is illegal to possess cannabis on school grounds. Witnessing students' vaping puts staff in a difficult position of having to act on this illegality as persons of responsibility, acting in "loco parentis" or as a reasonable parent. What would a reasonable parent do when they witness a student participating in an illegal activity?

What is the Board of Education Doing?

The Board of Education has Policy #250 Tobacco and Electronic Smoking Devices under Section 200: Health & Safety. The Board has also written a letter to Minister of Education, Fleming, and has asked for financial support pertaining to vaping cessation, education, and mental health.

What is the School District Doing?

The District is providing education to youth in elementary, middle and secondary schools outlining the facts about vaping. School staff will continue to enforce a no-vaping zone on school property. School Principals have been instructed to confiscate any vapour products they see on campus. If staff see vaping products on school property, they may confiscate them and turn them over to the RCMP.

What can Parents or Guardians Do?

- Start a conversation, speak with your child about the risks of vaping and vapour products.
- Check out Health Canada's Consider the Consequences of Vaping for more information on vapour products. Also, the Interior Health [Toolkit - Vaping School Properties](#)
- Be a positive role model. Don't smoke or vape around young children or teens.
- Do not buy or give vapour or tobacco products to minors.
- If you vape, keep vapour products, including their nicotine refills and empty cartridges, out of the reach of children and pets.

Other materials we'd like to highlight:

BC Lung Vaping Prevention Toolkit: <https://bc.lung.ca/how-we-can-help/vaping>

Health Canada Consider the Consequences Campaign:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/services/health/campaigns/vaping.html>

We recognize that some schools continue to struggle with student vaping on school property. School Administrators or RCMP School Liaison Officers may request progressive enforcement support from the Integrated Tobacco Program, in cases where school prevention and disciplinary processes have been unsuccessful.

In closing, we believe that in working together we can better educate our youth on the potential harmful consequences of vaping in order to keep them safe and healthy.

Sincerely,



Dr. Christine Perkins | Superintendent & Chief Executive Officer

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