

## STUDENTS

### FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

#### I. PHILOSOPHY

- A. The foundation of policies on student rights has been around since 1791; namely, the Bill of Rights. Within the school setting, it provides freedom of speech and expression, for due process, and for freedom from unreasonable search and seizure.
- B. A Board's basic position on student rights will be a clear reflection of its faith both in democratic principles and in the power of the educative process. Providing policy statements protecting these rights does not erode the authority of the school board, administration, or staff. As Thomas Jefferson said, "I know no safe depository of the ultimate powers of the society but the people themselves....If we think them not enlightened enough to exercise their control with a wholesome direction, the remedy is not to take it from them, but to inform their discretion by education."

#### II. BASIC RIGHTS

##### A. General

- 1. Students shall have the right to freedom of expression, speech, due process, and shall be protected from unreasonable search and seizure. Freedom of expression may not be utilized to present material which tends to be obscene or slanderous, or to defame character, or to advocate violation of federal, state, and local laws, or official school policies, rules and regulations. These rights may be restricted when their expression violates the rights of others or results in a disruption in the educational process.

##### B. Dress

- 1. Students have the right to determine their own dress, but they also have the responsibility to dress reasonably and appropriately. Wearing apparel that detracts from the normal educational process, constitutes a safety hazard, or attracts undue attention to the individual is unacceptable. A student's dress practices may be restricted if it is obscene or in poor taste, unclean, or substantially disrupts the educational process as determined by the principal. We will not accept students wearing clothing that has a message that is obscene, lewd, profane, vulgar, or that harasses, threatens, intimidates or demeans any individual or group of individuals because of sex, color, race, religion, handicap, national origin, sexual orientation or indicates an activity that is illegal for school age youth (smoking, drinking, drugs, etc.). We believe that students should be able to distinguish between appropriate or inappropriate clothing.

##### C. Student Publications – These guidelines pertain to all school sanctioned school publications:

- 1. The stories and articles shall not contain any language which is profane, obscene, offensive, or suggestive.

2. The stories and articles shall not deal with any subject which by its nature would offend the taste and sensibilities of the community.
3. No individual student or faculty member may be singled out for censure, criticism or ridicule in a school publication.
4. No religious, racial, or national group shall be held up to ridicule by statement or innuendo in school publications.
5. As a guarantee of accuracy, (see Article VI, The Canons of Journalism), all stories concerning or quoting a faculty member or individual student should be cleared with that person. This applies to stories about school organizations.
6. As a matter of good taste, (see Article VI, The Canons of Journalism), publications should not carry in columns any items concerning romantic interest of students, or items telling of or hinting of chemical abuse, or other social misconduct.
7. No article may covertly or overtly advocate the overthrow of our system of government (read Articles I and III, The Canons of Journalism).
8. Editorials are always unsigned and reflect the opinions of the entire editorial staff, not one individual. When they deal with important school issues, they should be the product of collective staff thinking.
9. Columns of opinion (sports, literary, editorial, etc.) represent the thinking of one individual and MUST always be signed with the proper name of the student author, faculty member or any other person. He/she then is held personally responsible for such opinions and must conform to the code and canons herein reflected. (This means he/she is legally responsible for such things as libel and slander or defamation of character.)
10. Reviews of student performances (in sports, plays, etc.) present a special problem and require special provisions. If such reviews are opinions, not news, they belong in signed opinion columns. Secondly, most high school students are not competent judges of dramatic or athletic performance. Third, printed negative comment can only have a negative effect on teams or group achievement. In view of this, no individual should be singled out for condemnation or criticism in such reviews. Constructive criticism can be made in signed columns as long as such criticism does not reflect on the director, advisor, coach, or individual student or player.
11. Letters to the editor (from students or faculty or lay public) may be published only after the staff has checked their authenticity (of authorship) and only when they are signed by the sender's name and conform to the provisions of this code.

### **III. ADMINISTRATION AND APPEAL**

- A. The principals are responsible for dissemination, interpretation, and implementation of policy.

- B. Students shall have the right to challenge the interpretation or contents of this policy. The channel of appeal shall be as follows:

1. Student Council
2. Principal
3. Superintendent
4. School Board

- C. Appeals will not be heard out of order. The School Board's decision is final.

#### **IV. DEMONSTRATIONS**

- A. All citizens may participate in peaceful assembly which does not trespass or interfere with normal operations. A demonstration that disrupts the educational process or uses school facilities or grounds without authorization is not permitted.
- B. The policy is not intended to discourage free and appropriate expression, but to insure that such actions do not interfere with normal operation. The following guidelines will be in effect:
1. The demonstration will be brought to the attention of the principals and superintendent.
  2. Students participating will be directed by the building principal or his/her representative to go to their regular class assignments. The principal will arrange for a meeting between the administration and students to discuss the problem.
  3. Nonstudents participating will be directed by the building principal to leave the school grounds.
  4. Students and staff may be excused at the discretion of the administration.
  5. If the problem is not resolved by the administration the problem will be discussed at the board level.
  6. Students who continue to participate in disruptive activities will be suspended.