

Guymon DAILY HERALD

Hardesty School goes tobacco-free

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Another area school district recently took a giant leap in tobacco use prevention.

Hardesty joined the growing list of schools across the state to adopt the 24/7 tobacco free policy, during the June 12 board meeting, which came into effect as of July 1.

The Hardesty tobacco free school policy states their commitment in providing everyone using school facilities with a healthy and productive environment and recognizes:

- Tobacco use has been identified as the number one preventable cause of disease and death in the United States.
- Environmental tobacco smoke (a.k.a. secondhand smoke) increases the number and severity of asthma episodes in children.
- The school board believes that education has a central role in establishing patterns of behavior related to good health and that measures are necessary to help its students resist tobacco use.
- The board recognizes the importance of adult role modeling for students during formative years.

With the majority of adult smokers starting before the age of 18, the target age for tobacco prevention is middle – high school age students. Studies have shown teaching tobacco free curriculum alone has not been successful in prevention.

Children learn through example as actions speak louder than words. Adults teaching the dangers of tobacco use and then allowing tobacco on the premise or using themselves, not only results in loss of the adult's credibility, but contradicts the message all together.

Changing the social norm of tobacco use in public being acceptable is the key to reinforcing lessons taught and building the child's confidence in their decision to remain tobacco free.

"When a school passes a policy we are able to buy curriculum for them on tobacco use and help them emplace guidelines for students that do break the rule," said Kayla McCarter, Texas County Tobacco Coordinator, "We can purchase the materials through the grant. We purchase banners and incentive items for them also, to introduce the new policy and make visitors, students, faculty aware of the no tobacco use 24/7 on school grounds."

For more information on schools with 24 hour tobacco free policies visit the Oklahoma State Department of Health website at: http://www.ok.gov/health/WellnessProgram/Schools_with_24-Hour_Tobacco-Free_Policies.html

