



William Floyd Union Free School District

of the MASTICS – MORICHES – SHIRLEY
240 Mastic Beach Road, Mastic Beach, New York 11951-1028

BOARD OF EDUCATION

Robert Vecchio, President • Jeananne Dawson, Vice President • Joseph Barone • Thomas A. Gross • Anthony Speruta • Robert Taiani

Paul Casciano, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

September 21, 2011

Re: Canine Drug Sweep and Locker Search at School

Dear Parent/Guardian:

Illegal drug possession and use by school-age students is a dangerous and persistent problem. To defeat this problem, parents and school districts must work together. On our end, the District will remain vigilant at all times to prevent illegal drugs from entering our public schools and to administer appropriate discipline to students who bring drugs into our schools. Strict enforcement of anti-drug rules is absolutely essential to protect the health, safety and welfare of students and school personnel.

The purpose of this letter is to notify you, in advance, about a cooperative initiative between the District and the Suffolk County Police Department that will be conducted during the current, 2011-2012 school year. **The District will invite the County Police into the High School on one or more occasions during the school year for the purpose of having the County Police Department's Canine Narcotics Unit conduct a sweep of students' lockers.** During these visits, drug-sniffing Police dogs will pass by students' lockers and will alert their handlers if they detect the presence of a prohibited substance at a particular locker. If this occurs, school officials will then conduct a thorough search of the locker(s) targeted by the dog, and all the contents within the targeted locker(s). If illegal drugs and/or other unlawful or unauthorized substances or items¹ are found in a student's locker, the student to whom that locker is assigned will be held accountable. In addition to being subject to suspension from school, any student who possesses illegal drugs, weapons or other unlawful items in his or her locker should expect to be arrested by the County Police, if probable cause is in evidence, which enforces an aggressive, pro-arrest policy under these circumstances.

Our State and Federal courts have previously upheld the legality of locker searches on grounds that school lockers remain at all times the property of the District, and therefore, that students have no legitimate expectation of privacy with respect to anything they store within their lockers. The District's legal authority to search lockers is outlined within the District's Student Search and Seizure Policy No. 7440. This Policy was recently updated and approved by the District's Board of Education; specific rules regarding locker searches are as follows:

- The School District owns all lockers, locks, combinations and/or keys to all lockers within school facilities.
- Students do not have any right or expectation of privacy with respect to anything stored within school lockers. Accordingly, school officials reserve the right to access and/or search any student's locker and anything stored within, at any time, with or without prior notice, and with or without reasonable suspicion to believe that evidence of a violation of school rules and/or the law may be found within.
- The sole purpose of being able to lock school lockers is to prevent the theft of property stored within.

¹ Once a search is undertaken for drugs, neither law enforcement nor school personnel will turn a blind eye to other unauthorized or unlawful substances found within a student's locker.

- Students have no right to lock school owned lockers with personally owned locks. If this occurs, the School District has the right to remove them.
- Students are solely responsible for items contained within their school assigned lockers. Students are prohibited from disclosing their locker combinations and/or allowing other students to share their lockers.
- Students must immediately notify a building principal or assistant principal if their lockers do not function properly and/or cannot be properly secured.

The canine drug sweeps by the County Police will not be announced in advance, and students will not be permitted to leave their classrooms while a canine drug sweep is in progress, except in a bona fide emergency. Under no circumstances will students be permitted to retrieve items from their lockers while a canine drug sweep is in progress.

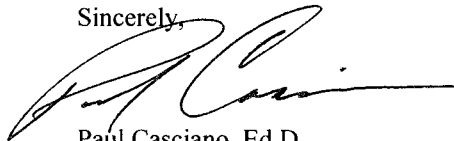
In addition, please understand that any drug sweeps conducted by the County Police shall be in addition to any locker searches conducted by school officials. The District reserves the right at all times to search District lockers assigned to students, with or without prior notice, and with or without cause to suspect that a search may turn up evidence of a violation of school rules and/or the law in a particular student's locker.

It is our sincere desire that no drugs or other unauthorized or unlawful items whatsoever will be found during these canine drug sweeps, or at other times during the year. Our primary goal is to deter students using or from bringing illegal drugs (and/or other unlawful or unauthorized items) into the High School, not to subject students to arrest and school discipline.

Please take this opportunity to have a discussion with your child(ren) about this cooperative initiative between the District and the County Police, even if you believe that your child(ren) would never engage in such activity. First and foremost, counsel your child(ren) to refrain from illegal drug use. Please stress, however, that if they cannot or will not refrain from drug activity, they will be subject to school discipline and/or arrest if illegal drugs and/or other unauthorized or unlawful items are found in their locker at school.

If you have any questions, please contact Barbara Butler at 874-1660. You will not be required to identify yourself if you choose to make an inquiry, simply tell the receptionist that you "have a question about the canine drug sweep and locker search initiative."

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Paul Casciano', written over a horizontal line.

Paul Casciano, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools