October 11, 2019

Dear Parent(s)/Guardian(s),

The use of electronic cigarettes or vaporizers “vapes,” raises the dual concerns of student health and safety. Electronic cigarette companies are targeting middle and high school students by marketing attractive liquid flavors such as “strawberry, bubblegum, lemonade and cookies” giving the appearance that this is a harmless smoking option with limited risks. Furthermore, these companies are providing misinformation about the side effects of these electronic cigarettes or vapes. The LBUSD finds that our parents/guardians are often not aware of the health risks and disciplinary consequences around vaping. Therefore, the purpose of this letter is two-fold: firstly, to inform you about vaping, including its negative effects; and lastly, to communicate the disciplinary consequences, if your child is in possession of vaping paraphernalia or caught vaping on any LBUSD campus, property, or at any school events.

Vaping is the act of inhaling a vapor produced by an electronic cigarette or vaporizer. The casing can come in any shape or size, but its most popular form is the Juul, which usually appears as a flash drive and can be easily concealed in a backpack, coat, purse, etc. Other shapes and sizes can look like a thick pen or a stylus for an iPad. In addition to the flavors mentioned above, electronic cigarettes or vaporizers also include nicotine and caffeine. Additionally, these devices can be used as a delivery system for cannabinoids and potentially other illicit drugs, which is concerning. Very similar to cigarettes, it is illegal for stores to sell electronic cigarettes or vaporizers to anyone under the age of 21. However, minors may be able to purchase the devices online or buy from older siblings, friends or adults.

The LBUSD’s concern, first and foremost, is for the health and wellness of our students. According to the U.S. Surgeon General, in high doses, substances used for electronic cigarettes and vaporizers can cause addiction and may have negative effects on adolescent brain development. The LBUSD is taking the use of electronic cigarettes and vaporizers very seriously. These devices, even those containing only flavored vapor are banned from school campuses and school events to the same extent as tobacco, marijuana or other controlled substance products. Under existing California law, possession or the use on campus of e-cigarette or vape paraphernalia is unlawful and will result in similar disciplinary consequences. Possession on campus or at any school events of any electronic device that delivers nicotine or other vaporized liquids on is unlawful. Possession on campus or at any school events of any component, part, or accessory of any such device is unlawful. Additionally, possession of THC/Cannabis-related/Hemp oils on campus is handled and regarded in precisely the same manner as being in possession of a controlled/illegal substance and will result in disciplinary consequences, up to, and potentially including expulsion.

The Long Beach City Council voted unanimously this month to begin writing an ordinance that would temporarily ban flavored vaping products due to a national outbreak of vaping-related injuries and deaths. The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors also voted unanimously this month to ban flavored tobacco products, and to call for a statewide ban on vaping.
The LBUSD hopes you find this letter informative and that you understand our concerns about this potentially harmful issue. Please take some time to speak with your child about the dangers of using tobacco products, including vapes. We realize that this topic may be a difficult and even controversial subject to bring up for some parents/guardians. As always, we appreciate your support and help in maintaining a safe learning environment for all students.

Please see the following links for additional information:


https://e-cigarettes.surgeongeneral.gov/


Sincerely,

Christopher J. Steinhauser
Superintendent of Schools