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MSBA/MASA Model Policy 505

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505 DISTRIBUTION OF NON SCHOOL-SPONSORED MATERIALS ON SCHOOL PREMISES BY STUDENTS AND EMPLOYEES

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to protect the exercise of students' and employees' free speech rights, taking into consideration the educational objectives and responsibilities of the school district.

II. GENERAL STATEMENT OF POLICY

- A. The school district recognizes that students and employees have the right to express themselves on school property. This protection includes the right to distribute, at a reasonable time and place and in a reasonable manner, non school sponsored material.
- B. To protect First Amendment rights, while at the same time preserving the integrity of the educational objectives and responsibilities of the school district, the school board adopts the following regulations and procedures regarding distribution of nonschool-sponsored material on school property and at school activities.

III. DEFINITIONS

- A. "Distribute" or "Distribution" means circulation or dissemination of material by means of handing out or offering materials or copies of materials ("materials"), selling or offering materials for sale, accepting donations for materials, posting or displaying materials, placing materials in internal staff or student mailboxes, or staff, student or parent emails.
- B. "Non-school-sponsored material" or "unofficial material" includes all materials or objects intended for distribution, except school newspapers, employee newsletters, literary magazines, yearbooks and other publications funded and/or sponsored or authorized by the school. Examples of nonschool-sponsored materials include but are not limited to leaflets, brochures, buttons, badges, flyers, petitions, posters, and underground newspapers whether written by students or employees or others, and tangible objects and websites, blogs, wikis, podcasts or other online resources.
- C. "Obscene to minors" means:

1. The average person, applying contemporary community standards, would find that the material, taken as a whole, appeals to the prurient interest of minors of the age to whom distribution is requested;
2. The material depicts or describes, in a manner that is patently offensive to prevailing standards in the adult community concerning how such conduct should be presented to minors of the age to whom distribution is requested, sexual conduct such as intimate sexual acts (normal or perverted), masturbation, excretory functions, or lewd exhibition of the genitals; and
3. The material, taken as a whole, lacks serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value for minors.

D. “Minor” means any person under the age of eighteen (18).

E. “Material and substantial disruption” of a normal school activity means:

1. Where the normal school activity is an educational program of the district for which student attendance is compulsory, “material and substantial disruption” is defined as any disruption, which interferes with or impedes the implementation of that program.
2. Where the normal school activity is voluntary in nature (including, without limitation, school athletic events, school plays and concerts, and lunch periods) “material and substantial disruption” is defined as student rioting, unlawful seizures of property, conduct inappropriate to the event, participation in a school boycott, demonstration, sit-in, stand-in, walk-out, or other related forms of activity.
3. Where the normal activity uses the district’s electronic technologies, “material and substantial disruption” is defined as deliberately attempting to disrupt the computer network and/or destroying data by spreading computer viruses or malware.
4. In order for expression to be considered disruptive, there must exist specific facts upon which the likelihood of disruption can be forecast, including past experience in the school, current events influencing student activities and behavior, and instances of actual or threatened disruption relating to the written material in question.

F. “School activities” means any activity sponsored by the school including, but not limited to, classroom work, library activities, physical education classes, official assemblies and other similar gatherings, school athletic contests, fine arts concerts, presentations and productions, in-school lunch periods, school and teacher websites, blogs, wikis, podcasts or school-sponsored online resources.

G. “Libelous” is a false and unprivileged statement about a specific individual that tends to harm the individual’s reputation or to lower that individual in the esteem of the community.

IV. GUIDELINES

- A. Students and employees of the school district have the right to distribute, at reasonable times and places as set forth in this policy, and in a reasonable manner, non-school-sponsored material.
- B. Requests for distribution of nonschool-sponsored material will be reviewed by the administration on a case-by-case basis. However, distribution of the materials listed below is always prohibited. Material is prohibited that:
 - 1. is obscene to minors;
 - 2. is libelous or slanderous;
 - 3. is pervasively indecent or vulgar or contains any indecent or vulgar language or representations, with a determination made as to the appropriateness of the material for the age level of students to which it is intended;
 - 4. advertises or promotes any product or service not permitted to minors by law;
 - 5. advocates violence or other illegal conduct;
 - 6. constitutes insulting or fighting words, the very expression of which injures or harasses other people (e.g., threats of violence, defamation of character or of a person's race, religious or ethnic origin);
 - 7. presents a clear and present likelihood that, either because of its content or the manner of distribution, it will cause a material and substantial disruption of the proper and orderly operation and discipline of the school or school activities, will cause the commission of unlawful acts or the violation of lawful school regulations.
- C. Distribution by students and employees of nonschool-sponsored materials on school district property are subject to reasonable time, place, and manner restrictions set forth below. In making decisions regarding the time, place, and manner of distribution, the administration will consider factors including, but not limited to, the following:
 - 1. whether the material is educationally related;
 - 2. the extent to which distribution is likely to cause disruption of or interference with the school district's educational objectives, discipline, or school activities;
 - 3. whether the materials can be distributed from the office or other isolated location, or via digital or electronic manner, so as to minimize disruption of traffic flow in hallways;
 - 4. the quantity or size of materials to be distributed;
 - 5. whether distribution would require assignment of school district staff, use of school district equipment, or other resources;
 - 6. whether distribution would require that nonschool persons be present on the school grounds;

7. whether the materials are a solicitation for goods or services not requested by the recipients.
8. whether or not the distribution of the materials takes advantage of the district's communication system for personal gain;
9. unless otherwise provided by law, announcements and informational materials regarding school or youth-related activities, organizations and agencies are clearly known to be non-sectarian devoted to community interests or child welfare, non-discriminatory and totally committed to equal opportunity, and generally recognized as owning their existence to serving the broad public and general interests.

V. TIME, PLACE, AND MANNER OF DISTRIBUTION

- A. No non-school-sponsored material shall be distributed during and at the place of a normal school activity if it is reasonably likely to cause a material and substantial disruption of that activity.
- B. Distribution of non-school-sponsored material is prohibited when it blocks the safe flow of traffic within corridors and entrance ways of the district site and parking lots. Distribution shall not impede entrance to or exit from district premises in any way.
- C. No one shall coerce a student or staff member to accept any material.
- D. The time, place, and manner of distribution will be solely within the discretion of the administration, consistent with the provisions of this policy.
- E. Distribution that results in a "spamming" or disruption of staff, student or parent email services is prohibited.

VI. PROCEDURES

- A. All requests for distribution of materials in or through the schools by non-school persons or organizations must be submitted for approval at least five days in advance of desired distribution date, together with the following information:
 1. Name and phone number of the person submitting the request.
 2. Date(s) and time(s) of day of requested distribution.
 3. To whom the distribution is intended (i.e. students, grade level, or school, etc.)
- B. All requests for materials distribution are to be screened individually as follows:
 1. All requests for district-wide distribution must be approved by the Superintendent's Office.
 2. All requests for distribution for an individual school or classroom must be approved by the building principal and by the Superintendent's Office.

3. In any instance of serious question as to appropriateness of distribution, final determination is to be made by the Superintendent of Schools.
4. At all levels, a continuing log of distribution approvals and denials is to be maintained.
5. Distribution of materials may be limited to the district's digital and electronic management system accessible by parents, students and district employees, or as copies made available at school and district offices, or for students and parents to take home.
6. Employee mailboxes and the School District's internal mail systems are reserved for school district related business and the facilitation of internal communication of school related matters to school district employees.
7. Employee mailboxes and the District's internal electronic communication and mail systems shall be open to the exclusive representatives of the School District employees on matters within the scope of the official representational duties of school district employees.

- C. The front of all non-school sponsored materials must include a prominent disclaimer indicating, "The activities, viewpoints, or events promoted in these materials are not sponsored, endorsed, approved or disapproved by the South St. Paul Public Schools."
- D. In the event permission to distribute the materials is denied or limited, the persons submitting the request shall be informed of the reasons for the denial or limitation. Permission or denial does not imply approval or disapproval of its contents by the school, administration, the school board, or the individual reviewing the material submitted.
- E. Permission or denial of permission to distribute material does not imply approval or disapproval of its contents by either the school, the administration of the school, the school board, or the individual reviewing the material submitted.

VII. DISCIPLINARY ACTION

- A. Distribution by any student of nonschool-sponsored material prohibited herein or in violation of the provisions of time, place and manner of distribution as described above will be halted and disciplinary action will be taken in accordance with the school district's Student Discipline Policy.
- B. Distribution by any employee of nonschool-sponsored material prohibited herein or in violation of the provisions of time, place and manner of distribution as described above will be halted and appropriate disciplinary action will be taken, in accordance with any individual contract, collective bargaining agreement, school district policies and procedures, and/or governing statute.

VIII. NOTICE OF POLICY TO STUDENTS AND EMPLOYEES

A copy of this policy will be published in student handbooks.

IX. IMPLEMENTATION

The school district administration may develop any additional guidelines and procedures necessary to implement this policy for submission to the school board for review. Such guidelines and procedures shall be an addendum to this policy.

Legal References:

- U. S. Const., amend. I
- Hazelwood School District v. Kuhlmeier*, 484 U.S. 260, 108 S.Ct. 562, 98 L.Ed.2d 592 (1988)
- Bethel Sch. Dist. No. 403 v. Fraser*, 478 U.S. 675, 106 S.Ct. 3159, 92 L.Ed.2d 549 (1986)
- Tinker V. Des Moines Indep. Sch. Dist.*, 393 U.S. 503, 89 S.Ct. 733, 21 L.Ed.2d 731 (1969)
- Bystrom v. Fridley High School*, 822 F.2d 747 (8th Cir. 1987)
- Roark v. South Iron R-1 School District.*, 573 F.3d 556 (8th Cir. 2009)
- Victory Through Jesus Sports Ministry Foundation v. Lee's Summit R-7 School Dist.*, 640 F.3d 329 (8th Cir. 2011), cert. denied *U.S.* 132 S.Ct. 592 (2011)

Cross References:

- MSBA/MASA Model Policy 506 (Student Discipline)
- MSBA/MASA Model Policy 512 (School-Sponsored Student Publications)
- MSBA/MASA Model Policy 904 (Distribution of Materials on School District Property by Nonschool Persons)
- Appendix to District Policy 904 (Distribution Process of Materials by Nondistrict Sponsored Persons and Organizations)