

Van Buren County Board of Education

Monitoring: Review: Annually, in April	Descriptor Term: Interrogations and Searches	Descriptor Code: 6.303	Issued Date: 10/18/07
		Rescinds: 6.303	Issued: 12/13/01

1 INTERROGATIONS BY SCHOOL PERSONNEL

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3 School personnel have a duty to report any reasonable suspicion that a student is carrying, or has carried, a weapon or is violating, or has violated, a provision of the Tennessee Drug Control Act to the principal, the principal's designee or, if the principal and the principal's designee are unavailable and the offense was committed on school property, to the appropriate authorities.¹

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8 Students may be questioned by teachers or principals about any matter pertaining to the operation of a school and/or the enforcement of its rules. Questioning must be conducted discreetly and under circumstances which will avoid unnecessary embarrassment to the student being questioned. Any student answering falsely, evasively or refusing to answer a proper question may be subject to disciplinary action, including suspension.

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14 If a student is suspected or accused of misconduct or infraction of the student code of conduct, the principal may interrogate the student, without the presence of parent(s)/guardian(s) or legal custodians and without giving the student constitutional warnings.

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18 INTERROGATIONS BY POLICE (AT ADMINISTRATOR'S REQUEST)

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20 If the principal has requested assistance by the police department to investigate a crime involving his/her school, the police shall have permission to interrogate a student suspect in school during school hours. The principal shall first attempt to notify the parent(s)/guardian(s) or legal custodians of the student of the intended interrogation unless circumstances require otherwise. The interrogation may proceed without attendance of the parent(s)/guardian(s) or legal custodians. The principal or his/her designee shall be present during the interrogation.

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27 The use of police women or female staff members is desirable in the interrogation of female students.

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29 POLICE-INITIATED INTERROGATIONS

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31 If the police deem circumstances of sufficient urgency to interrogate students at school for unrelated crimes committed outside of school hours, the police department shall first contact the principal regarding the planned interrogation, inform him/her of the probable cause to investigate within the school. The principal shall make reasonable effort to notify the parent(s)/guardian(s) or legal custodians of the interrogation unless circumstances require otherwise. The interrogation may proceed without attendance of the parent(s)/guardian(s) or legal custodians. The principal or his/her designee shall be present during the interrogation.

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1 SEARCHES BY SCHOOL PERSONNEL

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3 Any principal, or his/her designee, having reasonable suspicion may search any student, place or thing
4 on school property or in the actual or constructive possession of any student during any organized school
5 activity off campus, including buses, vehicles of students or visitors (Notice shall be posted in the
6 school parking lot that vehicles parked on school property by students or visitors are subject to search
7 for drugs, drug paraphernalia or dangerous weapons), and containers or packages if he/she receives
8 information which would cause a reasonable belief that the search will lead to the discovery of:
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- 10 1. Evidence of any violation of the law;
- 11 2. Evidence of any violation of school rules or regulations or proper standards of student or faculty
12 conduct;
- 13 3. Any object or substance which, because of its presence, presents an immediate danger of harm
14 or illness to any person.

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16 A student using a locker that is the property of the school system does not have the right of privacy in
17 that locker or its contents. All lockers or other storage areas provided for student use on school premises
18 remain the property of the school system and are provided for the use of students subject to inspection,
19 access for maintenance and search. Notice shall be posted in each school that lockers and other storage
20 areas are school property and are subject to search.
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22 A student may be subject to physical search or a student's pocket, purse or other container may be re-
23 quired to be emptied because of the results of a locker search, or because of information received from a
24 teacher, staff member or other student if such action is reasonable to the principal. All of the following
25 standards of reasonableness shall be met:
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- 27 1. A particular student has violated policy;
- 28 2. The search could be expected to yield evidence of the violation of school policy or disclosure
29 of a dangerous weapon or drug;
- 30 3. The search is in pursuit of legitimate interests of the school in maintaining order, discipline,
31 safety, supervision and education of students;
- 32 4. The primary purpose of the search is not to collect evidence for a criminal prosecution; and
33 5. The search shall be reasonably related to the objectives of the search and not excessively
34 intrusive in light of the age and sex of the student, as well as the nature of the infraction alleged
35 to have been committed.

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37 USE OF ANIMALS

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39 When necessary, dogs or other animals trained to detect drugs or dangerous weapons may be used in con-
40 ducting searches, but the animals shall be used only to pinpoint areas which need to be searched and shall
41 not be used to search the persons of students or visitors.
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43 USE OF METAL DETECTORS

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45 In view of the escalating presence of weapons in the schools, the Board of Education authorizes the use of
46 hand-held or walk-through metal detectors to check a student's person or personal effects as follows:
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1 School officials or law enforcement officers may conduct metal detector checks of groups of individuals if
2 the checks are done in a minimally-intrusive, nondiscriminatory manner (e.g., on all students in a randomly
3 selected class; or every third individual entering an athletic event). Metal detector checks of groups of
4 individuals may not be used to single out a particular individual or category of individuals.

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6 If a school official or a law enforcement officer has reasonable suspicion to believe that a particular student
7 is in possession of an illegal or unauthorized metal-containing object or weapon, s/he may conduct a metal
8 detector check of the student's person and personal effects.

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10 A student's failure to permit a metal detector check as provided in this policy will be considered grounds
11 for disciplinary action including possible suspension.

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13 The director of schools shall develop procedures for use of metal detectors.

14 15 SEARCHES BY POLICE

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17 If public health or safety is involved, upon request of the principal who shall be present, police officers
18 may make a general search of students' lockers and desks, or students' or nonstudents' automobiles for
19 drugs, weapons or items of an illegal or prohibited nature.

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21 If the principal has received reliable information which he/she believes to be true that evidence of a
22 crime or of stolen goods, not involving school property of members of the school staff or student body,
23 is located on school property and that any search for such evidence or goods would be unrelated to
24 school discipline or to the health and safety of a student or the student body, he/she shall request police
25 assistance; and procedures to obtain and execute a search warrant shall thereafter be followed.

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27 Anything found in the course of the search conducted in accordance with this policy which is evidence
28 of a violation of the law or a violation of student conduct standards may be:

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- 31 1. Seized and admitted as evidence in any hearing, trial, suspension or dismissal proceeding. It
32 should be tagged for identification at the time it is seized and kept in a secure place by the
33 principal or the principal's designee until it is presented at the hearing. At the discretion of the
34 principal, the items seized may be returned to the parent or guardian of a student or, if it has no
35 significant value, the item may be destroyed, but only with the express written permission of the
36 director of schools.
 - 37 2. Any seized item may be turned over to any law enforcement officer. Any dangerous weapon or
38 drug as defined in TCA 49-6-4202 shall be turned over to an appropriate law enforcement official
39 after completion of an administrative proceeding at which its presence is reasonably required.
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41 Whenever the possibility of uncovering evidence of a criminal nature exists, the principal or his/her
42 designee may request the assistance of a law enforcement officer to:

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- 45 1. Search any area of the school premises, any student or any motor vehicle on the school premises;
46 or
 - 47 2. Identify or dispose of anything found in the course of a search conducted in accordance with
48 this policy.
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The involvement of law enforcement officials is encouraged when there is reasonable cause to suspect that criminal evidence is about to be uncovered.

Legal References:

1. TCA 49-6-4202 through TCA 49-6-4212

Cross References:

- Procedural Due Process 6.302
Child Abuse and Neglect 6.409