

# SEARCH OUR MINDS, NOT OUR BAGS

In December 2019, Holyoke High School announced a new policy requiring school administrators to conduct regular random searches of students' belongings.

## WE TOOK ACTION AND WE WON!

### 1. ORGANIZED 150+ people

to attend and SPEAK OUT at SIX forums for community, students & staff



"Speaking as a student who has been searched... [school administrators] are not disrespectful. But when you come to school, you come here for a safe space. You don't want to come here every day feeling like it's a jail."

— Prince Diaz, 11th grade Ethnic Studies student

### 2. EDUCATED students about the policy

many didn't even know about it!



"If we want students to learn and be safe in classrooms, the last thing you want to do is take them out of class [to search them] so they can't learn."

— 9th grade Student, HHS

### 3. REVIEWED the evidence

Holyoke High was not the first school to propose or implement a search policy and lots of smart people have already studied the impact of these policies.



"This policy makes me hate school and myself because I feel like a target at school."

— Destiny Santiago, 11th grade Pa'lante Peer Leader

### 4. CONDUCTED our own research

including 15 interviews and a student survey



"Hearing that a search policy is coming makes me fear that it's going in the wrong direction. I don't want to feel like I work in a prison."

— Teacher, Holyoke High

## Here's what we found\*:

### Random searches increase

School disorder  
Students' stress  
Antisocial behavior  
Frustration and anger

- There is **ZERO correlation** between random searches and school violence prevention
- Majority POC schools are far more likely to have increased strict security measures, even after controlling for school crime, neighborhood crime and school disorder

### Random searches worsen

Academic performance  
Student behavior  
Relationships between students and administration

- When LAUSD implemented a similar policy, **zero guns were found**. Less than 1% of items confiscated were weapons (which included butter knives, art supplies, and defensive spray)

HOLYOKE HIGH SCHOOL

WHEN WE FIGHT, WE WIN!

In March 2020, after our extensive student-led advocacy, the principal announced that the policy would not move forward!

"This sets a precedent that students have power, we have voice, and we can accomplish absolutely anything!"

— Salomé Moreno, 11th grade Pa'lante Peer Leader



PA'LANTE  
Restorative Justice

Pa'lante is a youth-led transformative justice program at Holyoke High School working to build youth power and dismantle the school to prison pipeline. **Ethnic Studies** is a program of study that uses an Anti-racist and Community Responsive approach for reading the world. **The Student Equity Advisory Board** supports the superintendent to move the district towards its equity goals.

\*For more info, full citations & article links, visit [palanteholyoke.org/searchmindsnotbags](http://palanteholyoke.org/searchmindsnotbags)