



Dennis-Yarmouth Regional High School Police Services Unit

A Joint Unit of the Yarmouth Police & Dennis Police Departments



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Locker Room Theft

**By Nicholas R. Pasquarosa, Jr.
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Theft is still the most preventable problem at D-Y or any high school anywhere. Nearly all thefts are crimes of opportunity. On only two occasions has anyone broken into anything to steal something and in both of those cases the items stolen were two pairs of gym shorts and an old pair of sneakers. If you ask anyone who knows, they will tell you that a school is a microcosm of the community it serves. Theft inside the schools is strikingly similar to those occurring in our neighborhoods. About once a month one of the police agencies in the mid-Cape area is publishing advisories to citizens to lock their homes and cars. The advisories are normally published after a rash of car breaks into unlocked vehicles that contained a variety of expensive electronic items such as GPS devices, cell phone and MP3 players or iPods. In school the dynamic is the same, students typically leave expensive gear unsecured in common areas such as locker rooms, cafeterias and classrooms. We meet with other school officials and SROs with some regularity. This problem is by no means unique to our schools. In fact it would appear to be a pandemic.

Theft is something regularly addressed with students by teachers, coaches and SROs. The message is universal – secure your property. There are posters at the entrances of the locker rooms reminding students to lock up their stuff and at the beginning of the year the SRO visited with each physical education class and made a presentation on locker room theft and how to prevent it. Athletic coaches brought similar messages to their teams.

It is however a human condition not restricted to teenagers that, *“it won’t happen to me.”* Instead of spending about \$6 on a combination or padlock to protect their \$200 cell phone and \$300 iPod Classic we have a lot of young people relying on trust in their fellow student, or slight of hand, burying their gear at the bottom of their backpack, perhaps stuffed into a dirty sock and then left out on the bench, three feet from a newly renovated locker, for the eighty-five minutes they are away in class. We can assure you that this is a totally ineffective crime prevention measure. Ask yourself: if you were a criminal would you touch a dirty sock for a \$500 score? They will and they do.

How do we put a prevent this?

- Do not bring valuable items to school.
 - Students *and staff* are discouraged from bringing items of real or sentimental value to school on page 67 of the [Parent and Student Handbook](#).
- Properly secure items you plan on leaving out of your control for *any* period of time.
 - Lock it up!
 - Do not share your locker with anyone
 - Do not share your key or combination with anyone
- Report theft promptly.
 - Some theft reports are referred to the [online incident reporting system](#).
 - The online report can be filed from any computer with internet access. A kiosk set up in the assistant principals' office suite at D-Y High School to accommodate timely reporting.

All thefts are investigated and violators are prosecuted. Unfortunately, the theft of unsecured property leaves little in the way of clues to follow because there are generally no witnesses and no crime scene to process. Further, many thefts go unreported or are reported in an untimely fashion. That puts us back into the prevention arena as the best avenue to deal with the problem.

In the old days the theft of two or three dollars in lunch money was not much more than an annoyance and the school could normally spot the victim a hot lunch to get them through the day. Today things are different; the theft of someone's new iPhone is a day wrecker, no doubt about it.

Prevention is the key.