



**Tim Harkrider**

*Superintendent*  
204 W. Rogers  
Willis, TX, 77378

Dear Parents and Guardians,

October 7, 2019

As educators, we enter this profession excited to teach and inspire students to discover their interests and help them become the best version of themselves. As parents and educators, we also know that outside influences and detractors exist that can interrupt that progress.

Our middle and high school students can be especially vulnerable, which is why I'm writing to you today. The use of e-cigarettes, or "vaping," is a rapidly growing trend among young people around the country. The liquid used in a vape contains nicotine or marijuana - and as we are learning from the recent trend of lung illnesses - other harmful chemical additives that can quickly and unexpectedly cause irreparable and deadly damage.

Cigarettes, e-cigs and vapes are strictly prohibited at our campuses. Both are a distraction to learning and a health hazard for our students. If found, students will be disciplined according to the Willis ISD Code of Conduct.

Even more concerning are "dab pens" which are a type of vape containing THC or Cannabis concentrates. Unfortunately, we have also confiscated dab pens from students, which have far more serious consequences for young people. A "dab" is a concentrated cannabis extract that contains high levels of THC, the chemical in marijuana that induces intoxication or a high. In some recently tested dab pens, traces of other harmful substances were found. Dabs are not only illegal, but possession carries a felony sentence that carries a 2-10 year imprisonment and a \$10,000 fine. A felony arrest will follow a student for the rest of their lives.

Not only that, dab pens are being closely linked to the "lung illnesses" that are popping up in people who have a history of vaping. In a short time and sometimes with only a short history of vaping, people are dying. The CDC is extremely concerned about the impact it is having, as are educational institutions. Just last week, the Texas A&M University System put a complete ban on vaping devices anywhere on its campuses.

We believe that parents and educators have a shared responsibility to shape our children's future, including educating them about potential dangers and consequences. We are preparing an anti-vaping initiative that begins with this letter to you, and includes educating you and our students in several ways. We will use educational videos and guest speakers during school hours, as well as social media and email to reach our students outside of school hours. **We invite parents of 6th - 12th grade students to a presentation with guest speaker Dr. Crystal Collier on Wed., Oct. 30 at 6:30 pm in the Willis High School Performing Arts Center. See flyer attached for more details.**

We will remain vigilant in ensuring a safe and productive learning environment for all of our students. We hope that you will join us by having conversations with your kids about these items, their potential dangers and the consequences that come with their use.

I'm proud to serve as your Superintendent and will continue to work to make Willis ISD a place where our students feel safe and have meaningful learning experiences that prepare them for a healthy, vibrant future.

Sincerely,

Tim Harkrider  
Superintendent of Schools  
Willis ISD