

Office of the Superintendent of Schools
MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Rockville, Maryland

August 28, 2019

MEMORANDUM

To: Members of the Board of Education

From: Jack R. Smith, Superintendent of Schools

Subject: Efforts to Educate Students Regarding the Dangers of Vaping (07-29-19-02-B)

During Board/Superintendent Comments, Board members requested the following:

Question B

Mrs. O'Neill requested updated information from staff regarding efforts to educate students regarding the dangers of vaping.

Response

Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) recognizes that the use of electronic cigarettes (e-cigarettes), often referred to as vaping or Juuling (after a brand name of e-cigarettes), has been increasing among youth in the United States, including MCPS students. There is misinformation among the public that vaping is innocuous and an acceptable alternative to cigarette use. While e-cigarettes manufacturers market their products as a smoking cessation aid, the Food and Drug Administration has not approved their use for smoking cessation. One study confirmed that e-cigarette use is associated with higher use of traditional tobacco products at a later time and also demonstrated that adolescents who use e-cigarettes were significantly more likely to turn to regular cigarettes in adulthood. Most troubling was the finding that adolescents who were unlikely to use regular tobacco products did use e-cigarettes, which often have fruit or bubble-gum flavors, and ended up transitioning to cigarettes.¹ E-cigarettes typically contain nicotine and, increasingly, tetrahydrocannabinol (commonly referred to as THC), the active ingredient in marijuana that produces the "high." An additional danger of e-cigarettes is that nicotine, a highly toxic substance, is concentrated in e-cigarette liquid. This has resulted in accidental poisoning after ingesting or coming into skin contact with the liquid. Young children, in particular, are at risk as the fatal dose of nicotine is lower for them and they often are attracted to the flavors.

¹ Barrington-Trimis, J.L., Kong, G., Leventhal, A.M., Liu, F., Mayer, M., Boley Cruz, T., Krishnan-Sarin, S, and McConnell, R. (2018). E-cigarette use and subsequent smoking frequency among adolescents. *Pediatrics*, 142(6), e20180486; DOI: 10.1542/peds.2018-0486.

In 2014, MCPS Regulation COF-RA, *Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drugs on Montgomery County Public Schools Property*, was revised to expand the definition of “smoking” to any device that “simulates smoking,” and to prohibit the use of e-cigarettes and vaporizers on school property. MCPS also is collaborating with the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to raise awareness of the dangers of e-cigarettes and to educate adults on how easy it may be to conceal e-cigarette use because the devices may be very small, sometimes even resembling a USB device, and the vapor may be colorless and unscented. During the past year, the following measures have been taken by MCPS, Montgomery County, and the state of Maryland to address the rise in e-cigarette use.

- In March 2019, Montgomery County enacted a law that bans the use of smoking, including e-cigarette use, in outdoor seating areas where food is served.
- In May 2019, Maryland became the thirteenth state to raise the minimum age for purchasing tobacco products, including e-cigarettes, to 21 years of age.
- In April 2019, Montgomery County formed a work group, consisting of multiple stakeholders, including MCPS, to explore strategies to combat the use and abuse of e-cigarettes. A strategic plan was developed to decrease the use of vaping devices proposing enhanced surveillance, penalties for underage distribution, and increasing the eligibility age for purchasing vaping products.
- Louis Schreiber, Grade 12 student, Winston Churchill High School, organized a task force to explore options to provide resources to inform the community about the rise of vaping among county youth. MCPS is a part of this task force.
- Adult education is critical to curbing the use of e-cigarettes among youth as vaping devices may be very small, resemble other commonly used classroom items, and often emit no vapor or odor. Staff in MCPS high schools have responded to the rise in youth e-cigarette use in a number of ways.
 - In response to incidents at Winston Churchill High School in spring 2019, MCPS partnered with DHHS and the Montgomery County Police Department (MCPD) to present an informational session to parents/guardians on vaping, dangers associated with vaping, and warning signs.
 - In March 2019, the administration at Quince Orchard High School forwarded information to parents/guardians about the rise and dangers of vaping and the consequences that may ensue if a student is found in possession of e-cigarettes.
- MCPS includes information on [e-cigarette use](#) on its website.
- The Montgomery County BTheOne.org campaign on mental health awareness was expanded to include substance use prevention. In summer 2018, the website was redesigned to be more interactive and optimized for mobile devices. A renewed public service announcement campaign was launched in summer 2019.

- MCPS is collaborating with MCPD and the Montgomery County Overdose Intervention Team to launch the HOPE Trailer, modeled after Harford County's HOPE House, a mobile education tool (<https://harfordsheriff.org/get-involved/hope4harford/>). The HOPE Trailer, which will travel throughout the county, will provide an opportunity to raise awareness and share resources and information with Montgomery County adults on possible warning signs that their children are engaging in substance use, including e-cigarettes.

We will continue to keep you informed as MCPS and DHHS continue their partnership to reduce the use of e-cigarettes among our county's youth.

If you have any questions, please contact Dr. Maria V. Navarro, chief academic officer, at 240-740-3040.

JRS:MVN:UAH:ear

Copy to:
Executive Staff
Ms. Webb