

Community Relations

Law Enforcement Officials

Schools are responsible for students during school hours. This responsibility includes protecting each student's constitutional rights, assuring due process in questioning and arrest, protecting students from any form of illegal coercion and keeping students safe from physical and emotional harm. Because of the many support services that local law enforcement agencies provide to the schools, staff, and students, the State Board of Education supports the best possible relationship with those agencies consistent with the system's responsibilities to protect legal rights of staff and students.

This policy is intended to balance the needs of school and police officials. The reduction of ambiguity and confusion in how these officials interact will provide an optimal environment for education while ensuring that the public safety needs of the school and community are adequately met. Priority shall be given to law enforcement's involvement in threat assessments and in the planning and implementation of school district emergency plans, security procedures, intervention and crisis response.

Law enforcement officials are viewed as key community stakeholders in developing and implementing a comprehensive emergency readiness plan for the district's schools.

Interview of Students

Police interviews generally will not take place on school grounds. However, if the police do indicate that an interview on school grounds is necessary, school authorities may cooperate. When the interview involves a juvenile, a parent must be present. The exceptions to this rule are (a) if the student is being interviewed as a victim and/or (b) if there is an overriding immediate public safety concern. If a student under the age of 16 is being interviewed by the police and the parent/guardian cannot be present, a member of the school staff should be present.

When police are investigating possible criminal acts which occurred, or may have occurred, on school property, or while under the jurisdiction of the school district, they may question students at school when the following procedures are observed:

1. Students will be questioned as confidentially and inconspicuously as possible.
2. An attempt will be made to notify the student's parents so that they may be present during the questioning. The school Principal, or his/her designee, will be present. The administrator shall maintain a written record of all such interviews conducted.
3. Preferably, the officer doing the questioning will wear civilian clothes.

When investigating a possible criminal violation occurring off school grounds or not part of a school program, police will be encouraged to question students in their homes; however, they may be permitted to question students in the schools when the procedures outlined in 1-3 above are observed. Police will make every attempt to minimize distractions or disruption of school routines during the performance of their duties.

Community Relations

Relations with Law Enforcement Agencies (continued)

Arrest of Students

The decision to call police and request an arrest is within the discretion of the building administrator. The Principal may request the arrest of a student or there are times in which the police may request to pick up a student due to a warrant being issued for his/her arrest. If the school Principal agrees to assist in the arrest of a student, the student should be escorted from class by school personnel and remain in a secured office until the police arrive. The arrested student will be removed from the school in a way that minimizes embarrassment to the student and any disruption of the school routine.

Weapons

In cases where a student is suspected of carrying a dangerous weapon and there is a safety issue inherent in the search process, the student should be secured in a private area and the police should be contacted to conduct the search.

If a search is conducted by a school official and a weapon is found, weapons that are illegal should be turned over to the police immediately by the school official. Illegal weapons include knives with over a four-inch blade, dirk knives, switchblade knives, martial arts weapons and firearms. Ammunition should also be immediately turned over to the police. Weapons that are not illegal but are a violation of school policy may be retained by the Principal.

Designation of Authority

The Superintendent is authorized to develop procedures regarding this policy, including a process to ensure that appropriate staff has been informed, and to establish lines of communication with local law enforcement agencies to effect necessary cooperation toward ensuring the security of the school facilities, and the safety of students and staff.

(cf. 5145.12 Search/Seizure)

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes
 10-221 Boards of Education to prescribe rules
 53a-185 Loitering in or about school grounds: Class C Misdemeanor
 54-76j Disposition upon adjudication as youthful offender

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STONINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Stonington, Connecticut