

Student Publications

District Sponsored

Students' First Amendment rights to freedom of expression and equal protection of the law will be observed regarding district-sponsored student publications. The observance of these rights must be balanced against the legitimate needs of the educational process.

Some student publications, such as yearbooks and school newspapers, may be educational devices developed as part of the curriculum to benefit primarily those who compile, edit and publish them. Staff advisors will be assigned to guide students engaged in these activities. Any commercial advertisements in such publications will conform to Board policy and administrative regulation.

Students may be required to submit publications for approval prior to distribution. When approval is required, school administrators must make available to students the standards which will be used to determine granting or denying permission to publish. Such guidelines will be specific and will be directed toward ascertaining which publications will cause substantial disruption of district activities or contain libelous or obscene content.

Prior restraints will contain precise criteria which spell out what is prohibited. A definite, brief time limit will be set within which school officials must approve or disapprove distribution. To be valid, these guidelines must prescribe a procedure for appeals from students.

All Publications

It will be the responsibility of local school administrators to develop and circulate reasonable and specific regulations setting forth the time, manner and place in which distribution of student publications may occur. Students who become subject to discipline for failure to comply with distribution regulations will be granted procedural due process rights.

END OF POLICY

Legal Reference(s):
Hazelwood School District v. Kuhlmeier, 484 U.S. 260 (1988).

Student Publications

Student publications subject to review by school administrators include those which are:

1. School sponsored (supported by district funds, equipment, etc.);
2. Part of the established curriculum;
3. Of benefit primarily to those who compile, edit and publish them;
4. Not by policy or practice open for indiscriminate use by the general public or students individually or as a group; or
5. Activities which students, parents and members of the public might reasonably perceive to bear the sanction or approval of the district.

Student publications will be reviewed by staff advisors and may be reviewed by other district administrators prior to printing and distribution. Materials may be modified or removed from publications for legitimate educational concerns. Such concerns include:

1. The material is or may be defamatory;
2. The material is inappropriate based on the age, grade level and/or maturity of the reading audience;
3. The material is poorly written, inadequately researched or biased or prejudiced;
4. Whether there is an opportunity for a named individual or named individuals to make a response;
5. Whether specific individuals may be identified even though the material does not use or give names; or
6. The material is or may be otherwise generally disruptive to the school environment. Such disruption may occur, for example, if the material uses, advocates or condones the use of profane language or advocates or condones the commission of unlawful acts.

Modifications or removal of items may be appealed in writing to the superintendent. The superintendent shall schedule a meeting within three school days of receiving the written appeal. Those present at the meeting shall include the individual(s) making the appeal, the individual(s) who made the decision to modify or remove materials and the superintendent. At the superintendent's discretion, the district's legal counsel may also attend the meeting. The superintendent shall make his/her decision within three school days of the meeting. The superintendent's decision shall be final and binding on all parties.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the decision of the superintendent, he/she may appeal to the Board under established district procedures.