

COLCHESTER SCHOOL DISTRICT

POLICY: WEAPONS

DATE ADOPTED: May 20, 2025

PURPOSE

It is the intent of the Colchester School District to comply with the federal Gun-Free Schools Act of 1994 and state laws, requiring school districts to take appropriate disciplinary action including possible expulsion or long-term suspension of students who bring to school or possess at school a weapon. It is further the intent of the Board to expand the category of prohibited weapons pursuant to state law, and as defined by this policy. Additionally, it is the intent of the Board to maintain a student discipline system consistent with the requirements of the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and the Vermont State Board of Education rules.

I. CONDUCT PROHIBITED

It is a violation of this policy for any student at any time to possess or bring a weapon: to school; on school grounds (including parking lots and cars in parking lots); on school buses or other vehicles used to transport students to/from school and school activities; and/or at school functions, whether held on school property or at another school sanctioned site. The School Board shall take appropriate disciplinary action against any student who violates this policy in accordance with the provisions of this policy.

II. DEFINITIONS

- A. For the purposes of this policy, the terms “firearm,” “weapon,” “school,” and “expelled” shall be defined consistent with the definitions required by state and federal law.
- B. “Weapon” shall mean any device, instrument, material or substance, animate or inanimate, that is used for, or is readily capable of, causing death or serious bodily injury. This includes items such as knives, “brass knuckles”, switch blade/butterfly/and other types of knives, chains, clubs, and stars, poison or other toxic materials, etc. as well as items usually designed or used for another purpose, but that are capable of inflicting serious bodily harm, if used in an aggressive, belligerent or threatening manner, such as scissors, compasses, or a two by four.
- C. “Weapon” shall also mean a hoax device, so designed, assembled, fabricated or manufactured as to convey the physical appearance of a firearm, explosive or incendiary bomb, or of any of the devices that is used for, or is readily capable of, causing death or serious bodily injury.

III. IMPLEMENTATION

Last Reviewed: September 19, 2017
Date Warned: September 1, 2017
First Reading: December 3, 2024
Second Reading: May 20, 2025

A. Confiscation of the Weapon

Administrators or other delegated school officials will exercise judgment and caution, using law enforcement if necessary, to confiscate any article identified as a weapon under this policy. Any such actions should be taken so as to minimize the risk of further endangering self or others.

B. Notification of Law Enforcement

Where a student brings to school or possesses at school a weapon, school officials shall immediately refer the student to a law enforcement agency.

C. Disciplinary Proceedings

1. Any student who brings a weapon to or possesses a weapon at school may be brought by the Superintendent to the School Board for an expulsion hearing. The Superintendent, in consultation with the School Board Chair, will consider the following criteria in making the decision: the age of the student, previous discipline infractions, intent, impact on the school and or other students, awareness level regarding the possession of the weapon, how the weapon was found or reported, threatening behavior, disposition at the time of the incident, administrative teams overall assessment of the situation and the facts at the time.
2. A hearing conducted by the School Board under this policy shall afford due process as required by law, including but not limited to those outlined by State Board of Education rules, as applicable. An expulsion hearing conducted under this policy shall afford due process as required by law.
3. The Superintendent, with the approval of the School Board following opportunity for a hearing, may impose a long-term suspension from the school for the remainder of the school year or up to 90 school days, whichever is longer, any student who possesses at school or brings to school a weapon defined in Section II above. However, the School Board may modify the expulsion or long-term suspension on a case-by-case basis. Such modifications must be made in writing and may be granted in circumstances such as (but not limited to):
 - a. The student is unaware that they have brought a weapon to school.
 - b. The student did not intend to use the weapon to threaten or endanger others.
 - c. The student does not present an ongoing threat to others and a lengthy long-term suspension would not serve the best interests of the pupil.
 - d. The student is disabled and the misconduct is related to the disability.

IV. REPORTS TO THE SECRETARY OF EDUCATION

Annually, at a time and on a form determined by the Secretary of Education, the Superintendent shall provide the Secretary with a description of the circumstances surrounding expulsions and long-term suspensions imposed under this section, the number of students who violated this policy and the type of weapons involved.

V. ALTERNATIVE EDUCATIONAL PLACEMENT

Nothing in this policy shall prohibit the Board from providing alternative educational placement to a student, at the Board's sole discretion.

VI. NOTICE TO STUDENTS AND PARENT/GUARDIAN

The Superintendent or their designee is directed to take reasonable steps to inform students and their parent/guardian of this policy and to post notices of this policy on school property.

VII. AIDING OTHER STUDENTS

A student who in any way encourages or helps another student to bring a weapon to school or to possess a weapon at school endangers the safety of others. The District expressly prohibits any such action. No student shall knowingly or willfully cause, encourage, or aid any other student to possess, handle, or transmit any of the weapons or facsimiles of weapons listed above. A student who has been found to have violated this policy by causing, encouraging, aiding, etc. another student to violate this policy shall be dealt with in accordance with the provisions of paragraph III-C above, including being subject to expulsion or a long-term suspension.