I started my job as principal at Arrowhead High School nearly 27 years ago. At that time
Arrowhead, like most schools, had a significant problem with students smoking on grounds.
Gradually the problem started reducing and dropped significantly in the early 2000s. We fought
the good battle and got kids to stop smoking. I thought we were done with the nicotine fight at
that time.

Just when I thought we had the nicotine problem solved we started seeing vaping pop up in our
school. We quickly realized this was a serious problem that was not going to go away anytime
soon. The first indication of how addictive vaping really is and how serious a problem we had
was when student-athletes who had devoted a lot of their youth to a specific sport were getting
caught vaping in school; which resulted in a suspension from their sport. In a short period of
time, these students had been caught vaping so many times they lost all eligibility to play a sport
they loved. Feeding their addiction to nicotine was more important than their passion for their
sport.

These students are so addicted they will vape in the classroom, lunchroom, hallway, or
bathroom. When asked why they do this, the common answer is that it calms them down and
relieves their stress. When all they are really doing is staving off withdrawal symptoms by
putting more nicotine into their body. Across the country, this problem of teen vaping is getting
consistently worse. According to the National Youth Tobacco Survey in 2013, only 4.5% of all
teenagers had vaped in the past 30 days, in 2019 the number has risen to 27.5 % which
equals to 5 Million kids vaping. Even with young people dying or ending up in the hospital all
over our country, teenagers are still vaping at an alarming rate. I wonder how many
25-year-olds will be carrying an oxygen tank with them like a 2 pack-a-day 80-year-old with
emphysema.

“How are students getting this stuff?” is a common question I hear. One of my students got his
19-year-old brother to legally buy vaping devices, which he then sold to his friends and
classmates for a 100% markup on the cost. Young people are going on-line and checking the
“Are you 18 Box” yes which enables them to order any device or vape oil they want. The vape
oils are marketed to a younger audience with flavors like Cotton Candy and Gummy Bear. It
appears as though the companies are luring the youngsters in with flavors that appeal to kids
and keeps them coming back with addiction to nicotine. The devices that are available are
getting smaller and more easily concealed. Who needs to hide the fact they are vaping; not the
adult trying to quit smoking, but the kid who doesn’t want their parents to find out.

There is significant research on how nicotine negatively affects the developing adolescent brain,
specifically In the area of attention, learning, and memory. It comes as no surprise to me that
we see our academic scores going down around the state with over a quarter of our students vaping regularly.

At Arrowhead we are training high school students to go back to their middle school and tell the 6th, 7th, and 8th graders about the dangers of vaping in an attempt to be proactive and stop them before they start. I give informational sessions on vaping to the parents in our seven feeder schools to help them fight the battle at home.

I became a principal to help students learn and make an impact on the education of our youth. Unfortunately, I’m spending way too much time tackling the vaping problem when there are other things I should be doing. We are apparently allowing companies to make billions of dollars with no regard for the health of our youth.

I ask that you help us help the youth of this state by passing SB 364.

I brought some of the devices that have been confiscated from some of our students that I would like to show you at this time.