

Youth new victims of vaping craze

teja**master**
feature**editor**

Teens unaware of health hazards in vape

Over the past two years, the vaping epidemic has been rapidly increasing for schools across the nation. According to the 2017 National Youth Tobacco Survey, 15 percent of high school and middle school students use e-cigarettes, nearly 14 percent more than last recorded in 2011. Local schools in Northern Colorado such as Ault, University and Eaton have discussed how to prevent the issue of vaping, and some actions have already been taken.

Recently, principal Jay Tapia at Eaton High School had engaging signs put up outside the men's and women's bathrooms informing students of the dangers of vape.

Some reading statistics, dangers of vaping and phrases intended to catch students' eyes. One humorous sign states, "The stalls may have #1 and #2, but vapes may have #24, #28, and #82, vapers can inhale toxic metals into their lungs-like these from the periodic table: chromium, nickel and lead." Any student who has taken at least an introductory chemistry class should recognize these numbers. These signs, Tapia said were acquired from a well known anti-drug organization, The Real Cost.

The recent banning of blankets was also rumored throughout the school as a way to prevent students from vaping in class. Tapia debunked these rumors saying, "Only 20 percent of the reason for banning the blankets was regarding vaping, the other 80% was purely based off professionalism." Tapia said, he believes students and faculty are at school for a reason and should dress accordingly.

Administration has also looked into effectuating more action is such as the installation of experimental detectors in the bathrooms. Tapia also



said that teachers were given an informative presentation by the Weld County Health Department at the beginning of the year explaining vape products, effects of vaping and other concerns. Vaping is different from smoking because it is the inhalation of aerosol rather than tobacco smoke. Vape is mistaken as just being water vapor, which is not true. It is much more harmful than that, since aerosol is tiny liquid or solid particles within a gas.

These particles are hazardous, since they contain toxic chemicals, which have been linked to causing heart and respiratory disease, as well as being connected with cancer according to "Center on Addiction."

Drug abuse is a topic schools have addressed before. Substances have been an issue for years, yet the trouble with vaping is that it is much more convenient and easier to con-

ceal form. Vapor disappears within seconds, making it nearly impossible for teachers to identify students who are using. Most vape pieces are small enough to keep in a pocket and versatile enough to be taken apart and easily reconstructed.

Two anonymous students offered their input in order to help people achieve a better understanding behind the craze of vaping. One student said, "It's such a trend because it's new technology." The other student said, "It's relaxing, the tricks are fun to learn and there's a bunch of flavors." Although these students do partake in vaping, neither of them finds it appropriate for kids to be doing it at school. The first student said, "I feel like they [the school] have a reason to take action, especially with the younger students coming in, since it's becoming a bigger problem."

Vape was first introduced as an alternative to smoking, yet as it grew more popular the marketing strategy shifted to portray vape as an independent divertimento. Its popularity among teens is dangerous because of how addictive and potent vape is. The most successful company, JUUL is already worth \$10 billion, and its products are no joke. A single JUULpod has the same amount of nicotine as one pack of cigarettes. Fortunately JUUL is still very strict about age requirements--one must verify they are over 21 to access their website. JUUL also states that their product does contain nicotine which is addictive and that it is indeed focused on being an alternative to smoking cigarettes. Many other startup companies fail to enforce these boundaries, and with online shopping, underage students can easily obtain these products. Since vaping is so addictive it

is an immense threat to teens on account of addiction leading to depression, according to "the real cost".

The main catalyst to this epidemic is that students are either not informed or misinformed. According to the Truth Initiative, 37 percent of students said they were not aware that vape always contains nicotine. The hope is that the spread of awareness will help students realize the harms of vaping and aid in helping them quit the habit.

Visit Tasia Derrera's story "Give Tapia a break" on the banning of blankets here:

