

RIDGEWOOD HIGH SCHOOL

DISTRICT 234
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RE: Vaping; Dangers

Dear RHS Parents and Guardians:

This letter informs you of an increased usage of vape pens in the community. In recent years, vape pens, commonly referred to as e-cigarettes, have seen a massive increase in popularity. According to the Federal Drug Administration (FDA), among middle school and high school students, 3.6 million were current users of e-cigarettes in 2020.¹

“Vapes” or E-cigarettes are composed of a liquid cartridge, an atomizer, and a rechargeable battery. The fluid cartridge is the flavored part of the pen used to create the vapor; it is also the part of the pen that typically contains nicotine, but can also include “dab”, which is a liquid form of THC, the active ingredient in marijuana. The atomizer heats the pen when the user inhales, and the battery charges it. Here are some subtle signals that your teenager might secretly vape.

1. Fruity aroma(s) - E-cigarettes don’t smell bad like the smoke from combusting tobacco; however, most e-liquids have flavors that usually smell nice, like candy, mint, vanilla, fruit punch, marijuana, etc. Consider this a red flag if you suddenly whiff any of these, but none are around.
2. Unfamiliar handheld gadgets - E-cigarettes come in various shapes, from cig-a-likes to box mods. However, the most common ones resemble a pen and are known as vape pens. If you find such a gadget, or a pen that isn’t a pen, be aware that it could be a vaporizer. The easiest way to spot an e-cig is to look for holes on each end of the device. A picture of some e-cigarettes is at the end of this letter.
3. Batteries and Chargers - As you must charge your smartphone, vaporizers must be charged regularly. At the same time, some e-cigs can be charged with just a USB cable, while the most powerful e-cigs, like box mods, require a power supply. If you see unfamiliar batteries on the charger, look around, and you might find a vaping device.
4. Metallic wires and cotton wicks - This is yet another red flag if you find organic cotton, empty plastic vials, or thin metallic coils lying in your child’s room. Phone charging cords that have been cut with stripped wire ends are another way kids have been found vaping without using an actual e-cigarette or vaping device.
5. Empty pods - Pods are the vessels that hold the e-juice used in vaporizers, vape pens, and e-cigarettes. They can vary in shape and size depending on the device they are used on. If you see empty pods in the trash, this is also a strong sign that your child may be vaping.
6. Discarded atomizers - These are vital to e-cigs as they turn e-juice into vapor. However, they are disposable and, after a while, usually burn out. If you come across a discarded atomizer in your kid’s trash can, it’s a clear indication that he/she has been vaping.

Possession, use, distribution, or attempted distribution of vaping devices, e-cigarettes, tobacco products, nicotine products, cannabis products, THC-containing products, cartridges, pods, liquids, components, or related accessories is prohibited on school property, on school buses, and at school-sponsored or school-sanctioned activities. This applies regardless of a student’s age.

¹ 1. Wang TW, Neff LJ, Park-Lee E, Ren C, Cullen KA, King BA. E-cigarette Use Among Middle and High School Students — United States, 2020. MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep. ePub: 9 September 2020.

Use of tobacco products on school property is prohibited under the Illinois School Code and Board policy. Illinois law also regulates electronic cigarettes and prohibits the sale or furnishing of tobacco products, electronic cigarettes, and alternative nicotine products to individuals under 21. When a vaping device or related item is found at school, the item may be confiscated, and the student may receive school-based consequences consistent with the Student Handbook and District policy. If there is reason to believe the item contains or was used with cannabis, THC, or another prohibited substance, additional school action and/or referral to law enforcement may occur as appropriate.

As educators, we are responsible for supporting students' academic growth as well as their health, safety, and decision-making. We ask families to speak with their students about the risks of vaping and the expectation that students do not bring these items to school or school-related activities.

Please contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Goldflies', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Ryan Goldflies

Assistant Principal of Student Affairs

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