Student Publications

In accordance with Policy 647, “Student Publications,” Prince William County Public Schools (PWCS) shall adhere to the following rules, regulations, and restrictions regarding publications within schools and the distribution of the same, including, but not limited to, print, electronic, and online media.

I. Types of Prohibited Material:

   A. Material which reasonably leads the principal (or designee), to forecast substantial disruption of, or material interference with school activities, endangers the health, safety, or impinges upon the rights of students.

   1. Substantial disruption of and material interference with school activities shall include, but is not limited to:

      a. Creating an environment where there is a significant likelihood of harm to persons and/or property, or prevention of the normal and routine conduct of classes, and/or school operations;

      b. Interference with school activities, or movement on school premises;

      c. The principal (or designee), shall determine whether a substantial disruption of/or material interference with, school activities is likely, after taking into account the past history of disruptions in the particular school and/or other PWCS schools and their causes, past or current disruptions or incidents in the community connected with the content of the material, and/or whether the material in question is sufficiently provocative or controversial so as to make it reasonably likely that students will be led to act in a disruptive manner;

      d. Whether the material in question is similar to any material which has been proven disruptive in a similar environment; or

      e. The number of copies of the material intended to be distributed and the manner of the intended distribution.
B. Material which is libelous or slanderous. Libelous statements are inaccurate or false statements which injure a person as to his or her reputation, cause personal humiliation, mental anguish, and suffering, or cause other injuries.

C. Material which is lewd, vulgar, profane, indecent, or otherwise unsuitable for its intended or potential audience. The principal (or designee) has the authority to exercise his/her judgment to determine whether the material is vulgar, lewd, profane, indecent, or otherwise unsuitable for a school audience; depending upon the nature of the material, the age and maturity level of the audience, and the anticipated effect of the material on the audience.

D. Material which advocates the commission of a criminal act or is a criminal act, as defined by the “Criminal Code” of the United States, the Commonwealth of Virginia, or County of Prince William, and material which advocates drug or alcohol use, or other conduct inconsistent with shared values of a civilized social order.

E. Material with sexually explicit content deemed by the principal (or designee) inappropriate for the intended school audience.

F. Material which encourages, promotes, or endorses the use of alcohol, drugs, or other illegal substances or related activities.

G. Material which advocates the inappropriate use of electronic means for purposes of bullying, harassment, and intimidation, or material which in itself is reasonably likely to result in the bullying, threatening, harassment, or intimidation of others.

H. Material which is obscene for adults as defined in Section 18.2-372 of the “Code of Virginia” (1950), as amended, material which is obscene for juveniles as defined in Sections 18.2-390 and 18.2-391 of the “Code of Virginia” (1950), as amended, or any material, word, picture, photograph, drawing/sculpture, motion picture in any format or medium, electronic file, or message which offends against contemporary community standards of the decency, inclusivity, and morality expected of materials to be used or distributed in the public schools. Copies of the referenced “Code of Virginia” sections shall be maintained with this regulation.

I. Material which in the judgment of the principal (or designee), would associate the school with any position other than neutrality on matters of political controversy; or

J. Material which, in the judgement of the principal (or designee), is inconsistent with legitimate pedagogical concerns of the school.
II. Procedure:

The full text of all publications proposed by a student for use or distribution, together with the proposed manner of use or distribution, shall be submitted to the principal (or designee) for approval. Where the principal (or designee) determines that proposed material or manner of distribution violates one of the foregoing standards, he or she shall communicate denial and the reason therefore to the student proposing use or publication. The principal (or designee) may, if appropriate, provide guidelines for revision and resubmission of the rejected material for further review.

III. Appeal:

Whenever a principal's designee makes the determination that a proposed publication, or portion thereof, may not be used, printed, or distributed under the above rules, any student who supports the publication may appeal in writing to the principal, who shall respond as in Section II above. Whenever a principal shall deny use, printing, or publication, any student who supports the publication may appeal the matter in writing to the Division Superintendent (or designee), who shall make a decision in writing within seven working days after receipt of an appeal, based upon the standards set forth herein.

IV. Patently Offensive Material:

Whenever any teacher, principal, or principal's designee shall discover a student using, displaying, distributing, or possessing for such purpose, on school property, any material which has not been approved as specified above and is in patent violation of the standards set forth herein, such material may be confiscated, and/or appropriate disciplinary action taken. If the student believes the material is not in violation, he/she may appeal under Section III. In the event of an appeal, any confiscated material shall be preserved pending the outcome, and shall be returned to the student if the appeal is successful. Any appeal under this regulation shall not affect any recommendation or implementation of disciplinary action.

V. Outside Materials:

Distribution of literature, announcements, posters, bulletins, and communications including electronic files or messages by individuals not directly connected with schools, including students not presently enrolled in the school, shall not be permitted without the express approval of the principal (or designee), and shall be governed by Policy 925 and Regulation 925-1, “Distribution of Materials and Communications in the Schools by Outside Sources.”
The Associate Superintendent for Student Learning and Accountability (or designee) is responsible for implementing and monitoring this regulation.

This regulation and related policy shall be reviewed at least every five years and revised as needed.