

# Communication Studies Department Publications Policy

## Mission Statement for Production Classes

It is the mission of this department that in all production courses students will create in a variety of media, **communications for students, about students, and by students.** These will be produced to a standard at or above state standards for curriculum with a target of professional quality work.

Further, the core values of the department are:

Integrity

Collaboration

Excellence

Service

As of September, 2013, these productions included:

- Broadcast 2-3- Thundervision for Cable
- Journalism 2-4- The Flash Newsmagazine and Flash updates online
- Publications I-IV- The Tonitrus Yearbook
- Literary Magazine Out of the Blue
- Multi Media Storytelling “The Show”

This document is intended as an over-all staff policy for each of these programs. Where specific topics are covered, they are noted and in some cases specific programs may have additional policies.

## I. STATEMENT OF POLICY

Freedom of expression and press freedom are fundamental values in a democratic society. The mission of any institution committed to preparing productive citizens must include teaching students these values, both by lesson and by example.

As determined by the courts, student exercise of freedom of expression and press freedom is protected by both state and federal law, especially by the First Amendment to the United States Constitution. Accordingly, school officials are responsible for encouraging and ensuring freedom of expression and press freedom for students.

It is the policy of the Rocklin Unified Board of Education that The Flash newsmagazine and web production, Tonitrus yearbook, Out of the Blue literary magazine and broadcast and web production staffs, the official, school-sponsored student media of Rocklin High School have been established as forums for student expression and as voices in the uninhibited, robust, free and open discussion of issues (except as noted

within). Each medium should provide a full opportunity for students to inquire, question and exchange ideas. Content should reflect all areas of student interest, including topics about which there may be dissent or controversy.

It is the policy of the Rocklin Unified School District Board of Education that student journalists shall have the right to determine the content of student media. Accordingly, the following guidelines relate only to establishing grounds for disciplinary actions subsequent to publication.

## **II. OFFICIAL STUDENT MEDIA**

### **A. Responsibilities of Student Journalists**

Students who work on official, school-sponsored student publications or electronic media determine the content of their respective publications and are responsible for that content.

These students should:

1. Determine the content of the student media;
2. Strive to produce media based upon professional standards of accuracy, objectivity and fairness;
3. Review material to improve sentence structure, grammar, spelling and punctuation;
4. Check and verify all facts and verify the accuracy of all quotations; and
5. In the case of editorials or letters to the editor concerning controversial issues, determine the need for rebuttal comments and opinions and provide space therefore if appropriate.

### **B. Unprotected Expression**

The following types of student expression will not be protected:

1. Material that is "obscene as to minors." Obscene as to minors is defined as material that meets all three of the following requirements:
  - (a) The average person, applying contemporary community standards, would find that the publication, taken as a whole, appeals to a minor's prurient interest in sex; and
  - (b) The publication depicts or describes, in a patently offensive way, sexual conduct such as ultimate sexual acts (normal or perverted), masturbation and lewd exhibition of the genitals; and
  - (c) The work, taken as a whole, lacks serious literary, artistic, political or scientific value. Indecent or vulgar language is not obscene.
2. Libelous material. Libelous statements are provably false and unprivileged statements of fact that do demonstrated injury to an individual's or business's reputation in the community. If the allegedly libeled party is a "public figure" or "public official" as defined below, then school officials must show that the false statement was published "with actual malice," i.e., that the student journalists knew that the statement was false or that they published it with reckless disregard for the truth without trying to verify the truthfulness of the statement.
  - (a) A public official is a person who holds an elected or appointed public office and exercises a significant amount of governmental authority.
  - (b) A public figure is a person who either has sought the public's attention or is well known because of personal achievements or actions.

(c) School employees will be considered public officials or public figures in relationship to articles concerning their school-related activities.

(d) When an allegedly libelous statement concerns an individual who is not a public official or a public figure, school officials must show that the false statement was published willfully or negligently, i.e., the student journalist who wrote or published the statement has failed to exercise reasonably prudent care.

(e) Students are free to express opinions. Specifically, a student may criticize school policy or the performance of teachers, administrators, school officials and other school employees.

3. Material that will cause "a material and substantial disruption of school activities."

(a) Disruption is defined as student rioting, unlawful seizures of property, destruction of property, or substantial student participation in a school boycott, sit-in, walkout or other related form of activity. Material such as racial, religious or ethnic slurs, however distasteful, is not in and of itself disruptive under these guidelines. Threats of violence are not materially disruptive without some act in furtherance of that threat or a reasonable belief and expectation that the author of the threat has the capability and intent of carrying through on that threat in a manner that does not allow acts other than suppression of speech to mitigate the threat in a timely manner. Material that stimulates heated discussion or debate does not constitute the type of disruption prohibited.

(b) For student media to be considered disruptive, specific facts must exist upon which one could reasonably forecast that a likelihood of immediate, substantial material disruption to normal school activity would occur if the material were further distributed or has occurred as a result of the material's distribution or dissemination.

Mere undifferentiated fear or apprehension of disturbance is not enough; school administrators must be able affirmatively to show substantial facts that reasonably support a forecast of likely disruption.

(c) In determining whether student media is disruptive, consideration must be given to the context of the distribution as well as the content of the material. In this regard, consideration should be given to past experience in the school with similar material, past experience in the school in dealing with and supervising the students in the school, current events influencing student attitudes and behavior and whether there have been any instances of actual or threatened disruption prior to or contemporaneously with the dissemination of the student publication in question.

(d) School officials must protect advocates of unpopular viewpoints.

(e) "School activity" means educational student activity sponsored by the school and includes, by way of example and not by way of limitation, classroom work, official assemblies and other similar gatherings, school athletic contests, band concerts, school plays and scheduled in-school lunch periods.

### **C. Legal Advice**

1. If, in the opinion of a student editor, student editorial staff or faculty adviser, material proposed for publication may be "obscene," "libelous" or would cause an "immediate, material and substantial disruption of school activities," the legal opinion of a practicing attorney should be sought. The services of the attorney for the local newspaper or the free legal services of the Student Press Law Center (703/807-1904) are recommended.

2. Any legal fees charged in connection with the consultation will be paid by the board of education.

3. The final decision of whether the material is to be published will be left to the student editor or student editorial staff.

#### **D. Protected Speech**

1. School officials cannot:

- a. Ban student expression solely because it is controversial, takes extreme, "fringe" or minority opinions, or is distasteful, unpopular or unpleasant;
- b. Ban the publication or distribution of material relating to sexual issues including, but not limited to, virginity, birth control and sexually-transmitted diseases (including AIDS);
- c. Censor or punish the occasional use of indecent, vulgar or so called "four-letter" words in student publications;
- d. Prohibit criticism of the policies, practices or performance of teachers, school officials, the school itself or of any public officials;
- e. Cut off funds to official student media because of disagreement over editorial policy;
- f. Ban student expression that merely advocates illegal conduct without proving that such speech is directed toward and will actually cause imminent unlawful action.
- g. Ban the publication or distribution by students of material written by nonstudents;
- h. Prohibit the endorsement of candidates for student office or for public office at any level.

2. Commercial Speech

Advertising is constitutionally protected expression. Student media may accept advertising. Acceptance or rejection of advertising is within the purview of the publication staff, which may accept any ads except those for products or services that are illegal for all students. Ads for political candidates and ballot issues may be accepted; however publication staffs are encouraged to solicit ads from all sides on such issues.

#### **E. On-Line Student Media and Use of Electronic Information Resources**

1. On-Line Student Media.

Online media, including Internet Web sites, social media sites, and blogs may be used by students like any other communications media to reach both those within the school and those beyond it. All official, school-sponsored online student publications are entitled to the same protections and are subject to no greater limitations than other student media, as described in this policy except as noted below.

2. Electronic Information Resources

Student journalists may use electronic information resources, including Internet Web sites, e-mail, listserves and social media, to gather news and information, to communicate with other students and individuals and to ask questions of and consult with sources. School officials will apply the same criteria used in determining the suitability of other educational and information resources to attempts to remove or restrict student media access to online and electronic material. Just as the purchase, availability and use of media materials in a classroom or library does not indicate endorsement of their contents by school officials, neither does making electronic information available to students imply endorsement of that content.

Although faculty advisers to student media are encouraged to help students develop the intellectual skills needed to evaluate and appropriately use electronically available information to meet their news gathering purposes, advisers are not responsible for approving the online resources used or created by their students.

### 3. Acceptable Use Policies

The Board recognizes that the technical and networking environment necessary for online communication may require that school officials define guidelines for student exploration and use of electronic information resources. The purpose of such guidelines will be to provide for the orderly, efficient and fair operation of the school's online resources. The guidelines may not be used to unreasonably restrict student use of or communication through the online media.

Such guidelines may address the following issues: file size limits, password management, system security, data downloading protocol, use of domain names, use of copyrighted software, access to computer facilities, computer hacking, computer etiquette and data privacy.

### **III. ADVISER JOB SECURITY**

The student media adviser is not a censor. No person who advises a student publication will be fired, transferred or removed from the adviser role by reason of his or her refusal to exercise editorial control over student media or to otherwise suppress the protected free expression of student journalists. SB 1370

### **V. PRIOR REVIEW/RESTRAINT**

No student media, whether non-school-sponsored or official, will be reviewed by school administrators prior to distribution or withheld from distribution. The school assumes no liability for the content of any student publication, and urges all student journalists to recognize that with editorial control comes responsibility, including the responsibility to follow professional journalism standards each school year. EC 48970

### **Rocklin High School Content Statement for Publications**

By virtue of the fact that the productions are student conceived, planned and produced as well as products of academic programs, there are certain guidelines that must be put into practice ethically and legally.

Journalistic in nature, the productions attempt to **inform, educate, and entertain** their audiences in a broad, fair, and accurate manner on all subjects that affect readers. In addition, The Flash newsmagazine staff through its print editions and online work seeks to provide a public forum for the opinions of students, the staff of the paper, and the faculty to encourage an exchange of ideas and opinions on issues of prominence to readers.

The entire student body of prospective readers constitutes the primary target audience of the productions with secondary audiences of parents, school personnel, community members and other scholastic journalism groups. Content focuses on coverage that will meet the wants and needs of the majority of these students.

While the staff not only allows, but also encourages, constructive criticism of any part of the production, before or after distribution, final authority for the content rests solely in the hands of student journalists through each production staff's editorial board unless otherwise noted in this document (EC 48907). No material, opinionated or otherwise, will be printed which is libelous, irresponsible, advocates an illegal activity or which the editorial board deems in poor taste.

### **Editorial Leadership**

The Editorial Board for each production is the decision-making body. Members will be selected at the beginning of each semester by the adviser and staff and will consist of an odd number of voting members. The production adviser will serve in that same role, but will not vote.

The board controls its own membership and may remove a member for failure to attend meetings or meet other expectations through a majority vote. If the adviser appeals that vote, the board may confirm the decision with a unanimous vote. By the same method, the board may remove staff members who are not meeting job expectations. The teacher/adviser will work with the student to continue academic work until such time as their schedule can be changed. The teacher/adviser may request a schedule change for disciplinary reasons.

All board members will vote on decisions such as policy-making or controversial content when the need arises. A majority vote determines the decision. The adviser will not vote, but may advise and make suggestions or comments. The adviser may suspend decisions of questions based on legality or irresponsible business practices. The adviser, or any board member, has the right to appeal to the Publications Board.

The Publications Board will be made up of two representatives appointed by the Associated Student Body President; only one may be a member of the leadership class, as well as two certificated staff members and a classified member agreed upon by the advisers and one member of administration appointed by the Principal. They will meet only upon request, and a majority vote will determine all final decisions.

Any appeal beyond this level must go to the Superintendent of Schools for consideration by the Board of Trustees. These appeals are limited to questions of legality, business management, or staff membership.

Rocklin HS programs are a limited open forum as defined by AR 1325 and BP 1325. At all times, the editorial board will work within the guidelines of the California State Education Code 48907 and Rocklin Unified School District Board Policy 6145.3. (see appendix)

### **Correction Policy**

If a staff discovers, from any source, that a mistake was published and passed the editors, a correction of major errors will be made upon request in the most expedient and appropriate way possible as determined by the Editorial Board. Each staff will create its own policy on corrections.

### **Advertising Policy**

To help finance the productions, the staffs may sell advertising at rates published annually. Students who appear in advertisements (other than Senior Ads) must sign a model release. The Editorial Board (s) reserves the right to determine the appropriateness of advertising and refuse sale and publication without cause. However, each staff will determine its own appropriate advertising policy. No advertising will be published for activities illegal to the youngest member of the student population.

The district and department recognize that as self-sustaining businesses, the news magazine, magazine and yearbook can not be restricted in their efforts to only businesses that do not compete with other fundraisers, curriculum, or school related or preferred businesses without a due process. The real-world financial management of these productions is seen as a critical element in the learning process.

Due process appeals will be submitted to the adviser and principal and reviewed within 30 days by the editorial board of the specific publication.

### **Obituary Policy**

Should a student or faculty member die at any time during the current coverage period, the staff will treat the death in a tasteful, respectful manner.

In the newsmagazine, a short obituary, with the individual's name, school activities, date of birth, date and manner of death (if appropriate), and any other pertinent information, will appear in the news section. A mug shot may be used. The appropriate treatment will provide adequate memory of the individual for those closely associated, while not overemphasizing it for other readers. Any accompanying circumstances may be covered as a new event. Often death will be handled on the newspaper's web site as outlined above.

In the yearbook, the portrait of that person will appear as it would under normal circumstances. If deadlines allow, the death may be covered as a new event if deemed appropriate by the editorial board. If deadline allows the person's name in the index will appear in bold with years of birth and death.

## **Yearbook specific policies**

### **Portrait Policy**

All students and school personnel must have their portrait made with the official school portrait photographer in order to be included in the current volume of the publication. Seniors may choose to pay a minimal fee for a full portrait sitting to cover the costs of proofs.

By having all portraits taken by the same photographer under the same conditions, the publications staff can be assured of the highest quality reproduction of all photographs, serving the best interests of all students and staff.

All underclass photographs must be taken in a timely manner according to a schedule to be determined by the yearbook editorial board or adviser. All photos will be taken by the designated school photographer. The final make-up will be no later than Oct. 15.

### **Book Sales Policy**

Satisfaction Guaranteed or money back. Any student who does not wish to keep his/her book may obtain a refund provided that the book is returned in the same condition in which it was distributed. Returned for refund books must be free of damage and writing. Once returned the book becomes the property of the staff and can be resold at the current value.

Exchanges can be made for books with minor flaws if no writing has been done in the book. If a book has been written in, then no exchange can be made unless the adviser feels the flaw in the book is of major proportion (i.e. pages missing, pages in upside down). It will be the responsibility of the buyer to provide proof of purchase if the staff can provide no record. A valid receipt or a cancelled check deposited in the publications account will constitute proof of purchase.

Any purchased book not claimed by Labor Day Weekend of the following year becomes the property of the yearbook staff and may be refunded with a written request.

The staff and editorial board will determine the cost of an individual copy based on a balanced budget.

### **Advertising policy**

The yearbook will sell advertising for senior recognition and businesses as determined by the editorial board. The staff will publish a payment and materials schedule by Sept. 1 of each year and reserve the right to refuse publication to any parent or advertise who does not meet deadlines. Payments will not be refunded.

Errors in ads will be addressed in the following manner.

- a) Correction of minor errors with a reprint or reprints of the ads on stickers
- b) Partial repayment up to cost of the book for misspelled names or major errors

- c) Complete refund only in cases of errors that are deemed to destroy the intent of the ad.

Businesses will be held to the same expectations as graduate ads.

Yearbook will not be responsible for errors in printing caused by self-generated ads not meeting published specifications.

### **News magazine specific policies**

#### **Corrections**

Any corrections of fact, error, or intent will be amended in the most expedient way possible. In most cases this will be handled through web site updates.

#### **Policies**

Staff and publication policy for the newsmagazine staff are addressed above. The Flash will serve as a public forum and will determine distribution each year within the guidelines established in California Ed Code and school policy.

#### **Newspaper web coverage**

Weekly web updates are a regular part of journalism production. The Flash will [www.RocklinHSflash.net](http://www.RocklinHSflash.net) to post these updates, linked to the RHS home page. The editorial board will include at least one member specifically representing web reporting.

All policies above apply with the follow additions:

- 1) A separate editor may be assigned to web, but in all cases only editorial board members will be allowed access to upload and edit web materials
- 2) Photos placed on the web will receive special consideration. Editors will check the school's list (to be provided by the school administration) of students not allowed on the web and will emphasize group photos of students not identified over individual portraits. Photos may be removed at the student's or parent request.
- 3) Web coverage will emphasize news and reviews as well as sports coverage over features and editorials. Features and editorials are more commonly (though not exclusively) published in the quarterly news magazine.
- 4) Web coverage is aimed primarily at timeliness among the news values.

#### **Newsmagazine advertising**

The Flash staff retains the right to determine ad policy within the guidelines established above. The editorial board may decline advertising based on controversial or appropriateness.

Errors in advertising may result in

- a) A 50% reduction in payment and/or
- b) Reprinting the ad in the soonest possible issued and/or
- c) Corrections on the web site of specific information

### **Broadcast specific policies**

Closed circuit announcements produced by the advanced broadcast classes in association with the leadership program are not a public forum and thus have limited rights of expression. These announcements are primarily a public relations vehicle with the intent to inform, educate, and entertain the high school audience. The principal will appoint an administrator to work as a liaison with the broadcast teacher regarding all issues for school announcements. The leadership class will provide announcements by 7:45 each morning of video announcements.

Productions outside of class are public forums and limited as per content noted above and those restrictions placed by the Cable Company or host of the productions. These will be broadcast on the district's access channel as managed from Whitney HS. The editorial board of the broadcast program will determine content within legal guidelines and include a credit line in each broadcast that the content is solely determined by the student producers and does not reflect the belief or opinions of Rocklin High School or the Rocklin Unified School District.

### **Web specific policies**

The Rocklin High web page managed by the Web II in association with the RHS administration and staff is not a public forum and thus have limited rights of expression. However, inside pages linked to the home may serve as a public forum and content will be controlled by the editorial board.

The Rocklin High web program may allow advertising on inside content pages per policy above.

The Rocklin High administration will supply the web program with a list of any students who have web site restrictions placed on their inclusion by their parents or family.

### **Literary Magazine specific policies**

Out of the Blue is a student production to promote and support the visual arts and literary efforts of Rocklin High students.

The editorial board will define content within the guidelines above. As a self-sustaining business the magazine may sell advertising as defined above. The staff and editorial board will determine the cost of an individual copy based on a balanced budget.

The literary magazine may edit submissions to correct errors or to meet legal standards of libel, obscenity, and physical disruption of the school day.

### **Contents of Appendix**

- a) Integrity Policy for Communication Studies
- b) Scoring guide for Communication Studies
- c) JEA Standards for Journalism Advisers
- d) JEA Model Policies
- e) SB 1370
- f) AR 1325
- g) AR 5145.2
- h) BP 1325
- i) BP 5145.2
- j) BP 6145.31
- k) EC 489707
- l) EC 48950
- m) EC 51520