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6/1/2018

Dear Parent(s)/Guardian(s),

Plainwell High School, similar to many other schools, has seen a recent spike in incidents involving student vaping. Complicating this issue is that there is varying information and misunderstandings involving vaping and/or electronic cigarettes. The purpose of this letter is to inform you of the issue, give you resources if you feel your child is involved in this kind of behavior; as well as alert you to possible repercussions if your child engages in vaping on school property. We take this issue very seriously due to the negative health effects vaping can have on our students and often find that our parents are not always aware of the risks around vaping. The increase in vaping prompted us to do more research and we want to share our findings with you.

Vaping is the act of inhaling a vapor produced by an electronic vaporizer or e-cigarette. The vapor can contain nicotine and other substances. The liquids that are vaporized come in many different flavors and might even smell fruity. For example, many of the flavors of these liquid concentrates, or 'vape juices,' are sweet and even have names such as: cinnamon roll, marshmallow, bubblegum, lemonade and cookies.

Vaporizers/e-cigarettes come in all different shapes. Some common styles we see look like a thick pen, a stylus for an iPad, a flash drive, or a small flask with a round chimney coming off the top. The devices are very small and can easily be hidden on a person or blend in with normal backpack items. Like cigarettes, stores cannot sell vaping items to people under the age of 18. However, students report that they purchase the devices online, or buy from older siblings, friends, or unfortunately even parents.

When students vape in school bathrooms, it can be due to an addiction to nicotine they have developed, a peer pressure issue, or they are simply curious and want to try it out. In any case, spending excessive time out of class is heavily correlated to lower grades and not understanding of material. Additionally, vaping on school grounds negatively impacts students and staff who do not want to be exposed to, or breathe in vapor.

The Surgeon General reports that nicotine is addictive and can harm brain development, brain development continues until about age 25. We know that using nicotine may make it harder for school related tasks such as learning and concentration. In conversations with students, it appears that many are not aware of the harmful effects of vaping. Students either say they use nicotine-free liquid or that it is safer than tobacco cigarettes.

Below are two helpful resources that you can use to talk to your kids about vaping. The first is the Surgeon General's 2016 report on e-cigarette use. The second is a fact sheet and parent tip sheet. If you feel your child has already developed an addiction to nicotine, we suggest you reach out to your health care provider.

- https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/sgr/e-cigarettes/index.htm
- https://www.bedfordma.gov/sites/bedfordma/files/file/file/nida-ecig_info-graphic2016.pdf

Vaping is prohibited by the Plainwell Community Schools Student Handbook, which all students and parents/guardians sign off on to acknowledge their understanding of the rules and behavioral expectations at our high school. In addition, any athletes caught with a vape will suffer additional consequences. While we try to proactively educate to prevent any incidents, there will be consequences if a student vapes on school property. The consequences for vaping include: suspension, phone calls home, confiscation of the vaping device, and possible police involvement if used with an illicit drug. Furthermore, if a student is an athlete in possession of a vaporizer or is seen in the act of vaping, this is a violation of the chemical health rules of the Plainwell Community Schools Athletic Handbook and will result in loss of eligibility for a portion of the season.

In a continual effort to educate our students with the health dangers associated with substance abuse, Plainwell High School has added vaping to the health curriculum, a requirement for all students. We will have a parent information booth available at our Open House on August 27, 2018 and Parent Teacher Conferences in the fall.

Our goal is also to partner with parents to help support our students in making positive decisions for themselves and the high school community. A local resource with information on how to have the "drug talk" with your child is www.talksooner.org.

Thank you for your continued support of our school system.

Sincerely,



Jeremy Wright
Principal
Plainwell High School