



# PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF NORTH CAROLINA

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION | June St. Clair Atkinson, Ed.D., *State Superintendent*

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**TO:** LEA Superintendents

**FROM:** Dr. June St. Clair Atkinson *JSA*

Dr. Robin Gary Cummings, DHHS Deputy Secretary for Health Services and  
Acting State Health Director *RGC*

## PROHIBITING ELECTRONIC CIGARETTES ON SCHOOL CAMPUSES

We are writing to address a recent concern regarding **electronic cigarettes** (often referred to as e-cigarettes) showing up on North Carolina public school campuses.

Since August 2008, G.S. § 115C-407 has required that every North Carolina school district have a written 100% tobacco-free school policy that prohibits the use of all tobacco products on campus and at school-related events for students, staff and visitors at all times.

The definition of tobacco products in the 100% tobacco-free schools policy in most all NC school districts is written as follows:

**Tobacco Products and Tobacco Use:** For the purposes of this policy, “tobacco product” is defined to include cigarettes, cigars, blunts, bidis, pipes, chewing tobacco, snuff, and any other items containing or reasonably resembling tobacco or tobacco products. “Tobacco use” includes smoking, chewing, dipping, or any other use of tobacco products.

E-cigarettes are covered under the current tobacco-free school policies for the following reasons: First, a state law (**Senate Bill 530/S.L. 2013-165**) passed this year prohibits e-cigarette sales to minors. This law defines e-cigarettes as “tobacco products” and includes in the definition any product that contains tobacco and is intended for human consumption. E-cigarettes are vapor products that deliver nicotine, which is derived from tobacco. Second, most current tobacco-free school policies also contain the phrase, “reasonably resembling tobacco or tobacco products.” E-cigarettes are specifically designed to mimic a traditional cigarette.

**Therefore, e-cigarettes are included in the definition of “tobacco products” in our local school districts’ 100% tobacco-free policies and should be prohibited on campus and at school-related events for students, staff and visitors at all times.**

### OFFICE OF THE STATE SUPERINTENDENT

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AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY/AFFIRMATIVE ACTION EMPLOYER

Local school boards also have the clear authority to adopt a new local school policy to emphasize that e-cigarettes are prohibited on school campuses.

E-cigarette use among middle and high school students in the U.S. doubled to 1.78 million in 2012, compared with the year before, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Health experts fear that e-cigarettes can be a gateway to traditional tobacco products. About 90 percent of adult smokers in the U.S. began smoking prior to age 18. Also, like traditional cigarettes, e-cigarettes contain nicotine, which is addictive and has been shown to interfere with adolescent brain development.

As many of you know, the 2013 NC Youth Tobacco Survey is currently being administered in randomly selected schools across the state. Thank you for your participation. We should have new statewide and regional data regarding use of any tobacco products, including the use of e-cigarettes, among middle and high school students by the early spring of 2014.

If you have questions or concerns, please contact Jim D. Martin, M.S., Director of Policy and Programs, Tobacco Prevention and Control Branch at [jim.martin@dhhs.nc.gov](mailto:jim.martin@dhhs.nc.gov) or 919-707-5404.

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