Greater Essex County District School Board

Policy: Safe Schools

Reference No: P-AD-16

The Greater Essex County District School Board is committed to creating and promoting a safe environment in its schools and Board properties for staff, parents/guardians, visitors, volunteers and the community. Safety of students is a primary concern of the GECDSB. It is important that all students have a safe, caring and accepting school environment in order to maximize their learning potential and to ensure a positive school climate for all members of the school community. All school staff play a critical role in building and sustaining a positive school climate.

Every member of the school community has a responsibility to assist in creating and maintaining safe, secure, and harmonious learning, teaching, and work environments. All members of the school community have a role in leadership and modeling of appropriate behavior. To that end, the GECDSB supports the local Police % School Protocol.

This policy authorized the creation of procedures for implementation, which shall be considered guidelines pursuant to the Education Act.

Corresponding GECDSB Regulations:

- R-AD-28 Code of Conduct
- R-AD-29 Bullying Prevention and Intervention
- R-AD-30 Progressive Discipline
- R-AD-37 Delegation of Authority Regarding Student Discipline
- R-AD-51 Suspension and Expulsion
- R-AD-08 Student Searches

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Regulation: Student Searches

Reference No: R-AD-08

1. The Greater Essex County District School Board recognizes that teachers and Principals are entrusted with teaching students and with giving assiduous attention to their safety and well-being. In addition, Principals are required to maintain proper order and discipline in the school.

2. The Board recognizes that teachers and Principals must be able to respond quickly and effectively when problems arise in schools or on Board approved outings. In that regard, the Board recognizes that:
    - School authorities have a reasonable degree of discretion and flexibility to allow them to safeguard the safety of students and enforce Board and school policies and regulations;
    - From time to time, Principals or their designates may be required to search students;
    - The Process to be undertaken in determining whether a search is appropriate and the manner in which a search is to be conducted are set out in this Regulation;
    - The decision to search will be based on the Principal's or designates belief based on reasonable grounds that a Board and/or school policy and/or regulation is or has been breached and that a search of the student's property or the student will reveal evidence of that breach. Searches will be conducted in a reasonable and sensitive manner and will minimally intrusive to the student's privacy.

3. This regulation will be applied in a manner that is consistent with the Education Act R.S.O. 1990, c.E-2 (as amended from time to time), the Board and School Code of Conduct, the Board's Safe Schools Policy and Regulations, the Board's Digital Responsibility Regulation, and the Board/Police Protocol.

4. A Principal or designate has the duty to carry out an investigation to establish the nature and extent of an alleged breach or potential breach of the Board's and/or School's Code of Conduct and/or the Board's Safe Schools Policy and Regulations.

5. It is the responsibility of the Principal or designate to advise the students and parents/guardians at the beginning of the school year that desks and lockers are school property and that a search of such property may be conducted by school administration.

6. It is the responsibility of the Principal or designate to advise the students and parents/guardians at the beginning of the school year that enforcing Board and school policies and regulations may, in some circumstances, require searches of students and their personal effects, including personal electronic devices, and the seizure of prohibited items and may involve outside authorities.
7. In carrying out his/her duties to maintain a safe environment and to maintain proper order and discipline in the school, the Principal or designate who has reasonable

grounds to believe that the Board's and/or School's Code of Conduct and/or Safe Schools Policy and Regulations has been or is being breached may conduct a search of a student's clothing, possessions, personal electronic device, or any area (desk, locker, backpack) where his/her possessions may be stored if the Principal or designate believes that the search would reveal evidence of the breach.

8. Only the Principal or designate are authorized to conduct searches of students, unless there is an immediate threat to the safety or security of a person or the school building, in which case a staff member may conduct a search and immediately report the search and the outcome to the Principal or designate.

9. The decision to search must be based on information obtained by the Principal or designate that the Board's or School's Code of Conduct or Safe Schools Policy/Regulations was or being breached, which information the Principal or designate considers to be credible. The decision may be based on information from sources such as:
    - Students;
    - Parents;
    - Observations of Teacher/Principal/Vice-Principals, or other staff or other members of the school community; and
    - From a combination of these pieces of information which, considered together, appear to be credible.

10. Where there are reasonable grounds to believe that a student is carrying a gun, or other weapons or is in possession of or is distributing an illegal or restricted drug, the Principal or designate will take swift and immediate action which may include one or more of the following actions:
    - Call the police if there is an immediate safety risk;
    - Search the student's locker(s) and personal property;
    - Have the student empty and turn out pockets; have the student remove outer clothing; have the student remove shoes and socks; and/or,
    - Notify the police in accordance with the Board/Police Protocol and/or if it appears that a more intrusive search may be necessary.

11. The Principal or designate shall notify their immediate supervisor (in the case of a designate, the Principal and in the case of the Principal, the Supervisory Officer) and the student's parent/guardian in a timely fashion of the action they have taken.

12. Where there is a reasonable specific suspicion that illegal or restricted drugs or restricted controlled substances are stored on school property, the Principal, in consultation with his/her Superintendent may enlist the assistance of a canine unit to search Board property under the Supervision of the appropriate police services personnel.

13. Where there are reasonable grounds to believe that a student is in possession of stolen property, pornographic material or hate literature or that the student has committed a

breach or is committing a breach of the School's Board's Code of Conduct and evidence of the breach will be found as a result of a search, the Principal or designate may:

- Search the student's locker(s) and personal property;
- Have the student empty and turn out pockets; have the student remove outer clothing; have the student remove shoes and socks;
- With reasonable grounds to believe that evidence of the breach will be found on the student's personal electronic device, ask the student to turn-over their personal electronic device, ask the student to turn-over their personal electronic device; if the personal electronic device is password protected, the Principal or designate shall request the student provide the password; if the student does provide the password, the Principal or designate may confiscate the personal electronic device;
- Call the police if it appears that a more intrusive search is necessary; and/or
- Notify the police in accordance with the Police/School Protocol;
- The Principal or designate shall notify their immediate supervisor (in the case of a designate, the Principal and in the case of the Principal, the Supervisory Officer) and the student's parent/guardian in a timely fashion of the action they have taken.

14. All searched of a student's person will carried out by the Principal or designate in the presence of an adult witness.

15. Searches must be carried out reasonably. Searches will be carried out in a sensitive manner and hall be minimally intrusive, considering the age, gender and any other relevant factors related to the student. Searches of the person should be carried out in a private location.

16. Under no circumstances will the Principal or designate or other school staff, request that a student remove clothing other than outerwear, including shoes and socks.

17. Parents/guardians must be involved at the earliest possible stage of an investigation. The earliest possible stage will be at the discretion of the Principal or designate. Such discretion shall be guided by the following principles:
    - The age of the students
    - The seriousness of the offence
    - The imminent involvement of the police.

18. In the event that a parent/guardian is unavailable, the following guidelines shall prevail:
    - If a parent is not available, the emergency contact will be notified
    - A telephone call to the police will not be delayed as a result of the unavailability of the parent/guardian or other authorized contact person

19. Every effort shall be made to notify parents/guardians as soon as possible after the search or police contact has been made. The Principal or designate shall document the events leading to a search and shall provide details with respect to all steps taken in the search and/or seizure.