



## **SECTION III: INSTRUCTION**

## **POLICY 3200**

### **SCHOOL (STUDENT) PUBLICATIONS**

A school publication, in which students assist in writing and producing, is designed to serve as a vehicle for instruction, and is also a means of communication.

#### **Purpose of School Publications**

1. To exist as an instructional device for the teaching of writing and other journalistic skills;
2. To provide a forum for opinions of students and school staff; and
3. To serve the entire school system by reporting school activities.

#### **Rights of Student Journalists**

1. To print factual articles dealing with topics of interest to the student writers; and
2. To print, in an appropriate format on the editorial page, opinions on topics, whether school-related or not, which students feel are of interest to themselves or to the readers.

#### **Responsibilities of Student Journalists**

1. To submit copy that conforms to good journalistic writing style;
2. To rewrite stories, as required by the journalism advisor, to improve journalistic structure, sentence structure, grammar, spelling and punctuation;
3. To check facts and verify quotes; and
4. In the case of editorials or letters to the editor on controversial issues, to provide space for rebuttals, in the same issue if possible, but otherwise no later than the following issue.

#### **News Policy**

The primary role of the school newspaper is to present news coverage of interest to students. The newspaper should print news with absolute impartiality. There must be total separation between news and editorial opinion. News reporting must be complete, accurate and impartial. Straight news writing (factual, objective, unembellished accounts of events) should be emphasized. Feature articles and columns shall be signed by writers and shall provide an opportunity for specialized reporting.

#### **Material Not Permitted in School Publications or Media, Including BATV**

1. Material which is libelous or which violates the rights of privacy;
2. Material which is obscene, according to current standards of the community;
3. Profanity, hereby defined as language which would not be used in the major local newspapers and/or publications;
4. Material which advocates the breaking of the law;
5. Material which criticizes or demeans any race, religion, sex or ethnic group;



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6. Any material, the publication of which would cause substantial disruption of the school. Substantial disruption is hereby defined as the threat of physical violence in the school or nearby community and/or the disruption of the school's educational program; and,
7. Endorsements of political candidates or ballot measures, whether such endorsements are made via editorial, article, letter, photograph or cartoon. The newspaper may, however, publish "fact sheet" types of articles on candidates and ballot measures, provided such articles do not endorse any person or position, and provided equal space is provided to all candidates for a particular office and for both sides of a ballot measure.

#### Determination of Appropriateness

The newspaper advisor shall have the primary responsibility of reviewing each article prior to its publication to determine if it satisfies all the conditions of these guidelines. The school principal or designated representative other than the newspaper advisor may also review copy prior to its publication, if he or she so requests; however, such copy must be returned to the student editors within 24 hours after it is submitted for review. Copy should not be censored except for reasons specifically listed in these guidelines. Nothing in these guidelines is intended to allow censoring of any article merely because it is controversial or because it criticizes a school procedure.

#### Editorial Policy

Newspaper opinions are products of various forces which make up the newspaper. Whenever there is more than one editorial writer there is consultation on editorial policy. An editorial is not the voice of a single person who happens to write the editorial. The editorial staff meets regularly to discuss what the newspaper's attitude is to be concerning the news and what kinds of editorials are to be written. There always is one individual responsible for editorial policy, and that individual in a commercial newspaper is either the publisher or the editor-in-chief.

In the case of a school publication, the advisor (working with the editorial board) shall serve as a consultant on editorial policy. An editorial is an official position of the newspaper (the publisher, editorial board and the writer) and is not just the opinion of one person. Letters to the editor shall be the means for individuals to express personal opinions.

#### Resolution of Differences

In the event of disagreement, as to whether an article should be printed, the school shall have a publications (editorial) board which shall meet within 24 hours to submit its opinion. If the publications board cannot solve the dispute, then an appeal may be made to the Superintendent of Schools, who may obtain advice from the legal staff of the Board of Education in making the decision.

#### Editorial Board

1. Composition: An Editorial Board composed of administrative, faculty and student representatives shall be established to advise the newspaper and to handle matters of controversy concerning its publication. It shall consist of two high school administrators,



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three teachers including the newspaper advisor, two newspaper staff members, and a student council member who is not on the newspaper staff.

2. Functions: The Editorial Board shall screen all editorials, letters to the editor, art work and any other opinionated or controversial materials. Screening stories for misinformation, bad taste, or poor research shall be the duty of the editors and advisor. Making stylistic, grammatical, or spelling corrections shall be the duty of the copy-editors. In case a consensus of opinion of the Editorial Board does not occur, a simple majority vote will carry the decision. In case of a tie vote, the principal will be asked to cast the deciding vote.
3. Editorials: The school publication may include articles and artwork of differing opinions. The purposes of the material include: (1) to persuade readers to take action, (2) to state opinion, or (3) to add dimension to the consideration of a question.

Editorials must be accurate, informative, and in good taste. They will generally carry the burden of speaking for the newspaper, although the publication staff may wish to allow voice to dissenting points of view.

Criticism should be specific and generally on those issues related directly to the school. The publication staff may wish to comment on issues not of a school related nature when appropriate. Criticism must be accompanied by constructive suggestions for change.

Editorials should be characterized by clearness of style, moral purpose, soundness of reasoning and power to influence public opinion.

4. Letters to the Editor: A school publication may print letters to the editor which are of significance to a segment of the student population (i.e. segment is defined as more than ten students). These letters may originate within the newspaper staff or from the student body in general. These letters will be printed even if they are of a controversial nature if approved by the editorial board. The criteria will be that the letter must contain information or opinions which are important and not merely reflections of petty or personal grievances.
5. Art Work: The term art refers to non-type elements in the publication such as pictures, cartoons, and other graphic devices.

While cartoons may exaggerate situations in order to make their intended points, they should not hold up any individual or group to ridicule or embarrassments.

Art may be used to complement regular news stories, editorials or to entertain.

Source: *Broken Arrow Board of Education policy adoption, August 18, 1980.*  
*Broken Arrow Board of Education policy revised, July 13, 2009.*  
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