

New Jersey v. T.L.O. / Setting the Stage: Bell-Ringer Activity

As you walk into class, you observe this conversation between your teacher and one of your classmates:

Teacher: You smell like cigarette smoke. Have you been smoking?

Student: Me? No way. I don't smoke.

Teacher: I don't believe you. Let me have your backpack. I'm going to call security and have them check it for cigarettes.

Student: You're kidding me, right? I didn't do anything wrong. Plus, they can't search me without a warrant.

At this point, a security guard enters the room and approaches the student.

Guard: Come with me and bring your backpack. We're going to search it.

Questions to Consider

1. What do you think about the event that just occurred? Was the student treated fairly?
2. The student claimed that security cannot conduct a search without a warrant. Do you think this is true? Why or why not?
3. Do you think the rules that police must follow regarding searches apply to school officials too? Should the same rules apply? Why or why not?