The right to privacy is not mentioned in the Constitution, but the Supreme Court has said that several of the amendments create this right. One of the amendments is the Fourth Amendment, which stops the police and other government agents from searching us or our property without “probable cause” to believe that we have committed a crime. Other amendments protect our freedom to make certain decisions about our bodies and our private lives without interference from the government - which includes the public schools.

You've all heard cops on TV or in the movies say, "you have the right to remain silent..." Well, that's exactly what you should do if the police ask you questions. Remember anything you say can be used against you. Just give the police your name and address and say you want to speak to your parents and a lawyer. As soon as you do that, the police must stop questioning you.

The police aren't allowed to search you unless they have a warrant signed by a judge or unless they are arresting you. However, if they believe that you have a weapon, they can frisk you, and if they feel a weapon, they can then search you. If the cops ask to search you or your car, don't resist the search, but let them know that you don't consent to it.

You have the right to remain silent if you're questioned by a school official. Usually there is no problem with answering a few questions to clear something up. But if you think that a teacher suspects you of having committed a crime, don't explain, don't lie and don't confess, because anything you say could be used against you. Ask to see your parents or a lawyer.

We spend a big part of our life in school, so let's make a difference. Join the student government! Attend school meetings! Petition your school administration! Talk about your rights with your friends! Get involved!
The Supreme Court ruled in 1985 in New Jersey v. T.L.O. that school officials, unlike police, may search students without a warrant when they have “reasonable grounds for suspecting that the search will turn up evidence that the student has violated...either the law or rules of the school.” But school officials may not search you unless they have a good reason to believe that you in particular — not just “someone” — broke a law or a school rule. So, if a teacher thinks she saw you selling drugs to another student, she can ask you to empty your pockets and can search your backpack. But just because they think some students have drugs doesn't give them the authority to search all students.

And no matter what, the search must be conducted in a "reasonable" way, based on your age and what they’re looking for. Strip searching is illegal in many states, and where it is allowed, there has to be a solid reason to suspect a particular student of having committed a really serious crime.

In some states, courts have ruled that a student’s locker is school property, so the school can search it. But in other states, school officials must have “reasonable suspicion” that you are hiding something illegal before they can search your locker. Your local ACLU can fill you in on your state laws. But here’s a word to the wise: don’t keep anything in your locker that you wouldn’t want other people to see.

Some REALLY private matters - like birth control and abortion rights - vary from state to state. And they're worth fighting for!