



Appleton Area School District

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RE: Appleton Common Council and Board of Health – Electronic Cigarettes

Electronic cigarettes have had a significant negative impact on middle and high school students in the Appleton Area School District (AASD) --- our surveys indicate that one out of every four middle and high school students is using e-cigarettes. That's 25% of our children who are risking nicotine addiction. Students report that e-cigarettes or "vapes" are easy to obtain, easy to use, easy to hide, and hard to quit. The prefrontal cortex of our children is not fully developed until 21 years old. Middle and high school students do not have the capacity to use their prefrontal cortex to "put the brakes on" in order to stop the use of addictive nicotine products once they've started.

Here are some facts to consider:

1. Nicotine changes the brain, which is why quitting is so hard.
<https://teens.drugabuse.gov/blog/post/why-nicotine-so-addictive>
2. The brain's peak period to develop addiction is adolescence.
<https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/adolescence-a-high-risk-time-for-substance-use-disorders-2018080714402>
3. Youth are the likeliest addicts---and e-cigarette pods taste like cotton candy, which targets youth.
4. Four out of five youth who use tobacco products start with flavored tobacco.
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5536860/>

Many young people do not view e-cigarettes as dangerous and therefore have difficulty gauging how much nicotine they are using and how addictive it is. One e-cigarette cartridge, called a pod, has roughly the equivalent amount of nicotine as one pack of cigarettes.
<https://www.checkupnewsroom.com/juuling-new-vaping-method-exposes-teens-to-a-pack-a-day-of-cigarettes/>

The use of e-cigarettes has become normalized, and vaping is reaching every demographic of student. Students have been caught vaping in bathrooms, on buses, and in the back of classrooms.

We know from Stan Glantz's "The Cigarette Papers" published 25 years ago that two of the initiatives that will most significantly reduce tobacco/nicotine use are:

1. Smoke-free air legislation
2. Risk perceptions and perceived acceptability of tobacco use.

<https://tobacco.ucsf.edu/people/stanton-glantz-phd>

When youth see adults smoking and using e-cigarettes, it normalizes that behavior and teaches them that it is OK to use tobacco products.

Our goal for our students is that they live in a community with both strict smoke-free air legislation and community norms that include a lack of acceptance for any tobacco use, including e-cigarettes.

Finally, we have begun to see a trend of students not only using nicotine in their e-cigarettes, but THC as well. As we address the opioid epidemic, it is important to remember that seldom do users start with heroin --- typically they start with nicotine and marijuana. This concerns us on a whole different level.

Thank you for the continued work to provide a safe and healthy community for our students.

Sincerely,

Appleton Area School District Leadership Team

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