

STUDENT FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION IN SCHOOL-SPONSORED MEDIA

POLICY

The South Burlington School District (District) recognizes the fundamental principle in a democratic society that provides all citizens, including students, with the right to engage in a robust discussion of ideas. To this end, the District will ensure that students can access their right to free speech and free press protections related to school-sponsored media, and as a means to encourage students to become educated, informed, and responsible members of society.

No expression made by students, including those made in school-sponsored media, shall be deemed to be an authorized expression of school policy.

Definitions

“Media advisor” means a person employed, appointed, or designated by the district to supervise or provide guidance and instruction relating to school-sponsored media.

“School-sponsored media” means material prepared, written, published, or broadcast as part of a school-supported program or activity by a student journalist that is distributed or generally made available as part of a school-supported program or activity to an audience beyond the classroom in which the material is produced.

“Student journalist” means a student enrolled in the district who gathers, compiles, writes, edits, photographs, records, or prepares information for dissemination in school-sponsored media.

“Supervising Student” means a student who is responsible for editing school-sponsored media.

Implementation

Subject only to the conditions 1-6 below, a student journalist may exercise freedom of speech and freedom of the press in school-sponsored media. Supervising students of school-sponsored media are responsible for determining the content of their respective media.

This policy does not authorize or protect content of school-sponsored media that:

1. Is libelous or slanderous;
2. Constitutes an unwarranted invasion of privacy;
3. May be defined as obscene, gratuitously profane, threatening or intimidating;
4. May be defined as harassment, hazing, or bullying under 16 V.S.A. § 11;
5. Violates federal or state law; or
6. Creates the imminent danger of materially or substantially disrupting the ability of the school to perform its educational mission.

District staff may restrain the distribution of content in student media, described in 1-6 above, provided that the school's administration shall have the burden of providing lawful justification without undue delay.

Content in school-sponsored media will not be restrained solely because it involves political or controversial subject matter, or is critical of the school or its administration.

A student journalist may not be disciplined for acting in accordance with this policy.

A media advisor may not be dismissed, suspended, disciplined, reassigned, or transferred for taking reasonable and appropriate action to protect a student journalist in conduct protected by this policy, for the student's exercising their right to free expression, or for the media advisor's refusing to infringe on conduct that is protected by this policy, by the first amendment to the U.S. Constitution, or by the Vermont Constitution.

Date Policy Warned: September 26, 2018

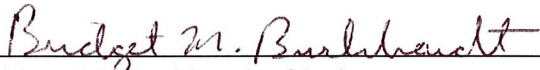
Date Policy Considered: October 3, 2018

Date Policy Adopted: October 17, 2018

South Burlington School District Board of School Directors




Elizabeth E. Fitzgerald, Chairperson



Bridget M. Burkhardt, Clerk



Martin J. LaLonde



Stephen T. Wisloski



Alex B. McHenry

AUTHORITY AND CROSS REFERENCE

Legal References

Legal References: 16 V.S.A. § 1623