

UNITED SCHOOL DISTRICT

SECTION: PUPILS

TITLE: SEARCHES

ADOPTED: October 13, 2008

REVISED: February 14, 2012

226. SEARCHES	
<p>1. Purpose</p>	<p>The Board acknowledges the need to respect the rights of students to be free from unreasonable searches and seizures while fulfilling the district's interest in protecting and preserving the health, safety and welfare of the school population, enforcing rules of conduct, and maintaining an appropriate atmosphere conducive to learning.</p>
<p>2. Authority Pa. Const., Art. I Sec. 8 SC 510 Title 22 Sec. 12.14 U.S. Const., Amendment IV</p> <p>Pol. 218.1, 223, 227</p>	<p>School officials have the authority to lawfully search students or their belongings, including lockers, automobiles, electronic devices, purses, backpacks, clothing, and other possessions, without a warrant, when in school, on school grounds or when otherwise under school supervision, if there is a reasonable suspicion that the place or thing to be searched contains prohibited contraband, material that would pose a threat to the health, safety and welfare of the school population, or evidence that there has been a violation of the law, Board policy, or school rules. The scope and extent of searches must be reasonable in relation to the nature of the suspected evidence, contraband or dangerous material and to the grounds for suspecting that it may be found in the place or thing being searched.</p> <p>The district has a compelling interest in protecting and preserving the health, safety and welfare of the school population, which under certain circumstances may warrant general or random searches of students and their lockers, vehicles or other belongings without individualized suspicion, for the purpose of finding or preventing entry onto school property of controlled substances, weapons or other dangerous materials.</p>
<p>3. Delegation of Responsibility</p>	<p>The Board authorizes the administration to conduct searches of students or their belongings, including lockers, automobiles, electronic devices, purses, backpacks, clothing, and other possessions in accordance with the standards set forth in this policy.</p>

<p>Title 22 Sec. 12.14</p>	<p>The Superintendent or designee, in consultation with the district solicitor, shall develop guidelines and procedures to implement this policy, and shall ensure that school staff who are involved in carrying out searches or determining when searches will be conducted receive appropriate periodic training about such procedures and currently applicable legal standards.</p> <p>Students, parents/guardians and staff shall be notified at least annually or more often if deemed appropriate by administration, regarding the standards and procedures in effect pursuant to this policy.</p>
<p>4. Guidelines</p> <p>Title 22 Sec. 12.14</p>	<p><u>Individualized Suspicion Searches</u></p> <p>Students or their belongings, including lockers, automobiles, electronic devices, purses, backpacks, clothing, and other possessions, may be searched without a warrant when in school, on school grounds or when otherwise under school supervision, if there is a reasonable suspicion that the place or thing to be searched contains prohibited contraband, material that would pose a threat to the health, safety and welfare of the school population, or evidence that there has been a violation of the law, Board policy, or school rules. The scope and extent of searches must be reasonable in relation to the nature of the suspected evidence, contraband or dangerous material and to the grounds for suspecting that it may be found in the place or thing being searched.</p> <p>In determining whether reasonable suspicion exists, the principal or designee always should be able to articulate what is being looked for, and why it is thought to be located in the particular place to be searched. The scope of a search should be limited to the place or places the item sought is believed to be.</p> <p>Searches conducted by the administration may include but not be limited to utilization of certified drug dogs, metal detection units, or any device used to protect the health, safety and welfare of the school population.</p>

Pol. 805

Searches By Or At The Request Of Law Enforcement Officials

The legal standards governing searches initiated by school officials are less strict than the standards applicable to law enforcement authorities in many situations. When searches of students, student belongings, vehicles or lockers are conducted by or at the request of law enforcement officials, with or without the involvement of school staff, the law enforcement officials are solely responsible for ensuring that a warrant has been issued or that the circumstances otherwise permit the search to be lawfully conducted in accordance with the standards applicable to law enforcement actions. School staff will not interfere with or obstruct searches initiated by law enforcement, but may assist when law enforcement officials have requested such assistance and have represented that a warrant has been issued or that they otherwise have proper authority for a lawful search.

Locker Inspections And Searches

Lockers are assigned to or otherwise made available to students as a convenience for the safe storage of books, clothing, school materials and limited personal property, and to facilitate movement between classes and activities and to and from school. Such lockers are and shall remain the property of the school district, and to the extent students have any expectation of privacy of lockers at all, it is very limited.

No student may place or keep in a locker any substance or object that is prohibited by law, Board policy or school rules, or that constitutes a threat to the health, safety or welfare of the occupants of the school building or the building itself. Students are required to ensure that their lockers do not contain spoiled food items or beverages, or soiled clothing which may attract pests, create odors or cause unhealthy conditions. A student locker may be opened and inspected for cleanliness, with or without the consent of the student, whenever there are odors, pests or other indications that a locker contains spoiled food, soiled clothing in need of laundering or similarly unhealthy matter.

Students are exclusively responsible for locking their assigned lockers to ensure the security of their personal belongings and school property entrusted to them. Students are permitted to secure their assigned lockers only with locks provided by the district, or if the district does not provide locks, personal combination locks for which the combination has been provided to designated school staff.

Prior to an individual locker search or inspection, the student to whom the locker is assigned shall be notified and be given a reasonable opportunity to be present. However, when there is a reasonable suspicion that a locker contains materials which pose a threat to the health, welfare or safety of the school population, student lockers may be searched without prior notice to the student.

The principal or designated staff person shall be present whenever a student locker is inspected for cleanliness or is searched. The principal or designee shall maintain written records of all occasions when a locker is searched or inspected. Such records shall include the reason(s) for the search, persons present, objects found and their disposition.

Searches Involving Removal Of Clothing Or Examination Beneath Clothing

Searches involving the removal of undergarments or examination beneath undergarments will be conducted by local law enforcement.

Handling And Disposal Of Items Found In The Course Of Searches

Any items or material found during a search or inspection, the student's possession of which is in violation of law, district policies or school rules, or otherwise is evidence of such a violation, may be confiscated, and may be used as evidence in student discipline proceedings or a criminal investigation, even if such items or material were not the original objective of the search or inspection.

The principal shall be responsible to ensure that confiscated items or material are properly inventoried and secured until the conclusion of disciplinary action, if any, and are then properly disposed of if not appropriate to be returned to the student. Items or materials that are evidence of a criminal offense, or that are not lawful for ordinary citizens to possess will be promptly turned over to proper law enforcement authorities for custody or disposal.

References:

Pennsylvania Constitution – PA Const. Art. I, Sec. 8

School Code – 24 P.S. Sec. 510

State Board of Education Regulations – 22 PA Code Sec. 12.14

United States Constitution – Amendment IV

Board Policy – 218.1, 223, 227, 805

In re F.B., 555 Pa. 661, 726 A.2d 361, 368 (1999)

Commonwealth v. Cass, 551 Pa. 25, 709 A.2d 350, 355-56 (1998)

Safford Unified School Dist. No. 1 v. Redding, 129 S.Ct. 2633 (U.S. 2009)