

SB 89 – Restricting Youth Access and Initiation to E-Cigarettes

Survey of 400+ Principals, Nurses, Counselors and Teachers - Launched March 20, 2023

Compiled Responses to these questions:

1. Are you witnessing E-Cig use by young people in your school(s) or community? (overwhelmingly YES)
2. Do you believe E-Cig use by young people is on the rise? (overwhelmingly YES)
3. Do you believe E-Cigs are safe and harmless? (overwhelmingly NO)
4. Has your school or community taken action to counter E-Cig use and possession by young people? (overwhelmingly YES, specifically detection devices)
5. As with alcohol, do you support raising the legal age to buy, sell, or possess E-Cigs to age 21? (overwhelmingly YES)
6. Do you support establishing a 25% sales tax on E-Cigs as a way to deter youth initiation? (overwhelmingly YES)



WESTERN

I appreciated the testimony I heard, was on the line to speak but wasn't chosen to before time expired.

Things I would like to add to my original answers to the survey questions.

1. In [our community] we have had just as many middle schoolers (6-8th grade) caught vaping as high schoolers.
2. We have had 5th graders at [our] Elementary caught vaping
3. We installed a vape sensor in 1 bathroom that registers 10-15 times a day that a vape is in use.
4. It is extremely difficult to catch a vape considering you can't see what is happening in locked bathroom stalls, their smell is often not that different from perfume that is often sprayed before and after use to mask the vape smell, and kids are hiding the devices in their undergarments is what other students are saying.
5. Bathroom passes and class skippers have skyrocketed as a result of the nicotine addiction adding a massive amount of missed school that doesn't show up in discipline data.
6. It is my firm belief that the combination of easier access to marijuana and vape's combined with the higher levels of stress and loss of time in schools these past couple years, students have turned to those products as an unhealthy coping mechanism which is fueling the addiction.

SOUTH CENTRAL

First of all thanks for putting the time into this, because vape has become a very large problem in our schools. I am a middle school (6-7-8) principal with approximately 150 students. If I were to guess, I would say 50% of my student body has tried vape/e-cigs. We have installed Vape sensors in our locker rooms and bathroom at our high school and middle school and we have a sensor or two that are set off at least 3-4 times per week. We have been

actively engaging our parents in vape education and awareness because of the increased usage. When we catch a student vaping we have some vape/e-cigs education modules that we require students to complete with the guidance of our school nurse. Unfortunately kids are getting smarter. They vape in school and then hide them in their undergarments because we cannot search there. It is a growing problem that seems to be out of control.

One of the problems we are facing is that older students purchase vapes and e-cigs in large quantities on-line and then sell them to younger students. Somehow the on-line purchases of these products need to stop. We have visited all of our local stores and mini-marts because of the problem we are facing in our schools. I do believe the legal age needs to be raised to 21 to purchase them. The increase of taxes will only be effective if they can be applied to internet purchases. I did forward your email to our administrative team and school SRO.

If you need more support please let me know.

SOUTHEAST

1. A huge spike of e-cig/vaping amongst teens has been at schools I've overseen the past few years. Tobacco use was declining up until a few years ago. Now I would estimate about 25% of teens have tried or frequently use e-cig/vaping products.
2. Significantly on the rise. Often I'm finding e-cig/vaping products are even being provided to teens by parents who don't see it harmless because of the innocent flavors or replacing something worse they could be doing.
3. The products teens are using contain nicotine, unknown chemicals, or marijuana dabs that are not harmless. Addiction is one of the serious consequences.
4. Actions are only supported by local law enforcement with citations. It's fighting an uphill battle with more and more teens using e-cig/vaping and parents condoning the behaviors. No money is available for vape detectors or other actions.
5. I support raising consequences, but they must include actions against adults who are providing the products to teens.
6. Yes, amongst other measures.

NORTHWEST "I work in two different schools in my school district. Vaping is a huge problem among students in both schools. I am afraid that it is on the rise. I believe that vaping and e-cigarette use is very harmful and a precursor to cigarette use as the students get older. In a counselor role, I teach SEL lessons to all students PreK-12 in the two schools where I work, I have created a lesson to educate students about the dangers of these products. Both principals have worked really hard to curtail vaping and e-cigarette use during the school day. I heartily support raising the legal age for use of these products to 21, and also support an increase in the sales tax for their purchase.

WESTERN

I am including my local Senator because I reached out to him in the fall to express my concern around the massive increase in vaping and access to vaping products.

The only area not addressed directly in this survey but also I'm not sure how it can be addressed is it seems at least one of the local pot shop owners who carries the elf bar vape is selling quantities to some individuals who are selling on front street to students. I'm not sure that what the pot shop owner is

doing is illegal, and he may or may not even know what is happening. I'm sure it is very difficult for law enforcement to prove but it is my understanding that one or more police reports have been filed from several parents.

MAT-SU

1. Yes
2. Yes. It is normalized among youth.
3. No. They are very harmful and a significant health risk that have long-term effects for young people.
4. We do not have any prevention programs in place at our school; however, we do have a mandatory class called Vape Educate that students must take when they are caught with a Vape.
5. Yes.
6. Yes.

WESTERN

1. Are you witnessing E-Cig use by young people in your school(s) or community? Yes, E-Cigs are by far the most common contraband found at school.
2. Do you believe E-Cig use by young people is on the rise? Yes, Very few middle and high school kids have not tried it.
3. Do you believe E-Cigs are safe and harmless? Absolutely not, they are very harmful, but kids don't have good information.
4. Has your school or community taken action to counter E-Cig use and possession by young people? We talk to kids about the harms of vaping. If kids are caught, we mandate a 4 hour anti vaping course that is completed with an adult.
5. As with alcohol, do you support raising the legal age to buy, sell, or possess E-Cigs to age 21? As the kids are getting these through unlawful means, a raise in the age may or may not help.
6. Do you support establishing a 25% sales tax on E-Cigs as a way to deter youth initiation? I have heard of kids offering \$100 for a vape that costs \$20. I do personally think a tax on this item will be beneficial, I do not think it will have the desired effect."

WESTERN

This issue has been plaguing our region for several years and the situation continues to worsen. I've been in education since 1996. Throughout my time in Fairbanks, Japan, New York City, Kotzebue, and now [rural AK], I've seen such a shift in the way that education treats tobacco and substances. Currently, everything we do within our system is defensive: we buy \$30,000 in vape sensors, we do searches, we bring our local law enforcement, we have discussion after discussion with students about the dangers of vapes, dab pens, and other devices. We offer overdose kits and discuss consequences while the most important part seems to be lacking: K-12 comprehensive education on these products.

I am reminded of a time when I was listening to the news and learned about the millions being spent within our state on narcan and thought to myself how backwards it all seemed. When I worked in the South Bronx in the early 2000s, our schools were worried about crystal meth making its way to our neighborhoods and becoming the new epidemic. Educators partnered with the CDC and local hospitals and we educated the students in masses...again and again...we showed images, shared narratives and powerful stories, we did not let the issue drop. Meth did not become an epidemic and I believe

that cooperative, comprehensive, intentional and an offensive stance is how we kept this drug out of our schools. Of course, I believe in the power of education - especially when it is considerate, relevant, and carefully planned.

In regards to your questions:

Are you witnessing E-Cig use by young people in your school(s) or community? At a horrifyingly increasing rate - we are a middle/high school and vapes and tobacco products are an issue with all grades, especially with our 11 and 12 year old students. From our top athletes to our most at risk, there doesn't seem to be a demographic more prone and that is what really worries me the most. I have never dedicated so much time to substances. It is increasingly difficult to convince young people, and a large body of adults, that these devices are harmful. It's as if taking nicotine into your system via an e-cigarette is not as harmful.

Do you believe E-Cig use by young people is on the rise? Absolutely. They're easy to get and young people often pay someone just old enough to procure a device/cartridges. With so many dispensaries carrying them, it's very easy to obtain an e-cig.

Do you believe E-Cigs are safe and harmless? I know that these devices, the chemicals they contain, and the impacts of nicotine are extremely harmful. But it is difficult to convince a child that the ""delicious tasting mango"" of their device is dangerous to their developing bodies and lungs. Little pockets of education just isn't as effective as something more comprehensive.

Has your school or community taken action to counter E-Cig use and possession by young people? As I stated earlier, we have purchased \$30,000 worth of sensors that tie into our video security system. The test sensor we have often goes off 10, 15, 20 times per day and there are times when we just let it go. If we spent all of our time searching lockers and backpacks and doing disciplinary practices, we would not be growing our students, celebrating successes, coaching teachers, and engaging in all the activities necessary for a thriving school. We partner with our local law enforcement and the Dept of Health, but again, the moments resulting are inconsistent and more like band aids on wet skin when it comes to their efficacy.

As with alcohol, do you support raising the legal age to buy, sell, or possess E-Cigs to age 21? Absolutely. I also believe that the vape devices should have a warning on them, just like a pack of cigarettes. Once the device is out of its package, they are harmless looking with nice colors and attractive names.

Do you support establishing a 25% sales tax on E-Cigs as a way to deter youth initiation? Yes, and I think that a portion of the funds should go towards proactive, comprehensive education that is a statewide initiative.

I hope this offers some insight, at least from our little coastal school district. I am always willing to have conversations, so please don't hesitate to reach out with more questions or feedback. I have written letters to state and federal entities, politicians, and other stakeholders on this issue and am passionate about solutions. I do support age increases and taxes, but those alone are not enough. Heroin is illegal, but it still plagues our communities. Education on the dangers of substances works. That in partnership with laws that work to keep these devices out of the hands of our youth would render the results we hope to see.

SOUTHWEST Good afternoon. My name is Karla Head and I am the secondary principal at Togiak School. I would gladly assist in whatever way I can in this endeavor.

INTERIOR

1. Are you witnessing E-Cig use by young people in your school(s) or community?
2. Do you believe E-Cig use by young people is on the rise?
3. Do you believe E-Cigs are safe and harmless?
4. Has your school or community taken action to counter E-Cig use and possession by young people?
5. As with alcohol, do you support raising the legal age to buy, sell, or possess E-Cigs to age 21?
6. Do you support establishing a 25% sales tax on E-Cigs as a way to deter youth initiation?

I am not witnessing use by young people in our community, but in the greater AGSD community there are some who do. Unfortunately, I do believe the use of them is on the rise. No, I firmly believe they are neither safe nor harmless. We have not had to take any action at our school/community at this time. Yes, I definitely support raising the legal age limit on E-Cigs. I would support a sales tax on E-Cigs.

KENAI PENN

1. Are you witnessing E-Cig use by young people in your school(s) or community? Yes. There are many students in our school that are vaping. It is a constant battle to try and stay on top of.
2. Do you believe E-Cig use by young people is on the rise? It is very widespread. It has been on the rise for several years. I hope that it doesn't continue to rise further.
3. Do you believe E-Cigs are safe and harmless? NO
4. Has your school or community taken action to counter E-Cig use and possession by young people? We try to educate the students about the harmful effects of vaping. Students who are caught vaping are educated and offered help with getting information on addictions and ending their nicotine use.
5. As with alcohol, do you support raising the legal age to buy, sell, or possess E-Cigs to age 21? Yes
6. Do you support establishing a 25% sales tax on E-Cigs as a way to deter youth initiation? Yes

FAIRBANKS

1. Vaping is very popular with students and is clearly on the rise.
2. Much like the 1950s, students think it's cool.
3. I believe e cigs are very dangerous. I wish there were studies that monitored the dangerous chemicals kids are inhaling.
4. Schools continue to fight the daily fight of catching students vaping. The devices get smaller and easier to hide. A lot of parents enable their children as well... saying it's not dangerous. All of the programs have done little to curb the use.
5. Yes, but I don't think it will affect high schoolers vaping. They always find a way to obtain.
6. Yes, raise the tax.

The only effective way to curb teenage vaping is for police/schools to treat possession or use of a Vape like they do alcohol. Police write tickets for underage drinking or possession... and the kid has to go to court and face the judge, pay a large fine, do community service, etc. I know the police are busy... but consider the time they spend doing this as an investment in our children.

NORTHWEST

1. Are you witnessing E-Cig use by young people in your school(s) or community? At the school I teach at it is rampant. From Elementary and above students are vaping. Some even think they are addicted to it because they listen to the B.S.. and garbage going on in the world.
2. Do you believe E-Cig use by young people is on the rise? E cigs have just made a convenient way for kids to access and think they are cool. So we need to change the way they think about being cool. Many parents are not paying attention or are doing it themselves. My kids have trouble finding friends that don't vape.
3. Do you believe E-Cigs are safe and harmless? Anything we put in our bodies like this is not safe. No one ever really knows how these chemicals will be in our bodies because we are all different.
4. Has your school or community taken action to counter E-Cig use and possession by young people? We try with campaigns and SEL teachings in the classroom and education but the advertising on social media need to amp up to counter the "coolness" of vaping.
5. As with alcohol, do you support raising the legal age to buy, sell, or possess E-Cigs to age 21? yes
6. Do you support establishing a 25% sales tax on E-Cigs as a way to deter youth initiation? Yes

WESTERN We have seen an increase in ecig usage among young people here in our school. We've had multiple suspensions for use of ecigs this year, many more than in the past, which has been little to none in previous years. I do support raising the age of purchasing ecigs because yes, they are harmful.

KENAI PENN

1. Are you witnessing E-Cig use by young people in your school(s) or community? Yes
2. Do you believe E-Cig use by young people is on the rise? Yes
3. Do you believe E-Cigs are safe and harmless? No
4. Has your school or community taken action to counter E-Cig use and possession by young people? Yes
5. As with alcohol, do you support raising the legal age to buy, sell, or possess E-Cigs to age 21? Yes
6. Do you support establishing a 25% sales tax on E-Cigs as a way to deter youth initiation? Yes

NORTHWEST So glad to hear you are addressing this severe problem in our schools.

1. Yes it is one of the main problems we have in the school with MS and HS students.
2. Yes it is growing in popularity almost daily especially with MS students.
3. NO
4. Our staff closely monitor the bathrooms (the main place vaping seems to be happening). We are looking into purchasing vape alarms (much like smoke alarms) to install in all of our bathrooms. Vaping is a HUGE PROBLEM.
5. Yes

Not against it, not sure it would really have much of an effect. Maybe if that 25% raise in taxes was used to fund things like vape alarms and education for our students about the harms of vaping, I could fully support it. Not sure it will really do much to deter them.

ANCHORAGE

1. Are you witnessing E-Cig use by young people in your school(s) or community? Yes, it's one of our major challenges in high school. A significant amount of our discipline this year has been tied to vape pens, dab pens, and related products. It is often difficult to tell if students are using nicotine or more serious drugs since vape liquid can smell like just about anything.
2. Do you believe E-Cig use by young people is on the rise? Undoubtedly.
3. Do you believe E-Cigs are safe and harmless? Absolutely.
4. Has your school or community taken action to counter E-Cig use and possession by young people? We have. In each instance, we work with the student and the parents. Consequences differ based on the nature of the offense. All ASD buildings are smoke and vape free; so, by policy we are obligated to act when we know someone is using, whether that is a student or an adult.
5. As with alcohol, do you support raising the legal age to buy, sell, or possess E-Cigs to age 21? YES.
6. Do you support establishing a 25% sales tax on E-Cigs as a way to deter youth initiation? YES.

SOUTH CENTRAL

1. Are you witnessing E-Cig use by young people in your school(s) or community? Yes
2. Do you believe E-Cig use by young people is on the rise? Absolutely
3. Do you believe E-Cigs are safe and harmless? No
4. Has your school or community taken action to counter E-Cig use and possession by young people? Yes, we have censors in all of our public use bathrooms to inform admin and our front office of any detection of Vape particles in the air within our bathrooms.
5. As with alcohol, do you support raising the legal age to buy, sell, or possess E-Cigs to age 21? Yes
6. Do you support establishing a 25% sales tax on E-Cigs as a way to deter youth initiation? Yes

SOUTHEAST

1. Are you witnessing E-Cig use by young people in your school(s) or community? - Yes. Students as young as 13 have been seen using.
2. Do you believe E-Cig use by young people is on the rise? Yes. If I had to guess, I would say in the high school I teach at the percentage of students using is about 25%.
3. Do you believe E-Cigs are safe and harmless? Not in the least.
4. Has your school or community taken action to counter E-Cig use and possession by young people? The school has, I am not sure about the community officially, although many parents are speaking out about it.
5. As with alcohol, do you support raising the legal age to buy, sell, or possess E-Cigs to age 21? Yes
6. Do you support establishing a 25% sales tax on E-Cigs as a way to deter youth initiation? Yes.

WESTERN

1. Are you witnessing E-Cig use by young people in your school(s) or community? Yes, this has by far been the largest increase by well over 10X in youth of all ages including as young as 5th graders. We have had numerous kids caught with vape pens like Juul & Elfbar. Most often we believe it is tobacco but we have had marijuana as well. Besides catching kids, there have been trash found and reports of students buying and selling on campus to each other.
2. Do you believe E-Cig use by young people is on the rise? Prior to this school year I have only seen 3-4 vape pens found in the previous couple of years. I think we are somewhere around 3-4 dozen vape pens this school year. We also installed a vape sensor in 1 bathroom, and although I don't have specific data, I know it does off somewhat frequently.
3. Do you believe E-Cigs are safe and harmless? No, and we have been trying to work with public health around getting more information to students around their harm.
4. Has your school or community taken action to counter E-Cig use and possession by young people? We have tried to get some information brought into the school, install a vape sensor but its cost prevents us from universal adoption, parental information. No city-wide action has been taken that I know of.
5. As with alcohol, do you support raising the legal age to buy, sell, or possess E-Cigs to age 21? Yes, and also stiffer fines for individuals selling to underage people.
6. Do you support establishing a 25% sales tax on E-Cigs as a way to deter youth initiation? Yes, but a portion of that tax should be designated to directly fund public information campaigns and determent methods in schools.

NORTHWEST

I was the principal of a remote village during the first semester of this year. During that time, I was able to confiscate 11 Vape devices from students. Additionally, it was a regular problem with students vaping in the bathrooms. Every student who was caught was involved in a conversation of the dangers of Vaping. However, we had more than one repeat offender. Additionally, the Dean of Students created a bulletin board that also addressed the dangers of vaping.

I have had no issues with my current school, but believe it is only a matter of time, since we are a more remote village.

In answer to your questions below:

1. Yes, I have witnessed young people (as young as 6th grade)
2. Yes, I believe it is on the rise.
3. No, I do not think it is harmless. Contains carcinogens and is not regulated. Anything could be added.
4. Yes, I agree the age should be raised to 21.
5. Yes, I support a sales tax.

Additionally, I think there should be penalties for those who are selling to minors.

ANCHORAGE I fully support any way we can reduce vape use, especially among young people, as does my co-AP Matt Witthoeft here at Begich. I plan to call-in and testify on Friday. I hope you're also reaching out to other schools. I think folks are just busy and perhaps need a little prodding. I know vape use is a huge problem across ASD, and probably statewide. Thank you for bringing this hearing to my attention.

ANCHORAGE Hi I am a 20+ veteran teacher at [High School]. Vaping is a SERIOUS problem. I am 100% in favor of SB 89. Here are my views:

1. Are you witnessing E-Cig use by young people in your school(s) or community? Constantly. It is an epidemic. They go to the bathroom stalls before, during, and after school. It is rampant.
2. Do you believe E-Cig use by young people is on the rise? Yes. There are many that do not use due to the dangers, but my son in Middle School is seeing kids use it in lower grades. It is so easy to conceal it makes for easy expansion of usage.
3. Do you believe E-Cigs are safe and harmless? Absolutely not. The long-term damage of this product will not be known for some time. I fear an entire generation having lung issues in their 30s, and who will pay for it? I do not want to as they CHOOSE to do this despite all the warnings of the product's danger. Studies already reveal the dangers of this product.
4. Has your school or community taken action to counter E-Cig use and possession by young people? To some degree. We are busting them and confiscating the devices. But given our status as a Title I school, there is hesitation in fining them \$500 for using the devices based on the law. A tax making it more expensive will help. Make them decide between eating and vaping.
5. As with alcohol, do you support raising the legal age to buy, sell, or possess E-Cigs to age 21? YES, YES, YES
6. Do you support establishing a 25% sales tax on E-Cigs as a way to deter youth initiation? YES. Adults already pay a high price for cigarettes, let us do the same for vaping. It is way more dangerous than tobacco. This should be a no brainer and have bi-partisan support. Any politician who resists this, including the governor, needs to consider how much it will cost the state decades from now in health costs to care for all these damaged lungs. Deter use now!

If you want more info or need further testimony, please feel free to email me. Please get this bill passed ASAP.

FAIRBANKS

Thank you for reaching out to educators concerning vaping in high schools. We are the front line, and I think all legislation is made better when the expert's and front-line workers' input is given from the beginning of the process. I will share your email with students and give them the option to respond to your questions. As for email testimony in support, I cannot endorse any specific legislation with students, but I am always exposing students to bills and highly encourage them to send testimony based on their research, opinions, and philosophy. So, I will give class time for students to research this issue and show them how to send testimony if they wish.

Below are my answers to your questions.

1. Are you witnessing E-Cig use by young people in your school(s) or community? Yes, we have a legitimate problem with students vaping at West Valley, specifically in bathrooms.
2. Do you believe E-Cig use by young people is on the rise? It has been on the rise in the last 4 years. I cannot say for sure if it is still rising this year, but over the last 3-4 years there are significantly more students vaping.
3. Do you believe E-Cigs are safe and harmless? No, research shows this to be patently false
4. Has your school or community taken action to counter E-Cig use and possession by young people? Yes. Our school has spent money to install detectors in our bathrooms, we have specific school policies concerning punishment, and significant manpower is spent trying to prevent, catch, and punish students for vaping. It takes a lot of time, energy, and resources away from the real work of schools and we feel like we get very little support from parents and community members. It is surprising how many parents think it is not a big deal that their student vapes. We do not feel much support from parents or community, mostly it's just complaining about how bad the problem is.

5. As with alcohol, do you support raising the legal age to buy, sell, or possess E-Cigs to age 21? Yes. That is federal law for vaping, so Alaska should be in compliance with federal law... it seems reckless that as a state we choose to flout federal law that is protective of children.

6. Do you support establishing a 25% sales tax on E-Cigs as a way to deter youth initiation? Yes. It is one of the research-proven tactics. That said there are other measures that are just as important, especially for youth, such as prevention education and limiting advertising which have been shown to have efficacy. The bill says that the taxes ""may"" be appropriated for health education or advertising to prevent use. I suggest that money WILL be appropriated for ad and education campaigns in schools.

INTERIOR

1. Are you witnessing E-Cig use by young people in your school(s) or community? YES
2. Do you believe E-Cig use by young people is on the rise? YES
3. Do you believe E-Cigs are safe and harmless? NO
4. Has your school or community taken action to counter E-Cig use and possession by young people? SOME LIMITED.
5. As with alcohol, do you support raising the legal age to buy, sell, or possess E-Cigs to age 21? YES BUT I DO NOT KNOW IF THAT IS ENFORCEABLE.
6. Do you support establishing a 25% sales tax on E-Cigs as a way to deter youth initiation? YES"

MAT-SU

1. Are you witnessing E-Cig use by young people in your school(s) or community? yes
2. Do you believe E-Cig use by young people is on the rise? Absolutely
3. Do you believe E-Cigs are safe and harmless? Absolutely not
4. Has your school or community taken action to counter E-Cig use and possession by young people? Yes –
 - a. Installed vape detectors in all bathrooms and locker rooms
 - b. Using Vape Educate software to educate students as part of a consequence
 - c. Brought in Tobacco Prevention & Control for Alaska Family Services, Breathe Free Mat-Su to push into classrooms to do preventative work with students, and also hosted an evening parent event to try and inform parents
5. As with alcohol, do you support raising the legal age to buy, sell, or possess E-Cigs to age 21? Absolutely – and would love to see a legal consequence for those under 21 who get caught – and/or a consequence for parents for underage students who get caught. We need some teeth for parents, more so than teens who are under 18. Adult consequences would then apply to our students 18 and over.
6. Do you support establishing a 25% sales tax on E-Cigs as a way to deter youth initiation? Absolutely. For example, the prevention program I mentioned survives on grants, and she is phenomenal and we did get the attention of some students who asked for help with their addiction.

Thank you for doing this hard work!

SOUTHEAST

1. Are you witnessing E-Cig use by young people in your school(s) or community? Yes, although the visible use is more often adults
2. Do you believe E-Cig use by young people is on the rise? E-cig / vape is definitely more evident in recent years than ever before
3. Do you believe E-Cigs are safe and harmless? No

4. Has your school or community taken action to counter E-Cig use and possession by young people? School are providing education on the harms of vape / nicotine / tobacco; Installing vape sensors

5. As with alcohol, do you support raising the legal age to buy, sell, or possess E-Cigs to age 21? Yes

6. Do you support establishing a 25% sales tax on E-Cigs as a way to deter youth initiation? Yes

WESTERN The problem is adults buying E-Cigs bring them back and selling them to kids for a profit and nothing is done.

WESTERN

1. We have had several instances of students with E-Cigs use in our grade 7-12 students this year. Parents in every case have responded that they don't know where the students found them as they don't allow them in their house. Every instance in school was discovered when a student was handing it off to another student to try who hadn't tried it before.

2. Judging by the sudden uptick in cases here at the school, I believe it is rapidly becoming a huge issue for the children in our village of Emmonak.

3. I believe these devices are very addictive and target young people with colorful and exotic flavors added to them to appeal to children. I believe students are becoming dependent on them and fear it will lead to other addictions.

4. We have been researching options as they are most often used in the restroom and it is very difficult to track down who is using it in the bathroom. Most often it comes to the office as a report of smelling something funny in the restroom. We are looking at installing vaping sensors in our restrooms but haven't been able to justify the expense as they are quite expensive.

Yes, as with alcohol, I support raising the legal age to buy, sell, or possess E-Cigs to age 21. I would support any deterrent including a 25% tax.

KENAI PENN

1. Are you witnessing E-Cig use by young people in your school(s) or community? Yes!

2. Do you believe E-Cig use by young people is on the rise? Not sure. Hopefully, it hit its peak and is starting to subside with education. But use is so easily concealed, it's hard to tell.

3. Do you believe E-Cigs are safe and harmless? No.

4. Has your school or community taken action to counter E-Cig use and possession by young people? Yes.

5. As with alcohol, do you support raising the legal age to buy, sell, or possess E-Cigs to age 21? Not sure.

6. Do you support establishing a 25% sales tax on E-Cigs as a way to deter youth initiation? Yes. That's a lot of potential revenue. I would support that if some of the money went into schools and/or general funds (There's only so much you can effectively spend on deterrence campaigns.).

MAT-SU (published unredacted with permission)

My name is Evan Kopperud. I am a lifelong Alaskan, and social studies teacher at Palmer High School. This is currently my 5th year as a certified teacher in the state, and 8th year in classrooms overall. This is in regards to your request for educator insight on vaping in our public schools.

1. Are you witnessing E-Cig use by young people in your school(s) or community?

2. Do you believe E-Cig use by young people is on the rise?

Yes and yes. At this point I believe it would be fair to say that vaping among teenagers in Alaska is reaching ""crisis level"", and I don't use that phrase lightly. For some students, it is still just a social activity done on occasion or when the opportunity presents itself (similar to, let's say, marijuana), but

unfortunately for a growing number of kids we're talking about straight-up nicotine addiction. That includes everything that comes along with addiction; withdrawals, irritability, manipulativeness, anxiety, depression and shame. This has exacerbated what is already an active mental health crisis that we've been navigating with students since the return to school after COVID shutdowns.

Over this past school year I've been able to have a lot of candid conversations with students on their own observations about vaping here at Palmer High, and this is a recap of essentially what I've heard numerous times:

- Kids are getting introduced to vapes as early as 4th and 5th grade in some cases, but almost every student has witnessed vaping in a school bathroom by at least their first year of middle school.
- While these are anecdotal estimates, and only that, the consensus I've gotten from talking with dozens of students is that the overwhelming majority of them have taken a vape hit at least once -- 70-90% range. Those who vape on a semi-regular or regular basis are in the 30-40% range. And between 10-30% of students can't get through the school day without vaping at least once (full-blown addiction). I've also routinely heard students say that staff and administrators are completely oblivious/naive to just how many kids are vaping on a regular basis.
- There was a huge uptick in vaping during COVID, and that's where many kids went from it being a social activity with friends to a solo activity, then into an addiction.
- Students who vape are well aware it's not good for them, and while they might brag about vaping in front of their peers, almost anyone you talk to individually expresses a lot of shame over it. They don't want to be addicted.
- How are underage kids getting their vapes? The most often culprit is older students/siblings who recently graduated and is now 19 buying it for younger, former classmates. Second most often is the child's parents buying it for them (sad, but unfortunately true). Third is less likely, but some students have actually used social media or Craigslist to reach out to strangers to buy it for them in kind of an online version of ""Hey mister""", like kids used to do back in the day outside of a liquor store.

I have noticed that for whatever reason, at least based on my personal observations in our school, vaping is something that seems to be more prevalent among female students than male students.

3. Do you believe E-Cigs are safe and harmless?

Obviously they are not safe and harmless. Nicotine is highly addictive and vaping is negatively impacting kids' breathing/lungs, etc. Students have mentioned how it makes it harder if you're playing a sport because you're just out of breath quicker. Are they safer than traditional cigarettes? I'm not a scientist, so I won't posit on that -- although my gut feeling tells me they're even worse simply because of the levels of nicotine that can be taken in, and because it's so easy to just keep puffing on them all day long without really noticing. What I will say is: it is definitely not helping our students who are already facing record-high levels of anxiety and depression.

4. Has your school or community taken action to counter E-Cig use and possession by young people?

As an educator I feel my role is to facilitate discussions with students and listen to what they have to say about it, and then advocate for that (like I am doing in this email response). I think the most important factor the legislature needs to be aware of, is that, at least for high schoolers, the kids already know vaping is not good for them. Schools already teach kids about the physical dangers of vaping in their health classes. I think we need to accept that an alarmingly high amount of our youth in Alaska are already addicted to different degrees, and what we really need is holistic addiction counseling. But of course I think making common-sense attempts to limit access are important as well.

5. As with alcohol, do you support raising the legal age to buy, sell, or possess E-Cigs to age 21?

Absolutely, 100%. Will kids continue to find other ways to get a hold of vaping products? Yep. But at least talking with students, the number one source for buying them the products are 19 and 20-year old former classmates or siblings, who were in the immediate grades above them.

6. Do you support establishing a 25% sales tax on E-Cigs as a way to deter youth initiation?

Yes. While this is a punitive tax on adults who smoke E-Cigs, if it can serve as a deterrent and add additional revenue to our government, than I'm all for it. I'm not going to lose sleep at night that vape shops and Big Tobacco are going to lose out on revenue.

Thank you. Sorry for the long-winded response, but I have a lot of thoughts on this which is why I took the time to -- hopefully -- give a meaningful and insightful response.

SOUTHEAST Hello Mr. Lamkin,

Thank you for your concern regarding our youth.

1. Are you witnessing E-Cig use by young people in your school(s) or community? Absolutely!
2. Do you believe E-Cig use by young people is on the rise? Yes
3. Do you believe E-Cigs are safe and harmless? No, I know I have a couple of students who are already addicted to vaping.
4. Has your school or community taken action to counter E-Cig use and possession by young people? Yes, we have communicated with families, conducted lessons on vaping and have consequences for possession or vaping in school.
5. As with alcohol, do you support raising the legal age to buy, sell, or possess E-Cigs to age 21? Yes
6. Do you support establishing a 25% sales tax on E-Cigs as a way to deter youth initiation? Yes. However, I am quite certain kids will pay whatever price is asked for an e-cigarette.

FAIRBANKS

1. Are you witnessing E-Cig use by young people in your school(s) or community? I am the prevention/intervention specialist at [high school] and unfortunately the numbers seem to be rising.
2. Do you believe E-Cig use by young people is on the rise? Yes definitely
3. Do you believe E-Cigs are safe and harmless? No, I do not
4. Has your school or community taken action to counter E-Cig use and possession by young people? We do educate students about E-Cig once they are caught using it.
5. As with alcohol, do you support raising the legal age to buy, sell, or possess E-Cigs to age 21? Yes I do.
6. Do you support establishing a 25% sales tax on E-Cigs as a way to deter youth initiation? Yes, definitely

FAIRBANKS

1. I have not witnessed it but it has been witnessed and reported to me by employees.
2. Yes, we are seeing a definite increase in vaping in the community as well as underage cigarette use.
3. No. I believe vaping and E-Cigs are as dangerous, if not more dangerous, than regular smoking.
4. I cannot speak for the community. We have posted warnings about vaping for at least the last 5 years.
5. Yes. I support raising the age to 21. I also support raising the penalties for contributing to the delinquency of a minor by providing drugs, alcohol, or tobacco products to them. I also support stricter penalties on minors for usage if they fail to identify their suppliers.

6. I believe that 25% sales tax is too low. Perhaps 50% would be closer to the mark.

INTERIOR

1. Are you witnessing E-Cig use by young people in your school(s) or community? YES
2. Do you believe E-Cig use by young people is on the rise? YES
3. Do you believe E-Cigs are safe and harmless? NO
4. Has your school or community taken action to counter E-Cig use and possession by young people? NO
5. As with alcohol, do you support raising the legal age to buy, sell, or possess E-Cigs to age 21? YES
6. Do you support establishing a 25% sales tax on E-Cigs as a way to deter youth initiation? YES

ANCHORAGE

I am the Student Services Assistant Principal at [] High School, and have dealt a lot with vaping in schools this year. I've been asked to pass on my experiences from this year.

1. Are you witnessing E-Cig use by young people in your school(s) or community?

Anecdotally, it seems that teen vaping is continuing to rise in numbers, and especially seems to have increased in use amongst younger students. We are seeing a large number of freshmen participating in vaping this year. Students report there are other students vaping in the bathrooms almost every time they use the bathroom. With limited school funding and personnel, it is very challenging to address this issue in a comprehensive and coordinated way, and feels more like we are playing wack-a-mole.

2. Do you believe E-Cig use by young people is on the rise? (see answer for #1)

3. Do you believe E-Cigs are safe and harmless? E-cigarettes are NOT safe or harmless. In my role I have done a fair amount of research on the negative effects e-cigarettes have on adolescent brains and lungs, and none of the data is beneficial to health. I especially believe we are in a dangerous space right now because of the increase in anxiety and stress stemming from the pandemic, and vaping is often promoted socially as a coping tool to take the edge off. More young people are searching for coping skills to support anxiety, and unfortunately vaping is VERY accessible.

4. Has your school or community taken action to counter E-Cig use and possession by young people? Our community messages to families and students about the hazards of vaping on the adolescent brain, lungs and emotions. We have posters all over the school illustrating the damage and danger students are exposing themselves to by vaping, and we add messages to morning announcements periodically. When students are caught, their penalty for a first offense includes an intervention course geared towards providing them with more statistics and information, plus a guide for some self-reflection to consider the patterns and urges that have led them to vaping in the first place.

5. As with alcohol, do you support raising the legal age to buy, sell, or possess E-Cigs to age 21? Personally, I do. However, I always ask where students are getting their e-cigs from and they often say parents and/or older sibling or family friends. I think there also needs to be a focused approach on educating the sellers of e-cigarettes, and would also support these types of products only being sold in liquor stores, further limiting adolescent access to them.

6. Do you support establishing a 25% sales tax on E-Cigs as a way to deter youth initiation? Personally, yes. However, I would want to ensure that a significant portion of the revenue generated by the tax goes back into prevention programs and resources for schools and youth-based organizations to address the issue.

NORTHERN

1. Are you witnessing E-Cig use by young people in your school(s) or community? Yes, it is epidemic.
2. Do you believe E-Cig use by young people is on the rise? Yes
3. Do you believe E-Cigs are safe and harmless? No
4. Has your school or community taken action to counter E-Cig use and possession by young people? Some what
5. As with alcohol, do you support raising the legal age to buy, sell, or possess E-Cigs to age 21? Yes
6. Do you support establishing a 25% sales tax on E-Cigs as a way to deter youth initiation? Yes

SOUTH CENTRAL

It is absolutely a very pressing problem at the middle school level. Vapes are so much more addicting than cigarettes, and the flavors and “safety” absolutely targets youth use. In our SD, we are slowly getting vape detectors installed in all middle and high schools. We haven’t gotten them yet at Homer Middle School. I work with our nurse and staff to help get all adults in the building educated on what to look (and smell) for. I think it should be against the law for them to smell and taste absolutely nothing like smoke or cigarettes, which makes it so easy to get away with and get addicted to. I honestly couldn’t say if raising the age or tax would help with middle school use, because they are already getting it from some illegal source anyways. Hope that helps.

ANCHORAGE

Yes we are in support of this bill. We have seen a rise in student access to vaping products and e-cigarettes. We are doing our best to educate students on the harmful effects.

1. Are you witnessing E-Cig use by young people in your school(s) or community? YES
2. Do you believe E-Cig use by young people is on the rise? YES
3. Do you believe E-Cigs are safe and harmless? YES
4. Has your school or community taken action to counter E-Cig use and possession by young people? YES
5. As with alcohol, do you support raising the legal age to buy, sell, or possess E-Cigs to age 21? YES
6. Do you support establishing a 25% sales tax on E-Cigs as a way to deter youth initiation? YES

Thank you for contacting us.

SOUTHEAST

1. Are you witnessing E-Cig use by young people in your school(s) or community? Yes!
2. Do you believe E-Cig use by young people is on the rise? Not sure about statistics of use among teens, but as kids age they come into situations that expose them to ecigs and other drugs... so could be?
3. Do you believe E-Cigs are safe and harmless? Not a chance.
4. Has your school or community taken action to counter E-Cig use and possession by young people? Minimal... PSAs
5. As with alcohol, do you support raising the legal age to buy, sell, or possess E-Cigs to age 21? Yes.
6. Do you support establishing a 25% sales tax on E-Cigs as a way to deter youth initiation? Yes.
