

## **PPS Code of Student Conduct – Updates for 2017-2018**

### **Summary of Legal Changes**

- **School Visitors:** Language added to reflect prohibition on audio/video recording of school meetings that is included in Board Policy 1004 - School Visitors and its administrative regulation.
- **Audio/Video Recording on School Buses:** Based on Act 56 of 2016, Pennsylvania school districts are required to include the following notice in student handbooks according to 18 Pa.C.S.A. 5704(18): “To ensure safety, all school buses and vehicles with passenger capacity of thirty-six (36) and above shall have video cameras installed. Buses and vehicles may also be equipped with audio-recording equipment. Use of such video and audio recording equipment is authorized for school discipline and security purposes.” This is also a requirement of revised Board Policy 908 – Transportation.
- **Weapons:** Definition of “Weapon” revised in Code of Student Conduct for consistency with Board Policy 213 – Weapons, revised in January 2017. Mace or pepper spray shall only be considered a weapon when it is discharged or threatened to be discharged. Based upon the decision in the case S.A. v. Pittsburgh Public Schools, No. SA-16-569 (Pa. Com. Pl. Ct. August 2016), schools shall consult with the Office of Student Support Services on any item considered to be a “tool, instrument or implement capable of inflicting serious bodily injury” prior to charging possession of a weapon.
- **Cell Phone Policy/Rules:** According to Board Policy 216 – Electronic Devices, cell phones are not permitted to be turned on, visible or used during the school day. Language in Code of Conduct is consistent with Board Policy and now also includes reference to schools that may have more strict procedures in place. Provision around misuse of electronic devices also added.
- **Hazing:** Add numbered violation regarding Hazing consistent with Act 31 of 2016, which amended the School Code to include stricter anti-hazing provisions.
- **Informal Suspensions:** All student suspensions are formal in nature and require the school to fulfill attendant procedural rights of the student and parent. Schools are directed not to use informal suspensions (i.e., sending a student home early, assigning the student a “safety day,” or assigning additional out-of-school days for failure to return with a parent/guardian or mental health evaluation).
- **Undocumented Students/Parents and Immigration Status:** The right to a positive and inclusive learning environment that feels safe, respectful and welcoming for all students extends to students who may be undocumented or have undocumented family members. Schools may not inquire as to the immigration status. The District maintains a protocol for handling inquiries from governmental agencies regarding student and parent/guardian immigration status in a manner that supports a safe and supportive school environment for all students.
- **Truancy and Compulsory School Attendance:** Revised in accordance with Act 138 of 2016, which amended Pennsylvania Public School Code provisions on school attendance and truancy. Revisions include new definitions, the requirement for a School Attendance Improvement Conference (SAIC), revised penalties, and other requirements of the new law.