



STUDENTS: Students' Responsibilities and Rights

School-Sponsored Media/Student Journalists

I. Policy Statement

- A. The Board of Education of Baltimore County (Board) supports school-sponsored student media as important elements of the instructional program and a student's overall learning experience.
- B. The Board recognizes a student journalist's legal rights of expression in school-sponsored media. The Board further recognizes its responsibility to the schools, students and community to ensure that school-sponsored media, which provide a vehicle for student expression, are consistent with legal and regulatory requirements, school system policies and rules, responsible journalism and professional standards.

II. Definitions

- A. *School-Sponsored Media* –
  - 1. Includes any material that is:
    - a. Prepared, written, published or broadcast by a student journalist;
    - b. Distributed or generally made available to members of the student body; and
    - c. Prepared under the direction of a student media advisor.
  - 2. Does not include material that is intended for distribution or transmission solely in the classroom in which the material is produced.
- B. *Student Journalist* – a Baltimore County Public School (BCPS) student who gathers, compiles, writes, edits, photographs, records or prepares information for dissemination in school-sponsored media.
- C. *Student Media Advisor* – an individual employed, appointed or designated by the Board, BCPS or the principal to supervise or provide instruction relating to school-sponsored media.

III. Standards

POLICY 5610

- A. A student journalist may express freedom of speech and freedom of the press in school-sponsored media, and such free expression may not be limited by the fact that such school-sponsored media is:
  - 1. Supported financially by the Board; or
  - 2. Produced in conjunction with a class in which the student journalist is enrolled.
  
- B. Under the supervision of a student media advisor, a student journalist is responsible for determining the news, opinion, feature and advertising content of school-sponsored media, which may not be construed to:
  - 1. Prevent the student media advisor from teaching professional standards of English and journalism to student journalists; or
  - 2. Authorize or protect content of school-sponsored media by a student journalist that:
    - a. Is libelous or slanderous;
    - b. Constitutes an unwarranted invasion of privacy;
    - c. Violates federal or state law;
    - d. Incites students to create a clear and present danger of the commission of an unlawful act, the violation of Board policies or the material and substantial disruption of the orderly operation of the institution; or
    - e. Is profane, vulgar, lewd, obscene or has the intent to harass, threaten or intimidate.
  
- C. A student media advisor may not influence a student journalist to promote an official position of the Board or of an individual school.
  
- D. The school principal shall have the burden of proving justification without undue delay before exercising an action of prior restraint.
  
- E. A student journalist may not be disciplined for exercising freedom of expression in accordance with this policy and the implementing Superintendent's rule.
  
- F. A student media advisor may not be dismissed, suspended, disciplined, reassigned, transferred or otherwise retaliated against for acting to protect a student journalist for exercising freedom of expression or refusing to infringe on conduct that is protected by federal and State laws, Board policy, Superintendent's rules and school system procedures.

IV. Implementation

The Board directs the Superintendent to implement this policy.

Legal References: U.S. Const. Amend. I  
Md. Const., Art. 40  
2016 Md. Laws, Chapt. 229 (SB 764), to be codified *Annotated Code of Maryland*, Education Article §7-121  
*Annotated Code of Maryland*, Criminal Law Article, §11-203,  
*Sale or Display of Obscene Item to Minor*

Related Policies: Board of Education Policy 5600, *Students' Responsibilities and Rights*  
Board of Education Policy 6202, *Technology Acceptable Use Policy (TAUP) for Students*

Policy

Board of Education of Baltimore County

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