

Student Publications

Student publications shall exhibit high standards of student journalism and accurately and fairly reflect high expectations of those persons associated with the district. A primary function of student publications shall be to provide students with worthwhile learning opportunities to develop and enhance communication skills within the bounds of legal parameters and community standards.

Student journalists shall have the right to report upon important events in the school, community, nation and world. However, students must observe the legal responsibilities and limits imposed upon all news media, as well as the limits of district policy. Student publications shall provide an opportunity for free, responsible expression of student views and opinions within the framework of district policies. Student publications subject to review by district administrators include those which are:

1. School-sponsored (supported by district funds, staff, space or equipment);
2. Associated with a specific course, cocurricular activity or the district's overall established curriculum;
3. Not by previous policy or approved practice open for indiscriminate, unsupervised use by the general public or students individually or as a group; or
4. Associated with activities which students, parents and members of the public might reasonably perceive to have the sanction or approval of the district.

Student publications shall include newspapers, newsletters, yearbooks, pamphlets, advertisements, magazines, brochures, handbills, posters, signs, announcements, mechanical recordings, videotapes or other similar printed or electronic materials. However, this policy is not intended to apply to routine classroom or homework assignments, class projects or other similar materials produced by students which teachers may wish to copy and distribute to other students in the same class for discussion or review.

No student publication shall be distributed on school property without prior approval from the principal of the school at which such distribution is to take place. "Distribution" shall mean the general dissemination of any printed materials or general viewing or performance of pictures, motion pictures, videotapes or sound recordings of any kind to more than five students.

The production of student publications shall generally be subject to the direct supervision of faculty or staff. All such material shall be initially reviewed in a timely manner by the supervising staff advisor, and then submitted for additional review to the building principal at the school from which the material originates, prior to printing and distribution of the material. The building principal may consult with the staff advisor initially responsible for reviewing the material during the subsequent administrative review process. The administrative review shall be conducted in a timely manner.

Materials may be modified or excluded from distribution by either the faculty or staff advisor, or by the building principal, for legitimate educational concerns, including:

1. Whether the material may be libelous, profane, obscene or defamatory;
2. Whether the material may be malicious or creates feelings of contempt towards others, or is demeaning or critical of another person's race, religion, sex, disability, language or ethnic group;
3. Whether the material advocates or implicitly condones violence or the possession of weapons by individuals on school property or at school-sponsored events;
4. Whether the material advocates or implicitly condones the damage or destruction of school or personal property;
5. Whether the material advocates or implicitly condones the use of alcohol, tobacco or unlawful drugs on school grounds or at school-sponsored events;
6. Whether the material discloses confidential information or adversely affects a student's or staff member's rights to privacy;
7. Whether the material is inappropriate based on the age, grade level and/or maturity of the reading audience;
8. Whether the material is poorly written, factually inaccurate, inadequately researched, misleading, imbalanced, biased or prejudiced;
9. Whether there is an opportunity for an individual or organization to make a response, whenever that specific individual or group may be identified even though the material does not use or give names;
10. Whether the material advocates or implicitly condones breaking school rules, district policies or the commission of any unlawful acts; or
11. Whether the material is generally disruptive to the school environment, or whether school officials can reasonably forecast the publication may cause substantial disruption or material interference with school activities.

Advertisements that may appear in any school-sponsored publication are also subject to the criteria listed above, and shall also be subject to administrative review and approval.

If a student or other person disagrees with the modification or rejection of a submitted publication, he/she shall submit a written request for reconsideration to the principal of the building where the material is being proposed for distribution. The request shall include the specific reason(s) why the modification or rejection is not appropriate. The building principal may consult with staff regarding the request, and otherwise shall review the matter and render a decision within one school day of having received the request.

If the student or other person is still not satisfied, he/she may submit a written request to appeal the principal's decision to the superintendent. The request shall include the specific reason(s) why the principal's decision is not appropriate. The superintendent may seek legal counsel in responding to any such request, and otherwise shall review the matter and render a written decision within two school days of having received the request. The decision of the superintendent shall be final.