Policy 3240 – Student Publications

Journalistic experience in a school setting should be calculated to develop the background of skills and understanding which will equip a student for the responsibilities of the free press in our society. Students must recognize, however, that a school-sponsored newspaper or student publication is unique and different from other ~~newspapers~~ publications in at least four ways.

1. It is an instructive tool in addition to a means of student self-expression;
2. It is read not just by the intended audience of fellow students, but by parents and many citizens outside the school;
3. It is partially supported by tax funds; and
4. It is an influence on the public relations of the entire District since its content is read by many not simply as expressions of individual students, but as expressions representative of the entire student body and approved by the administration.

The concept of "freedom of the press" under the First Amendment has application with regard to ~~school-sponsored~~ student publications. However, the United States Supreme Court has established that school districts may exercise editorial control over the style and content of ~~school-sponsored newspapers~~ student publications without violating the First Amendment. All ~~school-sponsored~~ student publications shall comply with the ethics and rules of responsible journalism. Text that is libelous, obscene, vulgar, lewd, invades the privacy of others, conflicts with the basic educational mission of the school, is socially inappropriate, is inappropriate due to the maturity of the students, or is materially disruptive to the educational process will not be tolerated.

The District recognizes that there are valid and necessary reasons to exercise such prepublication editorial control and to impose reasonable restrictions on student speech in ~~school-sponsored~~ District approved publications. Thus, the following guidelines apply to all ~~school-sponsored~~ District approved student publications.

1. ~~School-sponsored~~ District approved publications are those publications, including, but not limited to, school newspapers, magazines, yearbooks, and athletic programs; whether they are printed or online, which may fairly be characterized as part of the District's curriculum, whether or not they occur in a traditional classroom setting. Generally they include student publications which are supervised or advised by a faculty member and are designed to impart particular knowledge or skills to student participants and audiences. However, they also may include publications which students, parents, and members of the public reasonably perceive to be sponsored or approved by the District. The author's name will accompany personal opinions and editorial statements. An opportunity for the expression of differing opinions from those

published/produced will be provided within the same media.

2. The District will not restrict student freedom of expression when such expression is within the rules of responsible journalism and is consistent with the four factors outlined below. The principal of each school shall meet with the publication advisor, student editors, and student writers to establish guidelines ~~for achieving a maximum~~ that promote the greatest possible freedom of student ~~freedom of~~ expression subject to the limitations set forth in this policy.

3. All publications must be reviewed and approved by the ~~building principal~~ advisor prior to distribution. The building principal shall have the authority to determine the appropriateness of any ~~particular~~ item for publication. In exercising such authority, material will not be considered suitable for publication that is:

    A. Ungrammatical;
    B. Inadequately researched;
    C. Obscene;
    D. Defamatory;
    E. Advocates prejudice based on race, religion, sexual orientation, or gender identity or expression;
    F. Invades the privacy rights of others;
    G. Is unsuitable for the audiences for which the publication is intended;
    H. Contributes to the disruption or interruption of the educational process or the operation of the school; or
    I. Otherwise is contrary to District policy or applicable federal or State law.

The school principal may also exclude material that may serve to associate the District with any position other than neutrality on matters of political controversy.

4. The principal of each secondary school shall have the authority to determine whether advertising will be accepted for inclusion in school-sponsored student publications. The District has an important interest in avoiding the impression that it has endorsed a viewpoint at variance with its educational mission. Consequently, if advertising is accepted, each school principal shall have authority to exclude certain categories of advertising. For example, drug, drug paraphernalia, alcoholic beverage advertisements, or any other advertisements that may be viewed as encouraging action that might endanger the health and welfare of students may be excluded. Similarly, advertisements may be excluded if they are:

    A. Factually inaccurate;
    B. Defamatory;
    C. Obscene;

D. Advocate prejudice based on race, religion, sexual orientation, or gender identity or expression;
E. Contain either explicit or implicit sexual content or overtones; ~~or a~~
F. Are of poor production quality.

The school principal may also exclude advertising that may serve to associate the District with any position other than neutrality on matters of political controversy.

5. In the event the building principal determines that material is not suitable for publication, students may appeal such decision to the Superintendent or his or her designee. The decision of the Superintendent or his or her designee will be final.

6. Copies of each issue of the student publication shall be sent to the Superintendent and each member of the Board of Trustees.

Legal Reference:

Legal References	Description
484 U.S. 260 (1988).	Hazelwood School District et al. v. Kuhlmeier et al.

Adopted:
Revised:
Reviewed: