

## Monroe County Community School Corporation

### Student Publications, Rights and Responsibilities

6145.3

The Monroe County Community School Corporation Board of School Trustees supports student rights to freedom of expression under the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States and Article I of the State of Indiana Constitution. This support extends to official school publications, which shall be governed by the restrictions, regulations and ethics of responsible journalism, as defined by the American Society of News Editors. This code shall be applied with the clear understanding that school officials have the authority and the duty to provide for an ordered educational atmosphere free from the constant turmoil and distraction.

**I. Official School Publications**

1. Official school publications will be defined as those which are recognized and financially supported by the Monroe County School Corporation. Such publications will include but not limited to student newspapers and yearbooks. The ultimate purpose of student publications will be to serve as an opportunity to express themselves and their opinions and to provide a journalism laboratory.
2. Official student publications will reflect the policy and judgement of the student editors. This entails the obligation to be governed by the laws of libel, obscenity and defamation. Student publications will also refrain from unwarranted attacks upon individuals, faculty or students and reflect journalistic standards as adopted by the American Society of Newspaper Editors which are as follows:

**“A STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES**

Preamble: The First Amendment protecting freedom of expression from abridgment by any law, guarantees to the people through their press a constitutional right, and thereby places on newspaper people a particular responsibility.

Thus journalism demands of its practitioners not only industry and knowledge but also the pursuit of standard of integrity proportionate to the journalist's singular obligation.

To this end the American Society of Newspaper Editors sets forth this Statement of Principles as a standard encouraging the highest ethical and professional performances.

ARTICLE I – Responsibility. The primary purpose of gathering and distributing news and opinion is to serve the general welfare by informing the people and enabling them to make judgement on the issues of the time. Newspapermen and women who abuse power of their professional role for selfish motives or unworthy purposes are faithless to that public trust.

The American press was made free not just to inform or just to serve as a forum for debate but also to bring an independent scrutiny to bear on the forces of power in the society, including the conduct of official power at all levels of government.

ARTICLE II – Freedom of the Press. Freedom of the press belongs to the people. It must be defended against encroachment of assault from any quarter, public or private. Journalists must be constantly alert to see that the public's business is conducted in public. They must be vigilant against all who would exploit the press for selfish purposes.

ARTICLE III – Independence. Journalists must avoid impropriety and the appearance of impropriety as well as any conflict of interest or the appearance of conflict. They should neither accept anything nor pursue any activity that might compromise or seem to compromise their integrity.

ARTICLE IV – Truth and Accuracy. Good faith with the reader is the foundation of good journalism. Every effort must be made to assure that the news content is accurate, free from bias and in context, and that all sides are presented fairly. Editorials, analytical articles and commentary should be held to the same standards of accuracy with respect to facts as news reports.

Significant errors of fact, as well as errors of omission, should be corrected promptly and prominently.

ARTICLE V – Impartiality. To be impartial does not require the press to be unquestioning or to refrain from editorial expression. Sound practice, however, demands a clear distinction for the reader between news reports and opinion. Articles that contain opinion or personal interpretation should be clearly identified.

ARTICLE IV – Fair play. Journalists should respect the rights of people involved in the news, observe the common standards of decency and stand accountable to the public for the fairness and accuracy of their news reports.

Persons publicly accused should be given the earliest opportunity to respond.

Pledges of confidentiality to news sources must be honored at all costs, and therefore should not be given lightly. Unless there is clear and pressing need to maintain confidences, sources of information should be identified.

These principles are intended to preserve, protect and strengthen the bond of trust and respect between American journalists and the American people, a bond that is essential to sustain the grant of freedom entrusted to both by the nation's founders.”

3. In school publications, student journalists may report on and editorialize about controversial and crucial events in the school, community, nation and world.

## **II. Distribution of Publications**

The distribution of publications or materials on school property by students or other individuals will comply with the following procedures:

1. The distribution will be limited to those times, places and manner as specified by the rules and regulations published by the building principal. Rules designating times, places and manner will be established on the basis of whether or not a substantial disruption and/or a material interference with school operations would be reasonably foreseeable.

2. The following circumstances will constitute conditions under which the principal may halt the distribution of non-school-sponsored or school-sponsored material after the beginning of such sponsored distribution, if the material or publication contains:
  - a. Obscenity, according to current legal definition;
  - b. Material which is libelous, according to current legal definition;
  - c. Material for which there is a responsible foreseeability that distribution will result in a substantial disruption of or a material interference with school operations;
  - d. Material that encourages criminal acts; or
  - e. Material that advocates violent overthrow of the government.
3. In the event a principal halts the distribution of non-school or school-sponsored material, the individual desiring distribution of the material may appeal in writing to the Superintendent of Schools; such an appeal will be filled within one day. Should the individual disagree with the Superintendent's ruling, further appeal may be made to the Board of School Trustees. Any appeal will be dealt with by the Superintendent within one school day. Appeals to the Board of School Trustees will be in writing and will be scheduled for the next regular meeting of the Board.

### **III. Publications Advisor's Responsibility**

1. It will be the responsibility of the publication advisor (teacher assigned by the building principals to work with the students' newspaper and yearbook) to provide the necessary instruction as set forth by the school's curriculum and to provide guidance and counsel as required. The faculty advisor will ensure that students are aware of their responsibilities as pertaining to their rights under the First Amendment to the Constitution and freedom of the press, as well as this policy and regulation of the Monroe County Community School Corporation.
2. Should the advisor feel that a story or picture violates the provisions of Section I or Section II, paragraph 2 of this regulation, the advisor will make the decision not to publish the material in question. The student reporter or editor will have the right to appear under procedures outlined in Section IV.

### **IV. Publications Due Process Procedures**

1. In circumstances where the student editor feels that an article, drawing or photograph should not be published, the student reporter will have the right to appeal to the appropriate faculty advisor. Should the advisor agree with the student editor, the student reporter will have the right to appeal to the school's Editorial Board.

2. An editorial Board will be established for each high school as required and will be composed of the following:

Board Membership

Two High School students

One English teacher

One Social Studies teacher

One Counselor

Appropriate Publications Advisor (Ex-officio member)

Appointed By

English Dept. Chairperson

English Dept. Chairperson

Social Studies Dept. Chairperson

Dean of Students

- a. The student reporter will inform (in writing) the appropriate Publications Advisor of his/her wish to appeal to the Editorial Board. The Publications Advisor will be responsible for convening a meeting of this Board within three (3) school days.
- b. The Board will hold a hearing which will be chaired by an Editorial Board member selected by the Editorial Board itself.

Immediately following the hearing, the Editorial Board will discuss the appeal and reach a conclusion, reporting to the student in writing.

The student will then have the right to appeal to the building principal if desired.

From this point on, an appeal will follow the normal school system due process procedures to the Superintendent and finally to the Board of School Trustees. Time deadlines for action contained in Section III, paragraph 3, will be followed.

In determining whether or not the material is appropriate for a school publication, the Editorial Board will take into consideration the accepted standards of journalism and those requirements as outlined above in Sections I and II, paragraph 2, of this regulation.

**V. Broadcast Media**

Broadcast media, radio and television, programming sponsored by the Monroe County Community School Corporation will adhere to the provisions of this regulation.