

STUDENT PUBLICATIONS

Policy

The Trumbull Public School District recognizes only those student publications which are approved by the building administration.

1. Students should be well aware that their right to publish is not unlimited. School officials may place prior restraints on the student publication process. The limitations implied here refer to the following conditions for which a student or students may be responsible:
 - a. Anything published in a student publication must not cause immediate substantial disruption and a material interference with school activities.
 - b. Anything published in a student publication must not be defamatory, malicious, or improperly invade the privacy of others. Such libelous material will not be tolerated.
 - c. Under no conditions should a student publication use obscene statements.
 - d. Responsible journalism makes accuracy of reportage mandatory.
2. The responsibility for proper guidance in regard to any student publication rests with its appointed advisor and, of course, the school administration by extension.
3. Appropriate supervision and guidance must never be construed as censorship which is abhorrent to responsible journalism.

Adopted: 6/6/78

Amended: 1/7/97

Regulations

The First Amendment to the United States Constitution is applicable to students with respect to their rights to freedom of expression through student publications. The courts have ruled as such on numerous occasions. However, there are substantiated “exceptions” to this, as included in section 1 of the Policy on Student Publications. The following are guidelines to be applied in the implementation of the section of the policy:

- a. Articles that immediately cause substantial disruption and a material interference with school activities are not protected by the First Amendment. They cannot be censored beforehand, but students can be punished afterward. Such articles are those that might promote a student walkout or blockage of school corridors, lead to violent demonstration, etc. Note: The promoting of peaceful demonstration cannot be included in this punishable category even if it leads to incident.*
- b. Libel consists of:
 - 1) Knowingly printing words that create a false statement,
 - 2) Communicating this statement to others, and
 - 3) Having this statement cause damage to the reputation of another.

Defamation occurs when the material is maliciously printed, editors know the statement is false, and that such a statement can create a proven damage.

Criticism of public officials such as Boards of Education, administrators and teachers will generally not be viewed a libelous by the courts. Communication must be proven to be published with actual malice intended, which is a difficult task, so that care must be exercised not to be over-zealous in pursuit of such libel encounters that may lead to negative court action. However, libelous invasion of one’s private life is not to be tolerated.

Guidelines

The following are guidelines to be applied in the implementation of section 3 of the policy:

1. Student editors understand what the school system expects their sponsored publications to accomplish.
2. Journalism teachers, publication advisors, and student editors know the difference between the journalism that appears in so called “underground press” and that which appears in the New York Times.
3. Students shall be aware of the right and constraints provided by the First Amendment.

Reference:

Trumbull Board of Education Policy
Policy Code: JFCD – Non-School Sponsored Publications

- * M. Chester Nolte, “The Student Press and the Ways You Can Control It”
The American School Board Journal, p. 35, March 1978.

Ibid, p. 36.