

October 6, 2009

Dear Parents,

It has come to our attention there is confusion in the parent community regarding what constitutes a "weapon." Our student handbooks are vague in this area and will be corrected for the next school year. Normally we do not send a letter to families in the fall, but this issue is serious enough to constitute such a notification.

On the reverse side of this letter are definitions of "weapons" taken from the model discipline policy the Board of Education will be addressing in October. In addition to the definitions, know that the age of the student is not relevant when dealing with weapons on school grounds. Connecticut state and federal laws are very strict when dealing with students who bring weapons to school. School administrators must recommend expulsion to the Superintendent in every case. As a side note, just possession of the weapon is enough, mal-intent is not necessary. **In all possession instances, the Superintendent must recommend expulsion to the Board of Education Expulsion Committee and the Expulsion Committee, if they find the student did possess such a weapon, must expel the student.** The expulsion period is also mandatory – one calendar year. Students are provided alternative education while expelled. The Committee may allow early re-entry on a probationary status.

Although Coventry continues to be such a safe place to rear children, it is necessary that parents are aware of the seriousness of laws regarding weapons. Please know, the staff members in our schools are so appreciative of your support and collaboration when dealing with the protection of all of Coventry's students. We wish you and your student(s) a successful, productive, and safe 2009-10 school year!

Sincerely,

Donna Bernard, Ph.D.
Superintendent of Schools

DB/km

- **Dangerous Instrument** means any instrument, article or substance which, under the circumstances in which it is used or attempted or threatened to be used, is capable of causing death or serious physical injury, and includes a "vehicle" or a dog that has been commanded to attack.
- **Deadly Weapon** means any weapon, whether loaded or unloaded, from which a shot may be discharged, or a switchblade knife, gravity knife, billy, blackjack, bludgeon or metal knuckles. A deadly weapon includes a weapon from which a shot may be discharged which weapon is designed for violence and is capable of inflicting death or serious bodily harm and may include pellet guns and/or air soft pistols.
- **Electronic Defense Weapon** means a weapon which by electronic impulse or current is capable of immobilizing a person temporarily, but is not capable of inflicting death or serious physical injury, including a stun gun or other conductive energy device.
- **Weapon** means any BB gun, any blackjack, any metal or brass knuckles, any police baton or nightstick, any dirk knife or switch knife, any knife having an automatic spring release devise by which a blade is released from the handle, having a blade of over one and one-half inches in length, any stiletto, any knife the edged portion of the blade of which is four inches and over in length, any martial arts weapon or electronic defense weapon, or any other dangerous or deadly weapon or instrument, unless permitted by law under section 29-38 of the Connecticut General Statutes.
- **Martial Arts Weapon** means a nunchaku, kama, kasari-fundo, octagon sai, tonfa or chinese star.
- **Firearm**, as defined in 18 U.S.C § 921, means (a) any weapon that will, is designed to, or may be readily converted to expel a projectile by the action of an explosive, (b) the frame or receiver of any such weapon, (c) a firearm muffler or silencer, or (d) any destructive device. As used in this definition, a "**destructive device**" includes any explosive, incendiary, or poisonous gas device, including a bomb, a grenade, a rocket having a propellant charge of more than four ounces, a missile having an explosive or incendiary charge of more than one-quarter ounce, a mine, or any other similar device; or any weapon that will, or may be readily converted to, expel a projectile by explosive or other propellant, and which has a barrel with a bore of more than ½" in diameter. The term "destructive device" also includes any combination of parts either designed or intended for use in converting any device into any destructive device or any device from which a destructive device may be readily assembled.