



We Were Wondering... How Does Drug Testing Work At Prep?

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Drug testing at Jackson Prep has been going on for years, but does everyone know how the selection and the process of testing work? Are the tests used more for the scare factor than to catch people?

For some students, there seems to be a shroud of mystery around whether or not it is completely random selection. There are a lot of rumors about drug testing, some true and some not so much. Whether guilty or not, drug testing makes many people nervous. This article will hopefully set some fears to rest and resolve many of the rumors.

As most people know, the majority of the people chosen to be tested are randomly selected. The school does not conduct this roulette-like process, but rather the private drug testing company with which the school has contracted. Every eligible student's name is in the company's database and a program randomly selects a number of students.

Another possibility for being selected is detailed in Appendix C of the student handbook, and is affectionately known as the "Reasonable-Cause Clause." This clause gives the school the full right to select a student for testing based on a "change in behavior or performance, chronic tardi-

ness, excessive detentions, or conduct on or off campus that reflects poorly on the reputation of the school."

Anything seriously out of the ordinary could serve as a reason to test a student. School policy states that if the student

Random-selection tests give Prep students another incentive to avoid drug abuse

exhibits behavioral change, chronic tardiness, receives excessive detentions or if there is a change in the student's conduct off school campus, the student may be selected. Students' names are submitted individually and confidentially.

When a student is selected for Reasonable Cause testing, the school chooses not to tell the student that they were individually selected, rather than randomly selected. The students have no way of knowing the reason they were chosen, whether random or not. This can be distressing for students who are selected consecutively and never fail a drug test. Some students may want to know the reason they might be suspected of taking drugs.

Coach Gary Noble, junior high assistant principal and the head of drug testing at Prep,

says that testing "is meant to be proactive, not necessarily to catch students but to give students a good excuse to say no to drugs."

Coach Noble's wish for drug testing is to allow students to tell someone, perhaps at a party, that they cannot do drugs because they might get tested.

The tests themselves vary in procedure. Sometimes hair is taken, and sometimes a urine sample is taken. A hair sample can go back ninety days while a urine sample can only go back a few weeks. Hair samples can detect a multitude of drugs, a list of which can be found with a quick Google search. The frequency of testing also varies. The school can decide to do a test on any random school day, and no exact pattern is set. This additional randomness keeps students from knowing the possible testing days and attempting to avoid them.

On a test day, a few students from each grade are selected at random and taken from their first period class to Lindsay Hall. Each student is called in by grade, each one takes ten to fifteen minutes on average while a representative from the forensic laboratory conducting the drug test cuts five different locks of the students hair (in this case OMEGA Forensic Laboratories performed the test).

Then the student is to be returned to class, although, for some students that class is now second period and not first. In the past, student sources say students were given a choice, to give a hair or a urine sample, but students tested most recently have stated that they were not given a choice. So now students are asking why the change and why now.

When one of the students who participated in the previous drug testing was asked how they felt about being tested they responded in saying they felt like it was a waste of time, and wished the testing could be done during activity period and homeroom instead of during class time. Other students share this concern, but some are still hung up on the ques-

"Reasonable-Cause Clause" Lets School Address Concerns

tion "Was my selection truly random?"

Another student, who asked that their name be withheld, said, "My opinion on drug testing is that students are drug tested way too often. Drug testing should be a once a year type of thing, because the students are paranoid every month

about being drug tested, even if they have not done any drugs. I think drug testing distracts students from their school work and is all around unnecessary. Parents can drug test their children if they are suspicious, but I think the school administration should have a little bit of faith in the student body and should focus on educating us to their fullest extent."

Students can be tested more than once no matter the results of the previous test, and can receive a follow-up test if a student fails their previous one. Refusal to take the drug test can result in school dismissal. However, if a student tests positive, their parents are notified through a Medical Review Officer before the results are sent to a school representative.

The penalty for a student's first positive test is that the school may require drug assessment, counseling, and retesting, the costs of which will be paid by the parents or legal guardians of the student. The penalty for the student's second positive test is expulsion from school. It is the hope of the school, though, that drug testing and, in extreme cases, the consequences of an initial positive test will keep students from reaching this point.

If there's a question you'd like to see addressed in an upcoming "We Were Wondering..." feature, send an e-mail to sentry@jacksonprep.net or talk to an editor.