



# ELLICOTTVILLE

## Central School

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January 28, 2019

### INFORMATIONAL LETTER TO PARENTS

**FROM: MR. PLOETZ, MS / HS PRINCIPAL**

I am writing to discuss the use of e-cigarette and “vape” devices on and off campus, a serious trend among teenagers that threatens the safety and well-being of our students. I believe this trend has progressed beyond “edgy” behavior among just some of our students, leading me to pen this letter and provide you with information and resources connected with e-cigarettes and the use of these devices. The availability and use of these devices has reached levels that should concern all of us.

#### **WHAT ARE THEY?**



Many parents tell me they have/had no idea what an e-cigarette looks like until after they find out their child has one, or has used one. The photo to the left represents the most common types of devices available on the market today.

*\*Please note relative size of devices in relation to traditional cigarettes all the way to the left.*

These devices can be easily hidden, and are often mistaken for things such as USB drives, pens and other household items. Also, please note the photo below that highlights the most difficult type of device to detect, made by the company “Juil”. These look identical to long USB drives, and the plastic caps that contain the juice can be mistaken as the caps to some USB thumb drives.

Teens may refer to these devices as vapes, e-cigs, Juuls, or dabs, just to name a few. Use of these devices is most commonly referred to as “vaping” or “juuling”. A rechargeable battery supplies electricity to turn juice (more on this later) into vapor, which is inhaled like a cigarette or other smoking device.



Teens will tell you some vape devices “don’t have anything in the juice”, which may be true to a point. Teens will also tell you the vapor is harmless, which was hotly debated for a few years but is now widely believed to be untrue. Most vape juices contain nicotine, so much that a few puffs of an e-cigarette device may contain as much or more nicotine as an entire cigarette. Additionally, e-juice “base” (fluid that does not contain nicotine) is often used to incorporate other inhalable drugs into the use of the device. A common version of this is a “dab pen”, an e-cigarette with THC-laced wax, or “dab” instead of e-juice, which provides a concentrated method to obtain a marijuana high by inhaling vapor.

One of the most concerning issues with vapes, etc., is it is virtually impossible to visually tell what is or isn't in the vape device. Most juices look similar (brown/tan/reddish oily consistency) and smell very sweet. The reality is most of these devices, especially by the time they reach the hands of a teenager, are obtained on the black market or online, virtually eliminating the ability to definitively identify the contents of any single device or Juul cap/pod.

### **ARE THEY HARMFUL?**

We are still learning about the short and long-term effects of e-cigs and vapes. You might want to read up on some of the research regarding "popcorn lung" and other medical issues that could develop through e-cig use. Here is a link from the American Lung Association:

<https://www.lung.org/about-us/blog/2016/07/popcorn-lung-risk-ecigs.html>

NBC Nightly News recently ran segments on how e-cig use among teens has doubled in the last year, and how addictive these devices can be: <https://www.nbcnews.com/health/health-news/surgeon-general-calls-all-hands-deck-fight-teen-vaping-n949301>

It is important to know even the non-nicotine "base" juice has dangerous aerosols, and it is not just vaporized water coming out of these devices. Besides the point-of-impact damage the aerosols have on lung and respiratory tissue, the research on nicotine use and addiction among teens is robust. Please visit the National Institute on Drug Abuse for Teens website for good information on the specific health-related impacts of e-cigarettes, nicotine and other drugs:

<https://teens.drugabuse.gov/drug-facts/tobacco-nicotine-e-cigarettes>

### **WHERE DO TEENS GET THEM?**

Anyone who has online purchasing power can have them shipped to a residence simply by visiting a website, clicking they are old enough, and paying for them like any other online purchase. Most devices confiscated on campus are either obtained through an older acquaintance who purchased them legally at a vape shop, an older student who posed as an 18-year-old and purchased it illegally in person, or someone who purchase it online and had it shipped to them.

One of the most difficult things to write in this letter is to inform you of the presence of these devices on campus. I wish I could inform you we have discovered a way to eliminate (or even effectively police) e-cigs and vapes on campus, but we have not. Your child(ren) have probably informed you of their own observations or rumors regarding these devices on campus, and I regret to inform you these devices do exist and are used on campus. Stopping e-cig use in restrooms is about as easy as stopping children from checking their cell phones in a stall. We will continue to do our best to monitor our restrooms and locker rooms, but I believe everyone can understand the limitations that exist with our ability to completely eliminate vape usage on campus.

### **WHAT DO WE DO?**

The main purpose of this letter is to ensure all of our parents are informed of this issue. Our first steps include sharing knowledge of the problem, keeping a close eye out at home and at school for these devices and sweet smells, talking with your child(ren) about this issue, and staying up to date on available research and resources. Please visit these helpful websites for more information:

#### ***Centers for Disease Control and Prevention***

[https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/basic\\_information/e-cigarettes/index.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/basic_information/e-cigarettes/index.htm)

#### ***Surgeon General***

<https://e-cigarettes.surgeongeneral.gov/resources.html>

#### ***E-cigarette & Vape Pen "Crash Course" @ Stanford Medical Tobacco Prevention Center***

<https://med.stanford.edu/tobaccopreventiontoolkit/about.html>

## POINTS OF AWARENESS

1. Adult supervision in the locker rooms and bathrooms has been heightened. You might hear your children talk about an increased adult presence in the restrooms and locker rooms, including adults now more frequently using student restrooms. This is not an intrusion of privacy – this is our best strategy to deter e-cig use.
2. We are monitoring restroom use, including keeping an eye on those who utilize restrooms in groups and frequently throughout the day. Please speak with your children about not visiting restrooms to socialize, check phones or to simply “breeze in and out” if it is not necessary.
3. These items are extremely easy to hide. Do not be fooled by thinking a cursory scan of a child’s book bag or bedroom will reveal these devices – they can be the size of a pack of gum.
4. When in use, these devices put out a sweet smell, often like a vanilla or fruit candle. Just because you do not see vapor does not mean these devices are not in use in an area – the vapor dissipates quickly into the air, leaving behind nothing but a sweet or spicy (like nutmeg) smell.
5. E-juice often comes in small eye-drop size bottles, larger bottles that can hold 100 mL of juice or more, or usb-looking caps / pods that fit the Juul-style device. Not all devices require bottles of e-juice; manufacturers are now selling devices with pre-filled juice cartridges cheap enough to be disposable.
6. There have been many documented cases of the battery shorting out on e-cig devices, causing small fires or even exploding. This has not happened at ECS, but one of my fears is that someone will become injured or we could have a campus safety issue if a device becomes defective in a locker or book bag.
7. Cannabis oil, “dab” wax, and other drugs besides nicotine are becoming more and more common for sale online and on the black market. The most dangerous aspect (in my opinion) of e-cig and Juul use, in addition to potential addiction, is the uncertainty of not knowing what is actually in the juice or oil inside a device.



Thank you for taking the time to read through this important information. Feel free to share this bulletin with your child(ren). More importantly, talk to them about the dangers of e-cigarettes. The impacts of nicotine, THC and other drugs on a developing brain are far worse for children than they are for adults.

Thank you for partnering with us to instill in our children the commitment to remain drug-free. Please contact me directly if you have any questions or additional information regarding this issue at ECS and in our community.

Sincerely,

Erich Ploetz  
Middle / High School Principal