



# Gilmer County Schools

Dr. Shanna Downs, Superintendent

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Parents and Community Members,

I would like to thank you for a great start to the 2018-2019 school year and at the same time ask for your help in addressing a serious issue with our youth. We have grown alarmed at a disturbing trend to which I would like to draw your awareness. Since our new school year has started, we have confiscated a disturbing number of “vapes” or “juuls” containing both legal and illegal substances. In one event, one of our students was rushed to the hospital after inhaling an unknown drug from one of these devices. I received a call yesterday from our District Attorney, B. Alison Sosebee. She reported that within the last week, several teens in Pickens, Fannin, and Gilmer counties have experienced medical emergencies as a result of “vaping,” by use of electronic cigarettes which necessitated treatment by both EMS and hospitals.

Electronic cigarettes, also referred to as vape pens, have been around for more than a decade. The devices have become popular among nicotine users looking for a safer alternative to smoking cigarettes. An electronic cigarette creates an inhalable vapor with a small inner coil that slowly heats the liquid inside the device into a vapor that is inhaled by the user. This liquid that is inhaled, known commonly as “vape juice,” can contain any number of substances. It can contain flavoring and nicotine. It can also contain drugs and illegal substances such as THC oil, fentanyl, a substance known as “kronic”, and LSD. Electronic cigarettes have become a way for drug users to not only get high, but to do so discreetly. Due to the lack of smoke and odor that emits from the device, it is nearly impossible to tell what substance is being used. One substance known as “kronic” is being sold locally and has resulted in students experiencing serious reactions in neighboring counties.

The Gilmer County School System is working to educate students about the dangers of “vaping” and the use of other controlled substances. We will do this in an age-appropriate manner and in conjunction with community resources, including District Attorney Sosebee and Sheriff Stacy Nicholson. We ask you to please help us at home. If you have not already done so, please talk to your child(ren) about the seriousness of vaping, in all forms and with any substances and also about the dangers of using any other controlled substances.

We are asking parents, guardians and all those with children in their care to be aware of the dangers of vaping, e-cigarettes, and especially the dangers of students using vapes to ingest drugs. Please educate yourself on identifying these devices as they come in a variety of forms and can look like USB flash drives, lighters, pens, and other common items. To learn more information you may go to Center for Disease Control and Prevention website at <https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco> and U.S. Surgeon General website at <https://e-cigarettes.surgeongeneral.gov>.

Thank you for your help to ensure that our students are safe and able to reach their personal best. Be sure to contact your child’s school or my office if you have questions. Thank you for your support.

Sincerely

Shanna Downs, Ed.D.  
Superintendent

Every Child, Every Opportunity, Every Day!