

# LEGAL MAILBAG – NOVEMBER 20, 2025



By Attorney Thomas B. Mooney, Neag School of Education, University of Connecticut

*The “Legal Mailbag Question of the Week” is a regular feature of the CAS Weekly NewsBlast. We invite readers to submit short, law-related questions of practical concern to school administrators. Each week, we will select a question and publish an answer. While these answers cannot be considered formal legal advice, they may be of help to you and your colleagues. We may edit your questions, and we will not identify the authors. Please submit your questions to: [legalmailbag@casciac.org](mailto:legalmailbag@casciac.org).*

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Dear Legal Mailbag,

As is happening all over right now, students have been making “darts,” which are “Post-it”® notes made into paper planes with a straightened paperclip piece out of the end. It’s a trend on TikTok. The challenge is for students to throw the darts and try to stick them into the ceiling.

One of my teachers told me that at her son's school they decided to treat these darts as weapons and are suspending students who have them in their possession. Is that allowed?! It seems like we should have standards on what classifies as a weapon. School administrators can’t just make things up, right?

Signed,  
*Defining Terms*

Dear Defining:

You make a good point, but school administrators are otherwise able to prohibit students from making and/or possessing the “darts” that you describe because they can be dangerous and can damage school property.

To start with the definitional issue, one would not typically consider such a “dart” to be a weapon. Most student discipline policies define “weapon” as an object that is intended to cause harm, such as the following:

**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 device 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.

Notably, this definition includes three categories of objects, possession of which on school property or at a school-sponsored activity triggers mandatory expulsion under Conn. Gen. Stat. § 10-233d(a)(2), namely a “deadly weapon,” a “martial arts weapon,” or a “dangerous instrument.” Clearly, a “dart” as you describe is neither a “deadly weapon” nor a “martial arts weapon,” which the Penal Code defines respectively as follows:

“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.

“Martial arts weapon” means a nunchaku, kama, kasari-fundo, octagon sai, tonfa or chinese star.

Conn. Gen. Stat. § 53a-3. However, Legal Mailbag notes that the Penal Code defines “dangerous instrument” as follows:

(7) “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,

*Id.* As one reads, whether an object is a “dangerous instrument” that would trigger mandatory expulsion depends on the circumstances – a baseball bat used in athletics is equipment, but a baseball bat swung at others in a fight would be a “dangerous instrument.” Given that the point at the end of a “dart” could take out someone’s eye, Legal Mailbag wonders whether students throwing “darts” at each other could be considered use of a “dangerous instrument” that would trigger expulsion proceedings.

Here, such speculation would not typically be necessary because, as you report, the trend is not to use “darts” to harm others, but rather to attempt to stick the “dart” in the ceiling. Rather than trying to squeeze the possession or use of a “dart” into the definition of “weapon” or “dangerous instrument,” Legal Mailbag suggests that school administrators simply exercise their broad supervisory power to prohibit possession or use of “darts” in school or at school activities and further provide that such possession or use will result in disciplinary action.

To be sure, it may be difficult or impossible promptly to amend the board student discipline policy in your district to prohibit the possession or use of “darts” in school because amending board policy typically requires multiple steps. However, Legal Mailbag believes that it is not necessary to amend board policy to deal with this trend. In supervising students, administrators are free to establish school rules that reasonably relate to legitimate concerns. Prohibiting the construction of “darts” and/or their possession or use meets that standard because throwing such objects can certainly damage school property and could cause an injury. Accordingly, Legal Mailbag suggests that school administrators simply announce this new prohibition and enforce it.