

Community Relations

Distribution of Materials by Students

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School Newspaper

School newspapers in whole or in part are produced through the authorized use of Board of Education resources and are recognized as official school newspapers. Such school newspapers are an extension of the curriculum and are intended to promote student writing and journalism, provide a forum for information generated by and opinions of students, and serve as a medium to report school activities. Every school wishing to publish a school newspaper must identify a faculty member from that school who would be willing to act as advisor.

Rights of Student Journalists:

Student journalists have the right to:

1. print factual articles dealing with topics of interest to the student writers;
2. print on the editorial page, with the exception of material not permitted in official school publications, opinions on any topic, whether school related or not, which students feel is of interest to themselves or to the readers.

Responsibilities of Student Journalists:

1. Submit to the faculty advisor assigned to this duty copy that conforms to good journalistic writing style.
2. Rewrite stories, as required by the school newspaper advisor, to improve journalistic structure, sentence structure, grammar, spelling, and punctuation.
3. Check facts and verify quotes.
4. When writing editorials on controversial issues, provide space for rebuttals in the same issue.
5. Subject to the specific limitations in these guidelines, students are responsible for determining the contents of official school newspapers.

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Material not permitted in the school newspaper includes:

1. material which is libelous or which violates the rights of privacy;
2. profanity - defined as language which would not be used in The Hartford Courant or the New York Times;
3. material which demeans or discriminates against an individual or group of individuals based upon, but not limited to, race, religion, gender, disability, ethnic or national origin, age, or sexual orientation ;
4. ads for cigarettes, liquor, or any other product not conducive to good health;
5. any material, the publication of which would cause substantial disruption of the school. Substantial disruption is the threat of physical violence in the school or nearby community and/or anything that would compromise the safe and orderly environment of the school;
6. endorsements of political candidates or ballot measures, whether such endorsements are made via editorials, articles, letters, photographs, or graphics. The newspaper may, however, publish 'fact sheets' on candidates and ballot measures, provided such articles do not endorse any person or position, and equal space is given to all candidates for an office or to both sides of a ballot measure.

Determination of Appropriateness

The newspaper advisor shall review each article prior to publication to determine if it satisfies conditions of these guidelines. The school principal or designee may also review copy prior to publication. Such copy, however, must be returned to the student editors within 72 hours after it is submitted for review. No copy may be censored except for reasons specifically listed in these guidelines. Nothing in these guidelines is intended to allow censoring of any article merely because it is controversial or because it criticizes a particular school, a school procedure, or the school system itself.

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Certain materials related to the school, the school system, community, or local recreational activities may be distributed by students with the permission of the Superintendent or those appointed by the Superintendent to determine the appropriateness of the materials.

No materials may be distributed which relate to any religious belief or activity, or promote private gain, or political position, party or candidate.

Resolution of Differences

In the event of disagreement as to whether an article should be printed, each school shall have a publications board which shall meet within 48 hours to submit its opinion. The publication board shall consist of the principal or designee; the journalism advisor; the editor-in-chief; representatives from student government; the PTO; the advisory council; and other members as mutually agreed upon.

If the publications board cannot solve the dispute, then an appeal shall be made to the Superintendent, who shall seek advice from the board's legal counsel in making a decision. The Superintendent shall act on the appeal within 48 hours. There will be no appeal from the Superintendent's decision.

The distribution of anything other than printed materials specified in this section requires the approval of the principal.