



Capital School District

Board of Education Policy

Section: Student
Title: Journalism Guidelines
Policy #: 700-06
Date Approved: 12/05/12
Date Revised: 10/17/12

Purpose:

To provide students with rules for journalistic rights and responsibilities.

JOURNALISM GUIDELINES

The rights and responsibilities of students regarding freedom of speech, press, and action, shall be in conformity with the safeguards established in the First Amendment of the United States Constitution and as interpreted and applied through decision of the various courts.

“Congress shall make no law ... abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press;”

Students shall be free to express views and opinions provided they do not seek to coerce others to follow their mode of expression or interfere with the free expression rights of others during school hours.

Students shall have the right to express themselves through direct and symbolic means as long as such expression:

- a. does not mock, demean, or ridicule other persons or groups. Satire will be judged according to literary and artistic standards by the faculty advisor in conjunction with building administration and English Department Chairperson.
- b. does not interfere with the scheduled activities or disrupt the educational process within the school.
- c. does not reflect obscenity, vulgarity and inflammatory statements.

Students shall have the right to publish and distribute materials as long as such action or material:

- a. does not endanger the emotional health or the physical safety of students.
- b. does not threaten to disrupt the educational process.
- c. does not reflect a libelous nature. Libel may be defined as any defamatory writing that tends (1) to degrade a man in the eyes of his neighbors or render ridiculous, or injure his property or business; (2) accuse one of a crime. Generally, a writing that accuses one of a crime is considered libelous.

- d. does not indicate a malicious statement. Malice is defined as a written or spoken statement without probable or just cause, the known and necessary consequence of which is injurious to another.
- e. does not indicate a commercial purpose.
- f. does not contain obscene and inflammatory statements. The basic guidelines for the trier of fact must be (a) whether the average person, applying contemporary community standards would find that the work, taken as a whole, appeals to the prurient interest, ... (b) whether the work depicts or describes in a patently offensive way, sexual conduct specifically defined by the applicable state law, and (c) whether the work, taken as a whole, lacks serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value.
- g. does not involve an unauthorized use of district funds and materials.

The right to publish and distribute materials shall be accompanied by the following reasonable actions:

- a. designation of the person or persons who wrote and published the materials.
- b. adherence to acceptable standards of journalism which emphasize literary value, newsworthiness and propriety. Students shall maintain the professional code of ethics as adopted by the American Society of Newspaper Editors.
- c. display and/or distribution through permission of school administrator only.
- d. acceptance of the legal consequences for students' expressions and publication. Under Delaware Law, minors can be sued and can be held to answer the consequences of their libel. Further responsibility rests with the official publisher or distributor, generally the Advisor, the Administration and the Board of Education. Therefore, faculty advisors appointed by the administration will counsel students as to literary style, format, and the suitability of materials for publication. Advisors will have the right to determine what is proper material for publication. In cases where "unofficial" publications appear within the school, or where there is a grievance involving suitability for official publications, the following procedure will be used to judiciously review such publications:

Stage I – Review Panel

The following panel will judge and evaluate "unofficial" materials that are circulated within the school and render a decision within 24 hours after such material is *charged*. A majority vote will determine the decision of the panel. The panel shall consist of:

- 1. an association representative
- 2. a principal or an associate principal
- 3. in grades 7-12 a member of the English department or in grades K-6 an English language arts or social studies teacher
- 4. a representative of the student council at the middle and high schools

All members of the panel will rotate from case to case among representatives, principals, faculty members and students.

State II – Appeal Panel

If the judgment of Stage I has to be appealed, it will be done by final authority in Stage II which must render a decision within 48 hours after Stage I decision. Majority vote determines a decision on the panel. The panel shall consist of:

1. the Assistant Superintendent
2. the building principal
3. an officer for the association
4. an officer of the student council
5. the attorney for the school district

Canons of Journalism

These goals are the basis for codes of ethics.

• **RESPONSIBILITY:** The right of a newspaper to attract and hold readers is restricted by nothing but considerations of public welfare. The use a newspaper makes of the share of public attention it gains serves to determine its sense of responsibility, which it shares with every member of its staff. A journalist who uses his power for any selfish or otherwise unworthy purpose is faithless to a high trust.

• **FREEDOM OF THE PRESS:** Freedom of the press is to be guarded as a vital right of mankind. It is the unquestionable right to discuss whatever is not explicitly forbidden by law, including the wisdom of any restrictive statute.

• **INDEPENDENCE:** Freedom from all obligations except that of fidelity to the public interest is vital.

1. Promotion of any private interest contrary to the general welfare, for whatever reason, is not compatible with honest journalism. So-called news communication from private sources should not be published without public notice of their source or else substantiation of their claims to value as news, both in form and substance.
2. Partisanship in editorial comment which knowingly departs from the truth does violence to the best spirit of American journalism; in the news columns it is subversive of a fundamental principle of the profession.

• **SINCERITY, TRUTHFULNESS, ACCURACY.** Good faith with the reader is the foundation of all journalism worthy of the name.

1. By every consideration of good faith a newspaper is constrained to be truthful. It is not to be excused for lack of thoroughness or accuracy within its control or failure to obtain command of these essential qualities.
2. Headlines should be fully warranted by the contents of the articles which they surmount.

• **IMPARTIALITY:** Sound practice makes clear distinction between news reports and expressions of opinion. News reports should be free from opinion or bias of any kind. This rule does not apply to so-called special articles unmistakably devoted to advocacy or characterized by a signature authorizing the writer's own conclusions and interpretations.

• **FAIR PLAY:** A newspaper should not publish unofficial charges affecting reputation or moral character without opportunity given to the accused to be heard; right practice demands the giving of such opportunity in all cases of serious accusation outside judicial proceedings.

1. A newspaper should not publish unofficial charges affecting reputation or moral character without opportunity given to the accused to be heard; right practice demands the giving of such opportunity in all cases of serious accusation outside judicial proceedings.
2. It is the privilege, as it is the duty, of a newspaper to make prompt and complete correction of its own serious mistakes of fact or opinion, whatever their origin.

• **DECENCY:** A newspaper cannot escape conviction of insincerity if while professing high moral purpose it supplies incentives to base conduct, such as are to be found in details of crime and vice, publication of which is not demonstrably for the general good. Lacking authority to enforce its canons the journalism here represented can but express the hope that deliberate pandering to vicious instincts will encounter effective public disapproval or yield to the influence of a preponderant professional condemnation.