



HILLSBOROUGH MIDDLE SCHOOL

A National Blue Ribbon School of Excellence

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Dear Parents/Guardians and Students,

Earlier this fall, I addressed our school regarding the growing prevalence of e-cigarettes and other vaping devices with which youngsters in our community and around our country have been experimenting. Today, in coordination with Hillsborough High School Principal, Ms. Karen Bingert, I want to share some very important updates to our district policies and practices with regard to this issue for our students.

First, it is important to recognize that by New Jersey statute [N.J.S.A. 26:3D-58(b)], “smoking is prohibited in any area of any building of, or on the grounds of, any public or nonpublic elementary or secondary school, regardless of whether the area is an indoor public place or is outdoors.” Smoking is defined as “the burning of, inhaling of, exhaling the smoke from, or the possession of a lighted cigar, cigarette, pipe or any other matter or substance which contains tobacco or any other matter that can be smoked, **or the inhaling or exhaling of smoke or vapor from an electronic smoking device**” (emphasis added) [N.J.S.A. 26:3D-57].

In essence, these statutes indicate that smoking in the more traditional sense of cigarettes or inhaling smoke/vapor from an electronic smoking device is not permitted by anyone, regardless of age, on school grounds or within the school building. Electronic cigarettes or other vapor-based devices serve the same unhealthy purpose, which is to introduce nicotine and other inhaled products into the body. Moreover, *these electronic smoking devices can be altered and then used to inhale illicit drugs, such as THC/marijuana and synthetic drugs that are often manufactured with chemicals that pose significant safety threats to those who inhale them.*

Schools across the nation are seeking ways to dissuade impressionable youth from beginning addictive behaviors while confronting the challenges that these odorless, smokeless devices present, whether at home or in a school setting. Working collaboratively, the Hillsborough Township Board of Education, Police Department, municipal government, Municipal Alliance, Life Skills program, and school and district administrators agree that these risky behaviors must be curbed with the resources available to us.

Therefore, our school code of conduct has been updated. Students in possession of tobacco products, including electronic smoking devices or their cartridges/oils/waxes/components, and/or smoking/vaping while on school grounds will be subject to the following:

- In-school suspension including mandatory consultation with the HMS Student Assistance Counselor.
- A complaint may be filed with the municipal court. Violators are subject to fines of not less than \$250 for a first offense, \$500 for a second offense, and \$1000 for each subsequent offense [N.J.S.A. 26:3D-62(b)].
- *As contents of an electronic smoking device cannot be determined through casual observation or easily tested to determine if the contents are tobacco or controlled dangerous substances, students in possession of electronic smoking devices/components will be considered in possession of drug paraphernalia, and as per our policy, a parent/guardian will be required to take the student for an immediate drug screen and physician’s clearance. A positive screen or verified possession of drugs/alcohol will result in five (5) days of in-school suspension for a first offense (ten (10) days for each subsequent offense), five (5) mandatory*

drug counseling sessions with the HMS Student Assistance Counselor and ineligibility for all school activities for a minimum of 30 days pending completion of the required counseling sessions. Should a student test positive for a controlled dangerous substance or be in possession of verified drugs/paraphernalia, the suspension for that offense will replace the lesser suspension for a smoking violation, although a municipal complaint may still be filed with the potential for escalation to criminal charges as a drug offense.

Parents and guardians need to be aware that many electronic smoking devices are small and look like other things (such as a USB flash drive or pen), and some can be manipulated to expel drugs instead of tobacco products. Some devices expel a great deal of vapor while others release hardly any vapor at all, making them that much harder to detect.

If you believe that your child or anyone in your family is in need of assistance to quit smoking, there are many resources available only a click or call away, including those from the [National Cancer Institute](#), the [American Lung Association](#), and, locally, [NJ Quitline](#). If you have concerns about your child and possible drug or alcohol use, our Student Assistance Counselor, Mrs. Anna Mahler, is available to provide confidential assistance and referral information at amahler@https.us or 431-6600 ext. 2296. Additional resources are also available through the [National Institute on Drug Abuse](#), the [NJ Department of Health: Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services](#) and the [Partnership for Drug Free NJ](#).

Finally, please mark your calendar and join us for an information night that will be offered on January 23, 2018 at 7:00 pm in the Hillsborough High School Auditorium for all parents of students in grades 5-12 to learn about these devices and other things to be on the lookout for to help keep Hillsborough's children drug-free.

While the methods of engaging in unhealthy behaviors continue to change, one thing remains constant – our willingness to do everything possible to keep the children of Hillsborough safe and healthy. Parents and schools share this weighty responsibility, and Hillsborough Middle School stands at the ready to assist.

Please review this information with your child to ensure that it is clearly understood since these changes go into effect on January 2, 2018. Tobacco products and electronic smoking devices, as with any other drug, are not permitted in school and will now face greater consequences than in the past. This update to our policy is fully intended to act as a deterrent with the hope that Hillsborough's students will make better, healthier choices from the outset.

Sincerely,



Joseph Trybulski, Ed.D.
Principal