

STUDENT PRIVACY AND SEARCHES

At certain ages, students attain the right to decide for themselves what records will remain confidential, even from their parents, and what activities the students will participate in. At age eighteen students become legal adults and must approve any disclosure of information about themselves from school records, except directory information if a request for confidentiality has not been filed. Students at age eighteen may also sign releases, authorizations or permission slips to participate in school activities, and may sign themselves out of school and authorize their own absences. Students between sixteen and eighteen who have been granted legal emancipation from their parents or guardians have the same rights as eighteen-year-old students. Students over fourteen years of age have the right to keep private from everyone any district records indicating they have been tested or treated for a sexually transmitted disease. Students thirteen years and older have confidentiality rights in records regarding drug, alcohol or mental health treatment. All students have confidentiality rights in family planning or abortion records.

A. Searches of Students and Personal Property

Personal privacy is a fundamental aspect of individual liberty. All students possess the constitutional right to be secure in their persons, papers, and effects against unreasonable searches and seizures. Staff shall take particular care to respect students' privacy.

School officials have authority to maintain order and discipline in the schools and to protect students from exposure to illegal drugs, weapons, and contraband. The superintendent, the principal, and other staff designated by the superintendent shall have the authority to conduct reasonable searches on school property as provided by board policy.

A search is required when there are reasonable grounds to suspect a student has a firearm on school grounds, transportation or at school events.

Prior to conducting a search, school officials shall ask that the student consent to be searched by removing all items from pockets or other personal effects. If the student refuses to consent to the search, school officials may proceed to search the student, the student's personal belongings, and the student's locker, as follows:

1. Any search of a student conducted by a school district employee must be reasonably related to the discovery of contraband or other evidence of a student's violation of the law or school rules.

For the purpose of this policy, "contraband" means items, materials, or substances the possession of which is prohibited by law or district policy, including but not limited to, controlled substances, alcoholic beverages, tobacco products, or any object that can reasonably be considered a firearm or a dangerous weapon.

2. Staff shall conduct searches in a manner, which is not excessively intrusive in light of the age and gender of the student and the nature of the suspected infraction.

No student shall be subject to a strip search or body cavity search by school staff.

School officials may consult with local law enforcement officials regarding the advisability of a search on school premises by a law enforcement officer if evidence of criminal activity is likely to be seized.

The superintendent shall develop procedures regulating searches of students and their personal property.

B. Locker Searches

Students may be assigned lockers for storing and securing their books, school supplies, and personal effects. Lockers, desks, and storage areas are the property of the school district. No right or expectation of privacy exists for any student as to the use of any space issued or assigned to a student by the school and such lockers and other spaces are subject to search in accordance with district policy.

No student may use a locker, desk, or storage area as a depository for any substance or object which is prohibited by law or school rules or which poses a threat to the health, safety or welfare of the occupants of the school building or the building itself.

A student's locker, desk or storage area may be searched by district staff if reasonable grounds exist to suspect that evidence of a violation of the law or school rules will be uncovered. School staff shall report a student's suspicious activity to the principal prior to initiating a search, except in emergency situations when the risk of harm to students or staff demands immediate action.

All student lockers may be searched at any time without prior notice and without reasonable suspicion that the search will yield evidence of any particular student's violation of the law or school rules. If the school official conducting such a search develops a reasonable suspicion that any container inside the locker, including but not limited to a purse, backpack, gym bag, or an article of clothing, contains evidence of a student's violation of the law or school rules, the container may be searched according to board policy.

The superintendent shall establish procedures for conducting searches of lockers, desks, or storage areas.

Cross References:

Board Policy 3231
Board Policy 3414

Student Records
Infectious Diseases

Legal References:

RCW 13.64.060
RCW 28A.320.040
RCW 28A.600.020

RCW 28A.600.210-240
WAC 392-400-215

Power and capacity of emancipated minor
Bylaws for board and school government
Exclusion of student from classroom — Written
disciplinary procedures — Long-term
suspension or expulsion
School locker searches
Student rights

Management Resources:

Policy News, June 1999

School safety bills impact policy