

Real-Life Connection

You most likely use a locker to store items in school. Is that locker your own private place? Write whether you agree or disagree with these statements. Explain why.

1. Students have the same right to privacy as adults.

2. School lockers are the property of the school.

3. Lockers should never be searched.

A search warrant is an order granted in court by a judge, usually to a law enforcement officer. The warrant gives law enforcement officers permission to enter private property and search for evidence of a crime.

Context Vocabulary:

Argument (AHR gyuh muhnt) noun An argument is a reason or set of reasons for or against a point of view.

Example: I have no argument against recycling, since I think it is a great idea.

Influence (IN floo uhns) noun Influence is the effect that something has on a person or thing.

Example: My dad's influence helped shape my plans for after high school.

Irritate (IR uh tayt) verb When you irritate someone, you annoy or anger the person.

Example: Sam's toe tapping is starting to irritate me.

Negotiate (ni GOH shee ayt) verb To negotiate with someone is to try to reach an agreement through discussion and compromise.

Example: I hope to negotiate with my mom to get a bigger allowance.

Stalemate (STAYL mayt) noun A stalemate is a situation in which no further action can occur.

Example: The brothers' disagreement ended in a stalemate, because neither one would admit the other might be right.

Should schools have the right to do random searches of student lockers?

Privacy vs. Safety

Rushing to class, you realize you have left your textbook in your locker. You hurry back to your locker. As you round the corner, you come to a sudden stop. Your locker door is open, as are several others. Two teachers are standing there. It is clear they have been checking the contents of each locker. The sight does more than irritate you. You have done nothing wrong. Why were they looking in your locker? Does the school have the right to do this?

That question is being asked in one of the hottest debates in the United States today. In a random locker search, school officials can open any locker and examine its contents. To those who oppose such searches, the issue is about Americans' right to search another's home, possessions, or person without a specific reason and a court-ordered warrant. People who oppose random searches argue that students in school should be protected by the Fourth Amendment.

PRIVATE AREAS Many students and adults see school lockers as students' private areas. A locker, they say, is personal space within the school community. A student needs this space, some people claim. It is a safe area into which no one can intrude without the student's permission. Respecting that privacy demonstrates adults' trust of kids.

For the vast majority of students, the desire to protect their privacy is totally harmless. They might use their lockers to store items such as CDs, notes, letters, or magazines. Such items are not illegal and do not threaten anyone, but a student may prefer that a teacher or another

student not see them. There is the possibility, though, that some students are using lockers to hide things that are threats. This is a major concern, and it seems to support the argument that random searches are necessary.

School Officials look for locker solutions

Type of Locker	How it works
Clear locker	Clear doors on lockers so all teachers and administrators can see items that students store in their lockers.
Smart locker	Students open lockers with a swipe card instead of locks. School officials can lock down all the lockers at once. They can also monitor students' use of their lockers.

HIDDEN THREATS Illegal drugs are a real problem in many schools. Theft of personal items is also a problem. Thieves may use their lockers to store stolen goods, believing that lockers provide a safe hiding place. Weapons are the most serious threat. In the United States, more than 100,000 students and teachers are threatened with bodily harm. In one study, 57 percent of all public elementary and secondary school principals who responded reported that

their schools had experienced on or more incidents of crime or violence. Ten percent of all public schools reported a serious or violent crime. Those in favor of random searches say they are a way to address these threats.

Schools have a clear responsibility to protect students. The law requires it. Schools must take reasonable measures to prevent students from bringing weapons or drugs into school. Young criminals with drugs or weapons stashed in their lockers can be a lethal influence on other students. When it comes to protecting all students, yielding the right to privacy may be the wisest action.

SCHOOL PROPERTY People in favor of random locker searches also argue that school lockers are not the private property of students. Lockers, they point out, belong to the school. Students are allowed to use lockers in the same way they are allowed to use other school property, such as library books or computers. Along with the privilege of locker use, these people argue, should go the knowledge that lockers can be searched at any time. This understanding should be considered a school rule.

When it comes to random searches of school lockers, both sides of the debate seem to have reached a stalemate. Both sides agree there seems to be very little room to negotiate. People who oppose random checks say that the right to privacy is not negotiable. Schools say you cannot negotiate the right to safety.

People who favor the right of schools to do some form of locker search seem to have been more influential than those who oppose it. Sam Davis is the dean of the University of Mississippi School of Law. He is also an expert on the constitutional rights of children. He says,

“The court over the last fifteen to twenty years has really gone with preserving the government’s interests over the individual’s. There’s really no question that students have fewer constitutional rights in a public school setting than they do outside.”

Wrap It Up

Find It on the Page: Please use complete sentences to answer the following questions. If you need more space you may also write on the back of this page.

1. What is a random locker search?

2. List three things that random searches can help find.

3. Summarize the reasons for not performing random locker searches.

Use Clues

4. What effect might random locker searches have on students' feeling of safety within a school?

5. What actions rather than random searches could schools take to help ensure student safety?

6. What is your opinion of Sam Davis's statement that student have fewer constitutional rights in school than out of school? Explain.

Connection to the Unit 2 Big Question

After reading the article, how do you feel about random searches of student lockers? Do you think they are a violation of privacy? Explain in one well-structure (topic sentence, three supporting details, and a conclusion sentence) paragraph. Be sure to use evidence from the article to support your opinion.