

NAFCS issues new metal detector wands

New policy for handheld devices passed by the school board that will be used as a tool to enhance school safety



Photo illustration by Lexi Sapp.

Abby Brown
News Reporter
Aurora Robinson
News Editor

Following recent targeted violence within school districts across the nation, multiple educational establishments have begun work to buckle down on safety policies, meeting the demands of a heavily-concerned population.

In response to recent change in guidelines within Indiana school districts, the New Albany-Floyd County School Corporation has made the decision to introduce the use of handheld metal detectors into its schools.

“The reason the wands were issued was because of the shooting in Noblesville, Indiana, where the teacher tackled the student that shot a co-student, and then the teacher got shot. That was the governor’s response to school safety in Indiana by saying, ‘We’re going to give metal detectors to every school that wants them,’” said Floyd County sheriff Frank Loop.

The new policy 8401 for the handheld metal detectors was passed unanimously by the school board at a meeting on Nov. 12. There will be one device issued per every 250 students enrolled in a school. However, there are still a few aspects of the policy that are being adjusted.

“We are still in the planning stages on what it specifically will look like. The policy has been written, but we will need to work out the finer details in the weeks to come,” said principal

Rob Willman.

To create the policy, NAFCS looked into various sample policies, mixing aspects of two together to create one they believed had potential to be the best fit for our district.

“We got sample policies from two different sources. One of them was the Indiana School Board Association who gave us a policy, and also a particular firm that does school law, they also gave us a sample policy. We sort of took the best parts from both policies and presented it. Before we presented it, we obviously got reviews by the council to see that it meets the code, and make sure that it has everything in it that we need,” said assistant superintendent Bill Briscoe.

The general guidelines on how the searches will be conducted have been laid out by the policy. Students will be searched based off of any form of suspicion, or they will be randomly chosen to be scanned in school.

“The metal detectors will be used if there is a suspicion of a student having a weapon at school. They will also be used for random searches of students. Students will be randomly selected and brought to a secure place to be wanded and have their belongings searched. There will be at least two adults in the room anytime a student is searched,” said assistant principal Joe Voelker.

With students being searched randomly in the school, they do not possess the right to decline a search. There are public laws concerning safety that override

a student's rights in a school facility.

"This is the authorities giving it to the administrator in our law to say that, in a school, we are going to allow more intrusion into the privacy of a student inside of a school, for the sake of safety to protect the school by the administration," said Floyd County prosecuting attorney Keith Henderson.

Administrators said they believe searches in school will not invade a student's privacy in any way, although some disagree.

"I personally do not, but I see how people think that it will. It is difficult to balance the safety of the school against one's individual right to privacy. In Indiana, students can have their belongings searched if there is even a very small suspicion of doubt, or if it is part of a random process," said Voelker.

Along with concerns of invasion of privacy, several board members presented the question of how these random searches will truly remain random. Several, in this case, concerned about possible bias for the student selection for these random searches.

“Everybody wants a safe school, and they want to do everything that they can, but they have to balance that with the school environment.”

Frank Loop
sheriff

"We'll obviously keep records, making sure it's not discriminatory. We definitely wouldn't want to target a specific race or sex or those types of things," said superintendent Brad Snyder.

However, due to the policy being within a school facility,

those requested for a search must cooperate, or there will be consequences for the disobedient student.

"Since it is a part of the school and it is part of a policy, that student is going to have to comply, or the result would be that there's going to be a disciplinary action. Maybe ultimately you are not allowed to be in the building or go to school here," said Henderson.

The handheld metal detectors are being issued to help create a safer school environment. There are measures that can be taken to ensure school safety, but they could possibly decrease feelings of comfort within the facility.

"Everybody wants a safe school, and they want to do everything that they can, but they have to balance that with the school environment. So we can go ahead and make this building like my jail, that nobody gets in, nobody gets out, unless we push a button and let them in or out,

or we can make it an inviting community building where we want a learning environment. So that's where the balance is," said Loop.

As far as the long-term effects of the policies are concerned, there may still be changes made to the decided process. It is believed that this policy is a good starting point, but edits and additions will likely be made in order to make it a better fit for our school environment.

"A good policy is not a policy that we create and never change; a good policy is a policy that we go back and make sure that it is still effective, and that it is still doing good things," said Joy Lohmeyer, president of the New Albany-Floyd County Education Association.

However, to school and community officials this new policy is seen as a helpful deterrent and an extra precaution added to ensure the safety of students, faculty, and staff, and to prevent possible harm from coming their way during the school day.

"I think that it's just another tool, and of course we want to prevent school violence, and we want to make sure we have the right environment that allows students and staff to be able to tell us if they know something, or if they have heard something, because that's how we are going to prevent the issue from happening to begin with," said Loop.

To add onto the importance of trying these handheld metal detectors, authorities and administrators agree that a very important aspect of school safety is the faculty, staff, and students' awareness and ability to report wrong or suspicious behavior.

"Our number two line of defense is our students' eyeballs," said school resource officer Robbie Woodruff. "Without you guys in there, reporting suspicious behavior, we wouldn't be able to do as good of a job. We have faculty and students that work very well together to report suspicious activity. That's what helps us to maintain a safe environment."

How do you feel about the policy being passed?



senior
Nicholas Brock

“Personally, I believe it's a waste of time and money. And easily abused for practical jokes.”



junior
Holly O'Donald

“I think this could be an effective deterrent; however, I don't think it is a “be all, end all” solution.”



sophomore
Rylee Perkins

“I don't think it's a bad idea because there could be an instance when a student brings something in.”



freshman
Cameron Baumgart

“It's not the products themselves that's the problem, it's the education and the awareness.”



senior
Jesse Timmonds

“It is a good idea for multiple reasons being the illegal and at times dangerous items being brought in.”



junior
Deseray Kessinger

“I disagree with the decision to get metal detectors because I feel as if it is a waste of time and money.”



sophomore
Gillian Mings

“I think the idea of it is good but realistically I don't think it will be taken seriously.”



freshman
Brandon Gibson

“I feel like it is a good idea but I feel like they won't be used as much as intended.”