# Random Drug Testing In Schools

### Student athletes and members of non-athletic extracurricular groups can be tested for drug use as a condition of participation, according to the Supreme Court.

For generations, drug use by school age children and teens has been a concern of parents, educators and law enforcement officials. Their efforts to curb illegal drugs by students – with education programs and selective or [random drug testing](http://www.realoccupational.com/Drug-Testing/random-drug-testing) programs – are believed to have been partially effective. Data cited by the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), a department of the U.S. National Institutes of Health, shows that drug use dropped between 2001 and 2007 by 24 percent among students in grades 8, 10 and 12 (the grades that are measured from year to year).

Still, about half of all high school seniors report at least one incidence of illegal drug use, and 18 percent say they have used marijuana in the previous month. Further, the illegal use of prescription drugs such as painkillers (e.g., Vicodin and Oxycontin) is reported by about ten percent of 12th graders.

To minimize the number of students who are involved in drugs, schools began testing some of them for drugs in the past 15 years. Tests are either administered to students participating in extracurricular activities (sports, music, yearbook, etc.) or for reasonable cause or suspicion of use, such as when a student commits a crime on campus or behaves erratically in ways that break school rules. In private schools, drug tests can be administered as a prerequisite to admissions and randomly among the student body.

The U.S. Supreme Court has weighed in on student [drug testing](http://www.realoccupational.com/Drug-Testing/about-drug-testing) because the practice presents privacy concerns, particularly in a public education. The Court ruled that participation in extracurricular activities is voluntary, therefore it does not violate the Constitution’s prohibitions (Fourth Amendment) against unreasonable search and seizure. Private schools, like private clubs, can set their own rules on this matter.

How are school drug tests effective – if at all? The NIDA believes that in the short-term even a single incidence of use can result in unnecessarily risky behavior and impaired behavior in sports and academics. Overdosing in a single incidence is possible as well. Long-term, illicit substance use can affect an academic career, lead to antisocial behavior, health problems and strained family relationships. Ultimately, prolonged drug use by the young can lead to an early-life addiction.

Tests can be administered to find drugs in urine, sweat, spit, blood or hair. Tests are adapted to the drugs of concern, as drug ingestion behaviors tend to cluster within communities: One school may have a problem with anabolic steroid use, while heroin or crystal methamphetamines may be the scourge elsewhere. Some tests (particularly hair drug tests) can be designed to find multiple substances.

The extent to which students are identified and subjected to drug testing is determined somewhat by state law. Schools that are considering instituting such a policy should engage their lawyers in identifying any restrictions their particular states impose on testing.

"Random Drug Testing In Schools." *DNA Testing*. N.p., n.d. Web. 05 Sept. 2013.