



Stephens Elementary School

5687 Hwy 237, Burlington, KY 41005
PH: 859.334.4460 FAX: 859.334.4463

EVERYBODY LEARNS, EVERY DAY!

ERIC BLANKENSHIP
Principal

PARADISE FORBES
Asst. Principal

ROSS RECHTIN
Asst. Principal

COURTNEY BRAY
Counselor

REBECCA FOLZ
Counselor

Dear Stinger Families,

I hope this message finds you and your family well. As part of our ongoing commitment to student safety and well-being, we are reaching out to address several growing concerns that are impacting children at increasingly younger ages: **vaping, technology/cell phone use, and energy drinks.**

Vaping: A Serious Health Concern

Sadly the accessibility and advertising of vape products still hit many youth. Although vaping is often marketed as a "safer" alternative to smoking, it is **not safe for children or teens**. E-cigarettes contain **nicotine**, a highly addictive substance that can harm brain development in young people. These devices often come in flavors that appeal to children, making them seem harmless — but they are far from it.

Recent studies show that vaping can lead to respiratory issues, heart problems, and long-term addiction. Even in elementary settings, we are seeing increased curiosity and discussions among students due to exposure at home, online, or from older peers.

We encourage you to have open, age-appropriate conversations with your child about the dangers of vaping. Please also talk with your children about what to do if they find vapes. If you would like resources or tips for starting this conversation, our school FRYSC/counselors are available to help.

Cell Phones: Managing Screen Time and Digital Safety

We also want to bring attention to the increased use of **cell phones** and other smart devices among elementary-aged children. While supervised technology use can be useful, **excessive or unsupervised use can negatively impact sleep, mental health, attention span, and social skills.**

Inappropriate content, online bullying, and exposure to harmful apps can all happen with just a few clicks — often without a child's full understanding of the risks. We urge parents to monitor their child's screen time, set clear boundaries for phone use, and use parental controls where appropriate.

At school, we continue to enforce our cell phone/smart device policy to maintain a focused and safe learning environment. We appreciate your support in reinforcing these expectations at home. Our policy is that students are not permitted to use personal devices (including smart watches) from the time they are picked up on the bus until dropped off at the bus stop. All communication should be adult to adult during the school day by the Boone County Schools App, School Phone (859)334-4460, or official school email.



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Coffee and Energy Drinks

Recently, we have noticed an increase in students bringing energy drinks, caffeinated soft drinks, and coffee to school. These beverages, which often contain high levels of **caffeine, sugar**, and other stimulants, are **not appropriate for children**, particularly at the elementary level. According to health professionals, energy drinks can pose **serious health risks** for children, including:

- **Increased heart rate and blood pressure**
- **Anxiety, jitteriness, and difficulty concentrating**
- **Sleep disturbances**
- **Upset stomach or nausea**
- **Potential for caffeine dependency**

These effects can interfere with your child's ability to learn, behave appropriately, and feel well throughout the school day.

Please be aware that **energy drinks are not permitted at school**. We ask for your support in ensuring that your child does not bring these beverages in their lunchbox or backpack. Healthy alternatives such as water, milk, or 100% fruit juice are encouraged.

In relation, we are a CEP school that all students receive free breakfast and lunch if they would like. It is not permitted for students to bring food or drinks from outside restaurants in original packaging from the outside agency unless pre-approved for special occasions/times.

How You Can Help

- **Talk openly** with your child about vaping, digital safety, and healthy habits.
- **Set boundaries** for screen time and device usage.
- **Stay informed** about the latest trends and risks.
- **Reach out** to us if you notice behavior changes or need support.

Working together, we can ensure our children grow up healthy, safe, and prepared to make good choices. If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

Eric Blankenship, SES Principal:

eric.blankenship@boone.kyschools.us