

A Joint Message From . . .



Engage. Inspire. Prepare.



May 5, 2019

Dear Paulding County Parents,

As we wrap up what has been another terrific and highly successful school year for the Paulding County School District, there is still one issue that needs our attention and, unfortunately, it has reached urgent status. The issue of student vaping has become an epidemic in our schools and addressing it will require a full community commitment. That is why the Paulding County School District, the Paulding County Board of Commissioners, and the Paulding County Sheriff's Office want to enlist you, the parents, to join us in tackling this threat to student health and well-being.

This year saw the popularity of electronic smoking devices, called vapes or e-cigarettes, skyrocket. The presence of the easy-to-hide vape devices is widespread in all five of our high schools. Students hide them in their pockets and their bookbags, among other places, and they smoke before and after school and between classes. Vapes are also prevalent in our middle schools, and most concerning is that we have even seen cases of *elementary school students* using vape devices. Other school districts are reporting the same phenomenon. The devices are ubiquitous, and student vaping has become a SIGNIFICANT issue for our administrators and school resource officers to deal with on a daily basis.

Students vape everything from flavored nicotine to extremely potent liquid THC, the same psychoactive ingredient found in marijuana. They smoke these substances, which are easy to obtain, through battery-powered, pen-shaped devices that quickly heat the liquid to a potent aerosol. Many vapes are intentionally designed to look very similar to computer USB sticks.

There are a few points we would like to make about this relatively new phenomenon:

- 1) It is illegal for students under the age of 18 to use vaping devices or to purchase vaping materials. Students who break the law risk serious consequences.
- 2) It is against school district policy for students to vape, or for them to even bring the devices or materials to school. Students who violate school district policy are subject to significant disciplinary consequences.
- 3) Because it is a relatively new phenomenon, we do not yet fully understand the long-term health effects of vaping, but we do know it is **not** a safe substitute for smoking cigarettes. Already this school year we have seen several students transported to the hospital in the middle of school day because of vaping, which can result in unconsciousness and seriously affect breathing. Inhaling vaporized THC can seriously impair a student's mental and motor functions.

The issue of youth vaping is a serious one that goes beyond our schools. We need your help to stem the spread of this trend and prevent the possibility of students harming themselves. The Sheriff's Office and our schools are



being as proactive as possible to address the issue, including conducting a series of Alcohol & Drug Awareness Programs hosted by the Paulding County Commissioners and Superior Court at schools throughout the school year, but the effort that will have the most impact begins at home. Have you talked to your child about vaping? If not, we would strongly encourage you to do so. We know that broaching this topic may not be easy, so we have included some resources below to help educate you about e-cigarettes and vaping, and to help you talk to your students.

Together, we as a community can make a difference to improve the lives our children. Thank you for your support.

Resources for parents on e-cigarettes and vaping:

- **Informational E-Cigarette Fact Sheet:** (Attached)
- **Tobacco, Vaping and Marijuana: A Parent's Guide to a New Epidemic (YouTube video):**
<https://youtu.be/SEz7rvY9IjE>
- **Quick Facts on the Risks of E-cigarettes for Kids, Teens, and Young Adults:**
https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/basic_information/e-cigarettes/Quick-Facts-on-the-Risks-of-E-cigarettes-for-Kids-Teens-and-Young-Adults.html
- **Tip sheet for talking with your teen about e-cigarettes:** (Download)
https://e-cigarettes.surgeongeneral.gov/documents/SGR_ECig_ParentTipSheet_508.pdf
- **For teens who want to quit:**
<https://teen.smokefree.gov/>
- **More resources:** <https://www.paulding.k12.ga.us/preventionintervention>

Sincerely,

Dr. Brian Otott
Superintendent

Dave Carmichael
Chairman, Board of Commissioners

Gary Gullede
Sheriff