

**502 SEARCH OF STUDENT LOCKERS, DESKS, PERSONAL POSSESSIONS, AND STUDENT'S PERSON**

*[Note: Education districts are required by statute to have a policy addressing these issues.]*

**I. PURPOSE**

The purpose of this policy is to provide for a safe and healthful educational environment by enforcing the education district's policies against contraband.

**II. GENERAL STATEMENT OF POLICY**

A. Lockers and Personal Possessions Within a Locker

Pursuant to Minnesota statutes, education district lockers are the property of the education district. At no time does the education district relinquish its exclusive control of lockers provided for the convenience of students. Inspection of the interior of lockers may be conducted by education district officials for any reason at any time, without notice, without student consent, and without a search warrant. The personal possessions of students within a education district locker may be searched only when education district officials have a reasonable suspicion that the search will uncover evidence of a violation of law or education district rules. As soon as practicable after the search of a student's personal possessions, the education district officials must provide notice of the search to students whose lockers were searched unless disclosure would impede an ongoing investigation by police or education district officials.

B. Desks

School desks are the property of the education district. At no time does the education district relinquish its exclusive control of desks provided for the convenience of students. Inspection of the interior of desks may be conducted by education district officials for any reason at any time, without notice, without student consent, and without a search warrant.

C. Personal Possessions and Student's Person

The personal possessions of students and/or a student's person may be searched when education district officials have a reasonable suspicion that the search will uncover a violation of law or education district rules. The search will be reasonable in its scope and intrusiveness.

- D. A violation of this policy occurs when students use lockers and desks for unauthorized purposes or to store contraband. A violation occurs when students carry contraband on their person or in their personal possessions.

### **III. DEFINITIONS**

- A. “Contraband” means any unauthorized item possession of which is prohibited by education district policy and/or law. It includes, but is not limited to, weapons and “look-alikes,” alcoholic beverages, controlled substances and “look-alikes,” overdue books and other materials belonging to the education district, and stolen property.
- B. “Personal possessions” includes, but is not limited to, purses, backpacks, bookbags, packages, and clothing.
- C. “Reasonable suspicion” means that a education district official has grounds to believe that the search will result in evidence of a violation of education district policy, rules, and/or law. Reasonable suspicion may be based on a education district official’s personal observation, a report from a student, parent or staff member, a student’s suspicious behavior, a student’s age and past history or record of conduct both in and out of the education district context, or other reliable sources of information.
- D. “Reasonable scope” means that the scope and/or intrusiveness of the search is reasonably related to the objectives of the search. Factors to consider in determining what is reasonable include the seriousness of the suspected infraction, the reliability of the information, the necessity of acting without delay, the existence of exigent circumstances necessitating an immediate search and further investigation (e.g., to prevent violence, serious and immediate risk of harm or destruction of evidence), and the age of the student.

### **IV. PROCEDURES**

- A. Education district officials may inspect the interiors of lockers and desks for any reason at any time, without notice, without student consent, and without a search warrant.
- B. Education district officials may inspect the personal possessions of a student and/or a student’s person based on a reasonable suspicion that the search will uncover a violation of law or education district rules. A search of personal possessions of a student and/or a student’s person will be reasonable in its scope and intrusiveness.
- C. As soon as practicable after a search of personal possessions within a locker pursuant to this policy, the education district officials must provide notice of the search to students whose possessions were searched unless disclosure would impede an ongoing investigation by police or education district officials.
- D. Whenever feasible, a search of a person shall be conducted in private by a

education district official of the same sex. A second education district official of the same sex shall be present as an observer during the search of a person whenever feasible.

- E. A strip search is a search involving the removal of coverings or clothing from private areas. Mass strip searches, or body cavity searches, are prohibited. Strip searches will be conducted only in circumstances involving imminent danger.
- F. A education district official conducting any other search may determine when it is appropriate to have a second official present as an observer.
- G. A copy of this policy will be printed in the student handbook or disseminated in any other way which education district officials deem appropriate. The education district shall provide a copy of this policy to a student when the student is given use of a locker.

## **V. DIRECTIVES AND GUIDELINES**

Education district administration may establish reasonable directives and guidelines which address specific needs of the education district, such as use of tape in lockers, standards of cleanliness and care, posting of pin-ups and posters which may constitute sexual harassment, etc.

## **VI. SEIZURE OF CONTRABAND**

If a search yields contraband, education district officials will seize the item and, where appropriate, turn it over to legal officials for ultimate disposition.

## **VII. VIOLATIONS**

A student found to have violated this policy and/or the directives and guidelines implementing it shall be subject to discipline in accordance with the education district's Student Discipline Policy, which may include suspension, exclusion, or expulsion, and the student may, when appropriate, be referred to legal officials.

**Legal References:** U. S. Const., amend. IV  
Minn. Const., art. I, § 10  
Minn. Stat. § 121A.72 (School Locker Policy)  
*New Jersey v. T.L.O.*, 469 U.S. 325, 105 S.Ct. 733, 83 L.Ed.2d 720 (1985)  
*G.C. v. Owensboro Public Schools*, 711 F.3d 623 (6<sup>th</sup> Cir. 2013)

**Cross References:** MSBA/MASA Model Policy 417 (Chemical Use and Abuse)  
MSBA/MASA Model Policy 418 (Drug-Free Workplace/Drug-Free School)  
MSBA/MASA Model Policy 501 (School Weapons)  
MSBA/MASA Model Policy 506 (Student Discipline)