

Riley v. California (2014)

Supreme Court Cases Every Teen Should Know



Can Your Cell Phone Testify Against You?

Since *Tinker*, the nine justices on the nation's highest court have ruled on several cases that involve teens. Here are five of the most important cases—and why they matter to you.

In 2009, 19-year-old David Riley was pulled over by police in San Diego, California, because his car registration had expired. During the stop, police found two loaded guns. They also searched Riley's smartphone, where they found photos and videos that linked him to a local gang. The police arrested him and seized his phone. Later, they found information on the phone that tied Riley to a shooting. He was convicted of attempted murder and sentenced to 15 years to life in prison.

Riley's lawyers **appealed** his conviction. They claimed that because police hadn't obtained Riley's permission or a **warrant** before searching his phone, they had violated the Fourth Amendment, which prohibits "unreasonable searches and seizures."

The Supreme Court agreed. In a 9-to-0 ruling this summer, the Court overturned Riley's conviction.

Chief Justice John G. Roberts acknowledged that the ruling will make it harder for police to collect evidence. Cell phones "can provide valuable incriminating information about dangerous criminals," he wrote. But, he emphasized, "privacy comes at a cost."

**JS
CONTEST**

**What cause would you stand up for?
What steps would you take to get involved?**

Send us your three- to five-paragraph response. Five winners will each receive a First Amendment T-shirt signed by Mary Beth Tinker, an armband, and a \$25 gift card!

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Can Schools Require Drug Tests?



Board of Education v. Earls (2002)

In 1998, 16-year-old Lindsay Earls was a model student. She was a member of the National Honor Society, the marching band, and the academic team. But at Tecumseh High School in Oklahoma, every student who participates in extracurricular activities has to agree to be tested for illegal drug use.

Lindsay didn't think that was fair. She reluctantly agreed to be tested so she could continue taking part in school activities. (She passed.) But the teen decided to sue the school district, claiming that its drug-testing policy violated the Fourth Amendment, which prohibits "unreasonable searches and seizures."

In a 5-to-4 ruling, the Court sided with the school district. It said that "a student's privacy interest is limited in a public school environment, where the state is responsible for maintaining discipline, health, and safety." Drug tests, said the Court, are "a reasonable means of furthering the school district's important interest in preventing and deterring drug use."

The ruling expanded on an earlier decision that allowed schools to test student athletes for drugs. Today, middle schools in at least nine states conduct random drug tests.

Is Group Prayer Allowed in Public Schools?



Santa Fe Independent School District v. Jane Doe (2000)

For years, every football game at Santa Fe High School in Texas started with a student-led prayer over the public-address system. But that tradition ended in 1995 after two families sued the school district. They claimed that the prayer violated the First Amendment, which prohibits the establishment of a national religion—often referred to as the separation of church and state.

The Supreme Court agreed. In a 6-to-3 ruling, the justices said that the prayer was a school-sponsored activity and that students were therefore being forced to participate in a religious ceremony.

"The Constitution demands that schools not force on students the difficult choice between whether to attend these games or to risk facing a personally offensive religious ritual," the Court said.

However, the justices also said that "nothing in the Constitution . . . prohibits any public school student from voluntarily praying" on school grounds.

Today, the ruling is generally understood to mean that public school students can pray together as long as their teachers, coaches, or other school officials aren't involved.

Can Schools Censor Student Newspapers?



Hazelwood School District v. Kuhlmeier (1988)

The First Amendment protects the right to freedom of the press. But if you write an article for your school newspaper about a controversial issue, it could get cut.

That's what happened in 1983 to Cathy Kuhlmeier, Leslie Smart, and Leanne Tippett—juniors at Hazelwood East High School in Missouri. When their principal refused to publish articles in the school newspaper about teen pregnancy and divorce, the girls sued. They claimed that their First Amendment right to freedom of speech had been violated.

In 1988, the case reached the Supreme Court, where the justices ruled 5-to-3 against the teens. They said that a school newspaper isn't a public forum where anyone can voice an opinion but a supervised learning experience that the school can control.

"Educators do not offend the First Amendment by exercising editorial control over the style and content of student speech," the Court said, "so long as their actions are reasonably related to legitimate [educational] concerns."

Today, the ruling is often used to justify censorship of yearbooks, graduation speeches, and school plays.

Can Schools Search Your Belongings?



New Jersey v. T.L.O. (1985)

In 1980, a teacher at Piscataway High School in New Jersey caught a 14-year-old freshman smoking in the bathroom. The girl, whose initials are T.L.O., was sent to the principal's office. When school officials searched her bag, they found marijuana.

T.L.O. was arrested and convicted of selling drugs. Her lawyers appealed the conviction, claiming that her Fourth Amendment right to privacy had been violated. They argued that school officials should have obtained T.L.O.'s permission or a warrant before searching her belongings.

Five years later, the case reached the Supreme Court. In a 6-to-3 ruling, the justices sided with the school district. The Court said that schools have the right to search students' possessions, including backpacks and lockers, if there is "reasonable suspicion" that a school rule or a law has been broken.

According to the Court, schools must balance kids' "legitimate expectations of privacy" with the "equally legitimate need to maintain an environment in which learning can take place."