

INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT 196
Rosemount-Apple Valley-Eagan, Minnesota
Educating, developing, and inspiring our students for lifelong success.

Series Number 503.10AR Adopted April 2025 Revised _____

Title School-Sponsored Student Publications

1. Purpose

The purpose of this regulation is to protect students' rights to free speech in production of school-sponsored media while at the same time balancing the school district's role in supervising student publications and the operation of public schools.

2. General Statement of Policy

- 2.1 Expressions and representations made by students in school-sponsored publications are not expressions of official school district policy. Faculty advisors shall supervise student writers to ensure compliance with the law and school district policies.
- 2.2 Students who believe their right to free expression has been unreasonably restricted in school-sponsored media may seek review of the decision by the building principal. The principal shall issue a decision no later than three (3) school days after review is requested.
 - 2.2.1 Students producing school-sponsored media shall be under the supervision of a faculty advisor and the school principal. School-sponsored media shall be subject to the guidelines set forth below.
 - 2.2.2 School-sponsored media may be distributed at reasonable times and locations.

3. Definitions

- 3.1 "Distribution" means circulation or dissemination of material.
- 3.2 "Material and substantial disruption" of a normal school activity means:
 - 3.2.1 Where the normal school activity is an educational program of the school 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.
 - 3.2.2 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.

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.
- 3.3 "Minor" means any person under the age of eighteen (18).
- 3.4 "Obscene to minors" means:
 - 3.4.1 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;

- 3.4.2 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
- 3.4.3 The material, taken as a whole, lacks serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value for minors.
- 3.5 "School activities" means any activity of students 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, band concerts, school plays and other theatrical productions, and in-school lunch periods.
- 3.6 "School-sponsored media" means material that is:
 - 3.6.1 prepared, wholly or substantially written, published, broadcast, or otherwise disseminated by a student journalist enrolled in the school district;
 - 3.6.2 distributed or generally made available to students in the school; and
 - 3.6.3 prepared by a student journalist under the supervision of a student media adviser.
 - 3.6.4 School-sponsored media does not include material prepared solely for distribution or transmission in the classroom in which the material is produced, or a yearbook.
- 3.7 "Student journalist" means a school district student in grades 6 through 12 who gathers, compiles, writes, edits, photographs, records, or otherwise prepares information for dissemination in school-sponsored media.
- 3.8 "Student media adviser" means a qualified teacher, as defined in Minnesota Statutes, section 122A.16, that the school district employs, appoints, or designates to supervise student journalists or provide instruction relating to school-sponsored media.

4. Guidelines

- 4.1 Except as provided in section 4.2 below, a student journalist has the right to exercise freedom of speech and freedom of the press in school-sponsored media regardless of whether the school-sponsored media receives financial support from the school or district, uses school equipment or facilities in its production, or is produced as part of a class or course in which the student journalist is enrolled. Freedom of speech includes freedom to express political viewpoints. Consistent with section 4.2 below, a student journalist has the right to determine the news, opinion, feature, and advertising content of school-sponsored media. The school district must not discipline a student journalist for exercising rights or freedoms under this section or the First Amendment of the United States Constitution.
- 4.2 Student expression in school-sponsored media is prohibited when the material:
 - 4.2.1 is obscene to minors;
 - 4.2.2 is defamatory;
 - 4.2.3 is profane, harassing, threatening, or intimidating;
 - 4.2.4 constitutes an unwarranted invasion of privacy;
 - 4.2.5 violates federal or state law;
 - 4.2.6 causes a material and substantial disruption of school activities;

- 4.2.7 is directed to inciting or producing imminent lawless action on school premises or the violation of lawful school policies or rules, including a policy adopted in accordance with Minnesota Statutes, section 121A.03 or 121A.031;
 - 4.2.8 advertises or promotes any product or service not permitted for minors by law;
 - 4.2.9 advocates sexual, racial, or religious harassment or violence or prejudice; or
 - 4.2.10 is distributed or displayed in violation of time, place, and manner requirements.
- 4.3 The school district must not retaliate or take adverse employment action against a student media adviser for supporting a student journalist exercising rights or freedoms under section 4.1 above or the First Amendment of the United States Constitution.
- 4.4 Notwithstanding the rights or freedoms of this regulation or the First Amendment of the United States Constitution, nothing in this section inhibits a student media adviser from teaching professional standards of English and journalism to student journalists.
- 4.5 The school district may not authorize any prior restraint of school-sponsored media except as otherwise allowed under this regulation.
- 5. **Posting**
 - 5.1 This regulation is consistent with Minnesota Statutes, section 121A.80 and is posted on the district website.

References:

- U. S. Const., amend. I
- Morse v. Frederick, 551 U.S. 393 (2007)
- Hazelwood School District v. Kuhlmeier, 484 U.S. 260 (1988)
- Bystrom v. Fridley High School, I.S.D. No. 14, 822 F. 2d 747 (8th Cir. 1987)
- Minn. Stat. § 121A.03 (Model Policy)
- Minn. Stat. § 121A.031 (School Student Bullying Policy)
- Minn. Stat. § 121A.80 (Student Journalism; Student Expression)
- MSBA/MASA Model Policy 512