

El Monte Union High School District

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October 9, 2017

Dear Parents / Guardians:

I am very fortunate to serve as the superintendent of this great district, and we are all very proud of the incredible progress we have made in recent years. Providing a safe school environment for our students is our first priority.

The El Monte Union High School District has safety measures currently in place designed to safeguard students and to affect positive learning in the classroom. We believe that schools in our district are the safest place in the community for our students. Unfortunately, we have experienced recent activity in the rise of illegal substances and the distribution of prescription drugs on campus. We continue to work with our local authorities to address this problem and we rely on students, as well as parents, to inform us when they are made aware of such unlawful activity on campus.

To assist us in addressing this problem, we have requested from our local authorities the use of drug detection dogs on our campuses during the 2017-18 school year. The District would like to provide parents and students information about the use of detection dogs. To help assist you and your child with a better understanding of the laws and regulations regarding detection dogs on campus, a copy of the District's Board Policy on this subject is enclosed with this letter.

The District's Board Policy ("BP") 5145.12 entitled "Search and Seizure" states:

In an effort to keep the schools free of dangerous contraband, the district may use specially trained nonaggressive dogs to sniff out and alert staff to the presence of substances prohibited by law or Board policy.

The dogs may sniff the air around lockers, desks, or vehicles on district property or at district-sponsored events. Dogs shall not sniff within the close proximity of students or other persons and may not sniff any personal items on those persons without their consent.

Further, District Administrative Regulation ("AR") 5145.12 comports with the legal requirements for permissible uses of detection dogs. AR 5145.12 states, in relevant part:

Contraband-detection dogs shall not be used in rooms occupied by persons except for demonstration purposes, with the handler present. When used for demonstration purposes, the dog shall be separated from the students and not allowed to directly sniff any individual. Prior to conducting an inspection, students shall be asked to leave the room that will be subject to the canine sniff.

Contraband detection dogs shall not be used in classrooms or other district facilities when the rooms are occupied, except for demonstration purposes with the handler present. When used for demonstration purposes, the dog shall be separated from the students and not allowed to sniff any individual.

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Prior to conducting an inspection, students shall be asked to leave the room that will be subject to the canine sniff. No student shall be forced to leave personal items behind for inspection, unless school officials have reasonable suspicion to search the item.

Only the dog's official handler shall determine what constitutes an alert by the dog. If the dog alerts on a particular item or place, the student having the use of that item or place, or responsibility for it, shall be called to witness the search. If a dog alerts on a locked vehicle, the student who brought the vehicle onto district property shall be asked to unlock it for inspection.

As noted above, the requirement that the student be present for any search of his/her personal property subsequent to a positive response by the detection dog strikes the appropriate balance between the student's privacy rights and the District's interest in locating contraband on campus. If you have any questions regarding the District's Board Policies on the use of detection dogs, please do not hesitate to contact your school principal.

In closing, I consider the matter of school safety everyone's responsibility, and I ask for your support in reporting any unsafe condition or suspicious activity to your child's principal or to me. Always call 9-1-1 if an immediate emergency exists. Together, we can create a strong and effective network to ensure the safety of the District's students and staff. As always, I welcome your comments and would be delighted to discuss any ideas or concerns you may have regarding the matter of school safety.

Sincerely,



Edward A. Zuniga, Ed. D.
Superintendent