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English 111-97

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Rough Draft – Persuasive essay

It should be a schools priority not only to provide excellent academics, but also to ensure a safe and secure environment for its students. The debate about whether school officials have the ability to search a student’s belongings has become a controversial issue. Many debate that their right of privacy is being violated. However, what about the right for safety of an individual? Why should students have to fear about their safety while at school? Does a person’s privacy truly matter when an individual is in a potential dangerous situation? An officer should have the ability to search a student’s belongings with reasonable cause when suspecting that the individual may have a weapon or drugs, in order to ensure safety and avoid any harmful incidnets.

Students in U.S. public schools have the Fourth Amendment right to be free from unreasonable searches. This right is diminished in the school environment, however, because of the unique need to maintain a safe atmosphere where learning and teaching can occur. School officials have the legal capacity to search the students' schoolroom when they have reasonable suspicion that a student or students are a potential danger for the school. The Fourth Amendment states that the rights of people are to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures without a warrant. However, the case of New Jersey v. T.L.O., 469 U.S. 325 (1985) dictates that "a warrantless search by a school official does not violate the Fourth Amendment so long as the official has reasonable grounds to believe that a student possesses evidence of illegal activity." In the case of a classroom, it is considered the property of the school, Therefore, school officials have the legal grounds to conduct any search they feel necessary inside the schoolroom without a warrant. Furthermore, because all students are informed in writing of the school's policy of random searches, there should be no expectations of privacy of goods within the student population.

By the 1990s, school problems were defined as weapons possession, drug and alcohol abuse, gang activity, truancy, and violent assaults against students and teachers (citation). By allowing searches around schools, the amount of students bringing or owning a weapon and taking or selling drugs could decrease drastically. If a student knows that that he or she could get caught with a weapon or drugs, what would be the probability that he or she actually brings any of those items to school? Understanding that weapons and drugs are both dangerous and unacceptable, will not only decrease the possibility of having possession of them but also the student will know that is wrong. These students will understand that safety comes first, for themselves and others.

A 2008 American Teacher Survey revealed that nine percent of teachers feel that violence is a significant impediment to learning for at least 25 percent of their students, particularly for students in urban environments; and 27 percent of teachers reported in the National Study of Delinquency Prevention that student behavior prevented them from teaching either “a fair amount” or a “great deal of the time (citation).” Students who are afraid at school may have difficulty concentrating on their work and may be more likely to stay home from school for reasons other than being ill; in this way, fear can consequently lead to students falling behind. Studies have shown that schools with higher rates of violence have lower test scores, reduced graduation rates, and a lower likelihood that a student will attend college. One study, conducted by Jeffrey Grogger's , on neighborhoods and violence determined that even moderate levels of violence reduce the likelihood of graduating from high school by approximately five percent, and lower the likelihood of college attendance by nearly seven percent.(citation)

Conducting searches on students could also prevent any harmful incidents from occurring. One example would be school shootings. Most Americans are aware of the incident that occurred in Columbine, Colorado at Columbine High School. Two senior students, [Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eric_Harris_and_Dylan_Klebold), murdered a total of 12 students and one teacher. They injured 21 additional people, with three others being injured while attempting to escape the school. The pair then committed [suicide](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Murder%E2%80%93suicide) after the massacre. In 2012, another similar incident occurred, this time at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newton, Connecticut. A 20 year old Adam Lanza fatally shot 20 children and 6 adult staff members. The incident was the deadliest [mass shooting](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mass_shooting) at a high school or grade school in U.S. history and the second-deadliest mass shooting by a single person in U.S. history, after the 2007 [Virginia Tech shootings](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Virginia_Tech_shooting).These incident may be rare and occur occasionally, however they can happen and it is important to try and prevent them, even if it means giving up your privacy for potential weapons and drugs (citation).

It’s understandable when debating about s student’s right of privacy. However, it is not a student’s right to carry a weapon or to be in possession of drugs at school. The officer is not conducting the search to humiliate or offend a particular student. Their job is to make sure the school is safe, not to promote it. In addition, if the student felt that they were under no circumstance given reason to promote suspicion and be searched, they have a right to say and legally fight their circumstance. There are also incidents that would be considered accidents. Let’s say that a student accidently brought a pocket knife to school. He didn’t purposely bring it. The day before he or she had gone fishing with his or her father, and used the knife to help cut a fish or fishing line. The student has put the knife in his jacket. The next day he wears the same jacket but forgets to leave the pocketknife, unaware that he had it in the first place. Upon getting to school he realizes the pocket knife in his pocket. Should he be asked to get searched, the officer gets a hold of the weapon. However, this deos not automatically mean the student had malicious intentions with the knife. This would be considered an accident. However, there will still be consequences for the student. What would have happened had he left his jacket unsupervised and another student got a hold of the knife? What if this student did have malicious intents? The whole purposes of the searches are to promote and ensure safety. A weapon can be as dangerous as anyone can make it be.( should this really be here?)  
 Locker and body searches should be seen as a necessity rather than a suggestion or inconvenient since they will certainly help prevent any tragedies, reduce the amount of student with a weapon or drugs, and help the students realize the malicious that weapons and drugs can be. It is critical that safety is provided on a school ground. This will help students feel secure and comfortable when getting the education they surely deserve.

Work Cited

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Students should expect to have their lockers searched because parents need assurance that their children are safe at school, society at large expects schools to be orderly and controlled environments for students, and the police need to be able to apprehend those who would break the law.

The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated, and no Warrants shall issue, but upon probable cause, supported by Oath or affirmation, and particularly describing the place to be searched, and the persons or things to be seized.