

1. Mark your confusion.
2. Show evidence of a close reading.
3. Write a 1+ page reflection.

Edison High School Students Raise Privacy Concerns about Restroom Guidelines

Students are urged to log their bathroom passes to help administration locate them during emergencies, the Edison High principal says

Source: Alexcia Negrete, OCRegister.com, October 15, 2024

New instructions for how Edison High School students must document when they're leaving the classroom have students worried that the school is tracking how often and for how long they visit the restroom, arguing it's an invasion of their privacy.

Instituted this school year, officials at the Huntington Beach, California high school asked students to scan a QR code posted in classrooms if they are leaving for various reasons, including to visit the nurse, the library, a wellness space or the restroom. Students were asked to limit their time out of the classroom to seven minutes, and they should scan the same QR code upon returning.

Principal Daniel Morris said it's not a strict policy but rather guidelines that students are asked to follow. Not all teachers are requesting students to abide by the instructions.

Students were suggested to limit themselves to only three bathroom passes per day. Still, the new guidelines have left several students confused and concerned about their privacy.

Edison students are behind an online petition that argues monitoring how often a student uses the restroom — the app students are asked to use to scan in and out of the class would record the number of times and duration they visit the bathroom — violates the Fourth Amendment. The new guidelines also do not accommodate students who experience menstrual cycles, the petition adds.

The out-of-classroom guidelines were introduced to students earlier this month with a slideshow presentation. The main point of the passes, Morris said, is to know where students are in case of an emergency like a fire or school shooting. According to Education Week, there have been 30 school shootings in 2024, including two in California.

"We understand kids' situations, and in 99% of those cases, we're aware of the students that need extra visits," Morris said.

Morris also noted that there is an issue of fire alarms going off from students smoking in the restrooms. Keeping track of the number of times a student leaves the classroom, including visiting the bathroom, Morris said, helps the administration determine if there needs to be a discussion with a student or provide them with extra support.

But the student who created the online petition said the passes won't prevent the issue of students smoking in the bathroom. The student is not being named because they fear retaliation from the school for speaking out about the new guidelines.

Students are worried, they said, that they may get detention if they have to use the restroom frequently. And it causes confusion when not every teacher enforces those guidelines, the student said.

"I've been talking with other students, and they said they have to change their pads and tampons every couple of hours because they're scared of toxic shock syndrome," the Edison High student said. "I think it's really restrictive for students who are at school longer than eight hours."

Morris said students would not be suspended or punished simply for using the bathroom frequently. It's more of a method, he said, to check on students and make sure they are alright. Administrators don't check the restroom logs frequently, he added.

The reasoning behind the guidelines — and ensuing confusion — is a good example of why parents, students and administrators should be in discussion with one another, said William Jeynes, who teaches education courses like Cultural and Linguistic Diversity in Schools at Cal State Long Beach.

"I think there needs to be a balance," Jeynes said. "When I was young — I'll admit — I'd cut class in the bathroom for a long time, but now issues are getting more severe, and I think that schools need to think through these, but I would also favor parents, school officials and students expressing their concerns."

As of Monday morning, nearly 450 people had signed the petition. Edison High students hope it will spark more conversations on their campus.

"I hope this is a good example of student action at school," the student who created the petition said. "I hope the petition will make a difference, and I can bring it up with the school to change something."

Possible Response Questions

- What are your thoughts about this policy of tracking bathroom use in schools? Explain.
- Did something in the article surprise you? Discuss.
- Pick a word/line/passage from the article and respond to it.
- Discuss a "move" made by the writer in this piece that you think is good/interesting. Explain.