

From the Pittsfield Public Schools Concerning the Selective Service 1.8.20

Recently some of our students have expressed concern over being drafted or conscripted into the United States Armed Forces after possibly hearing misinformation that “the draft” was imminent due to recent events between the United States and Iran. Much inaccurate information is being shared via social media, so we wanted to share how the draft actually works--and how you can better help the young person you love deal with the stress and anxiety the times may be creating in them. Anything in italics is directly from the Selective Service section of the United States Government website: <https://www.usa.gov/selective-service>.

As I write this, the Selective Service website is not fully functional. It can be found at <https://www.sss.gov/>.

There is some confusion about the differences between registering for the draft and the draft itself.

According to the United States Selective Service: *“A draft is the mandatory enrollment of individuals into the armed forces. The United States military has been all-volunteer since 1973. But an Act of Congress could still reinstate the draft in case of a national emergency. The Selective Service System is the agency that registers men and is responsible for running a draft.”*

Please note that in spite of several conflicts between now and 1973, the draft has not been utilized since 1973, toward the end of the Vietnam War. Our country is well-served by brave women and men who volunteer to put themselves in harm’s way both here and around the world to protect people, property, and ideals. Also note that the decision about whether or not a draft is to occur requires an act of Congress that is then signed into law by the President for the Selective Service Administration to be able to call people involuntarily to military service.

The Selective Service is a national database of those who are eligible to be drafted into the military should circumstances require it: *“Almost all men age 18-25 who are U.S. citizens or are immigrants living in the U.S. are required to be registered with Selective Service. U.S. law calls for citizens to register within 30 days of turning 18 and immigrants to register within 30 days of arriving in the U.S. Men in the U.S. on student, visitor, or diplomatic visas and women are not required to register.”*

Male students who are 18 or older must register for the Selective Service. Females may serve in nearly all areas and jobs within the U.S. Armed Forces, but are not currently

required to register with the Selective Service. **Please remind students that Selective Service registration is not being drafted.** It is a database from which a draft could potentially occur. The primary enforcement tool used by the U.S. Government to ensure registration is the inability to secure federally backed student loans for those pursuing higher education who fail to register. The potential penalties for failing to register include jail time and/or a fine. Students who are completing a FAFSA for student loan applications will be asked if they have registered and this could be a source of questions for them.

The following article from the newspaper *USA Today* may prove of value to you as we work to discuss the potential for a draft with the young person or people in your life: <https://www.usatoday.com/story/life/parenting/2020/01/06/military-draft-how-answer-your-kids-questions-draft/2823826001/>. If you wish to find the article, the title of the story is “Will there be a draft? How to answer your kids' questions about a military draft.”

Please be aware that our response to these events and this anxiety is based on our regular practices of working to strike a balance between helping students understand information that is “out there” and striving to reduce anxiety by not dwelling on things that we may not have control over. We are working to practice age and developmentally appropriate ways to work with students in Pre-K through grade 12 who may be experiencing worry due to rumors of war.

Please also be aware that while we respect students' rights to protest, we demand respect among our students, staff, and others for differing ideals, ideas, and viewpoints. If students wish to participate in protests during school hours, they will do so only with parental permission to be dismissed from school. We see our students' primary job to work to become better educated, more discerning, and to continue to build the tools that allow them to be productive adults and neighbors.

During the school day, the focus will be on maintaining a safe, stable learning environment. Though the world can often be unpredictable, we will work to provide a consistent and predictable school experience. As always, we have counseling staff available to meet with students experiencing anxiety or concerns as needed. Staff and parents can contact the counseling staff at any time to request that someone be seen, express a concern or ask for assistance in speaking with the student themselves.

