



RIDGEWOOD HIGH SCHOOL

DISTRICT 234
7500 WEST MONTROSE AVENUE - NORRIDGE, ILLINOIS 60706-1196
708-456-4242 FAX 708-456-0342
www.d234.org

Dear Ridgewood High School Parents and Guardians:

This letter is to inform you of an increased usage of vape pens in the community. In recent years, vape pens, commonly referred to as e-cigarettes, have seen a massive increase in popularity. According to the Federal Drug Administration (FDA), [over 5 million students in middle school and high school were current users of e-cigarettes in 2019.](#)

“Vapes” or E-cigarettes are composed of a liquid cartridge, an atomizer, and a rechargeable battery. The liquid cartridge is the flavored part of the pen used to create the vapor; it is also the part of the pen that typically contains nicotine, but can also contain “dab”, which is a liquid form of THC, the active ingredient in marijuana. The atomizer heats the pen when the user inhales and is charged by the battery. Here are some subtle signals that mean that your teenager might be secretly vaping.

1. Fruity aroma(s)

E-cigarettes don't smell bad like the smoke from combusting tobacco, however, most e-liquids have flavors in them that usually smell nice like candy, mint, vanilla, fruit punch, marijuana, etc. If you catch a sudden whiff of any of these but none of them is around, consider this a red flag.

2. Unfamiliar handheld gadgets

E-cigarettes come in various shapes, from cig-a-likes to box mods. However, the most common ones resemble a pen and are known as vape pens. If you see such a gadget, or a pen that isn't a pen, be aware that it could be a vaporizer. The easiest way to spot an e-cig is to look for holes on each end of the device.

3. Batteries and Chargers

Just like you have to charge your smartphone, vaporizers need to be charged on a regular basis. While some e-cigs can be charged with just a USB cable, most of the powerful e-cigs like box mods support. So, if you see unfamiliar batteries on the charger, take a look around and you might find a vaping device.

4. Metallic wires and cotton wicks

If you find organic cotton, empty plastic vials or thin metallic coils lying in your child's room, this is yet another red flag. Phone charging cords that have been cut with stripped wire ends is another way kids have been found vaping without using an actual e-cigarette or vaping device.

5. Empty pods

Pods are the vessels that hold the e-juice used in vaporizers, vape pens, and e-cigarettes. They can vary in shape and size depending on what device they are used with. If you see empty pods in the trash, this is also a strong sign your child may be vaping.

6. Discarded atomizers

The atomizers are a vital part of e-cigs as they turn e-juice into vapor. However, they are disposable and after a while usually burn out. If you come across a discarded atomizer in your kid's trash can, it's a clear indication that he/she has been vaping.

Possession of a vape pen on Ridgewood High School grounds is strictly prohibited. Possession will result in the device being confiscated and a citation from the School Resource Officer. If a student receives a citation, both the guardian and student must go to court and further consequences will be decided by the judge. These may

include community service, tobacco education, substance abuse counseling, or a monetary fine up to \$300.

As educators, our responsibilities are not only for your child's academic growth, but their social and emotional health as well. Building strong habits of mind and positive decision-making skills will help guide them through life's challenges. To that end, we ask for your help in ensuring our students are making safe and healthy choices.

Questions or concerns can be directed to the Dean of Students, David Hawk, at 708-456-4242 x 1242 or at dhawk@ridgenet.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "D. Hawk". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

David Hawk

Dean of Students