

# Rockwood Student Publications Policy

The Rockwood Student Publications Policy pertains to all Rockwood high school media, including broadcast programs, print newspaper/newsmagazines, radio production, social media, video production, websites and yearbook, which fall under the direction of a recognized Rockwood student publications staff. The full policy will be published on student publications-run websites and referenced in the school yearbook colophons and newspaper staff boxes.

Rockwood student publications are the official student-produced media of news and information published/produced by Rockwood students and have been established by both policy and practice as designated public forums for student editors to inform and educate their readers as well as for the discussion of issues of concern to their audience. Publications will not be reviewed or restrained by school officials prior to publication or distribution. Advisers may – and should – coach and discuss content during the production process.

Because school officials do not engage in prior review and the content of all Rockwood student publications is determined by and reflects only the views of the student staff and not school officials or the school itself, its student editors and responsible student staff members assume complete legal and financial liability for the content of the publication.

## General Philosophy Statements

### I. FREEDOM OF THE PRESS

As it is essential to preserve the freedom of the press in order to preserve a free society,

1. The student publications will serve the best interest of the students and faculty of the Rockwood School District, keeping themselves free from any commercial obligations distracting from this purpose; this is defined by the student publications themselves;
2. Any decisions affecting the publications on any and all levels will be made by the student editors, the advisers are allowed to give legal advice and their feedback, but the final decisions rest in the hands of the student editors;
3. Only the student editors may prevent material they judge to be in violation of the student publications editorial policy from being printed;
4. All student publications will vigorously resist all attempts at censorship and prior review, particularly pre-publication censorship;
5. All student publications retain the right to publish any and all material obtained through an interview by a publications staff member, holding that the interviewee was aware that they were talking with the student press and that the information could be published in any form at any time;
6. All student publications referenced in this editorial policy are designated public forums;
7. Rockwood's student publications and its staff members are protected by and bound to the principles of the First Amendment and other protections and limitations afforded by the Constitution and the various laws and court decisions implementing those principles;
8. Rockwood's student publications will not publish any material determined by student editors to be unprotected, that is, material that is libelous, obscene, materially disruptive of the school process, an invasion of privacy, a violation of copyright or a promotion of products or services unlawful (illegal) as to minors as defined by state or federal law;
9. Definitions and examples for the above instances of unprotected speech can be found in Law of the Student Press published by the Student Press Law Center.

### II. THE STUDENT EDITORS

1. Student editors make all decisions that pertain directly to Rockwood's student publications.
2. The student editor and staff who want appropriate outside legal advice regarding proposed content should seek attorneys knowledgeable in media law such as those of the Student Press Law Center. Final content decisions and responsibility remain with the student editors.
3. The duly appointed editor or co-editors shall interpret and enforce this editorial policy.

### **III. THE ADVISER(S)**

1. The adviser(s) is a professional teaching staff member and is in charge of the class just as in a conventional classroom situation;
2. Is a certified journalism teacher who serves as a professional role model, motivator, catalyst for ideas and professionalism and an educational resource;
3. Provides a journalistic professional learning atmosphere for students by allowing them to make the decision of content for the student publications and ensuring the student publications will remain a public forum;
4. Guides the media in accordance with approved editorial policy and aids the educational process related to producing material;
5. May caution, act as legal consultant and educator in terms of unprotected speech but has no power over censorship or veto except for constitutionally-valid reasons; The adviser will not act as a censor or determine the content of the student publications. The adviser will offer advice and instruction, following the Code of Ethics for Advisers established by the Journalism Education Association as well as the Canons of Professional Journalism. School officials shall not fire or otherwise discipline advisers for content in the student publications that is determined and published by the student staff.
6. Will keep abreast of the latest trends in journalism and share these with students;
7. Will forward any received correspondence and/or information to the appropriate editors;
8. Will provide information to the staff about journalism scholarships and other financial aid and make available information and contacts concerning journalism as a career;
9. Will work with the faculty and administration to help them understand the freedoms accorded to the students and the goals of the school publications;

All content decisions will be made in accordance to the following provisions, while keeping in mind that the overall purpose, role and goal of all Rockwood student publications is to:

1. Inform, interpret and entertain their readers through accurate and factual reports, where information has been thoroughly gathered verified;
2. Be accurate, fair and impartial in its coverage of issues that affect the school community;
3. Not avoid publishing a story solely on the basis of possible dissent or controversy;
4. Cover the total school populations as effectively and accurately as possible;
5. Strive to report all issues in a legal, objective, accurate and ethical manner, according to the Canons of Professional Journalism developed by the Society for Professional Journalists. The Canons of Professional Journalism include a code of ethics: Seek the truth and report it, be accountable and transparent, minimize harm and act independently.

## **Policy Statements**

### **I. PROFANITY**

1. The student publications will not print unnecessary profanity.
2. The student editors will determine whether content is considered profane or is a cultural or non-vulgar slang term.
3. The student editors reserve the right to edit quotes for unnecessary profanity or unnecessarily offensive words; quotes that have been edited will be noted accordingly when published.
4. Staff interviewers may ask a source when necessary to repeat a quote without the use of profane language.

## **II. STAFF WRITING**

1. In general, all content in the student publications other than letters to the editor will be produced by students of the journalism program.
2. Rockwood students outside of the student publications staffs may have the opportunity to submit material to the student publications at the Editorial Board's discretion.
3. Student editors will determine if any content submitted from any non-staff source will be verified and published.
4. Any content submitted from an outside source can be edited by the student editors and must comply with this policy.
5. Content must be the original work of the student and not previously published on any platform unless otherwise authorized by the editors.

## **III. TAKE DOWN REQUESTS**

1. If a source makes a take down request for something online, the Editorial Board will make the final decision taking into consideration the content and context of the request. In general, there will be no takedowns or retractions from online content unless something in the article is false. If the information was factual when published, editors have no legal responsibility to change it now because a subject is embarrassed or otherwise offended.
2. In the event of a take down request by the author of a piece, the Editorial Board will make the final decision taking into consideration the context of the material and the context of the request, but recognizing also that copyright laws state that work produced for the Student Publications belong to the Student Publications, not the student who created the work.

## **IV. OPINION MATERIAL**

1. All printed editorial subject matter will be determined by the student editors.
2. The student publications will endeavor to provide a chance for comment from all sides of a critical issue in the same edition.
3. Student editors will determine the content, including all unsigned editorials. The views in editorials represent that of a majority of the publication's staff. Signed columns or reviews represent only the opinion of the author.

## **V. REGARDING CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES**

1. All coverage of controversial issues will occur in a timely manner.
2. All sides of the issue will be presented and reviewed so as to refrain from any bias with exception of opinions.
3. In news, all sides of a school, community, city, state, national or international political issue will be presented factually so as to inform rather than promote or endorse.
4. The media will not publish material that is unnecessarily obscene, libelous or an unwarranted invasion of privacy.
5. The media will not attack people and/or organizations;
6. Editors will consider the following questions before publication of the piece:
  - a. Why is it a concern?
  - b. What is its journalistic purpose?
  - c. Is the information accurate and complete?
  - d. Are any important POVs omitted?
  - e. How would we feel if the story was about us or someone we know?
  - f. What are the consequences of the publication?
  - g. Is there a logical explanation to anyone who challenges the issue?
  - h. Is it worth risking our credibility?
  - i. What are the alternatives?

## **VI. BYLINES/CREDIT**

1. With the exception of staff editorials, all articles, graphics, videos, photos, art, columns, pages, reviews, mugshots and cutouts and other material creatively conceived will be bylined with the producer's name.
2. All bylined writers will be held accountable for their work.
3. When more than one person has contributed creatively to a piece of work, any person who has contributed to the work must be bylined as a producer.

## **VII. DEATHS**

1. Any current student, staff member, faculty member or building administrator who dies during the year will be recognized in the student publications.
2. The death may be reported as a combination news story and standard obituary and may be covered in the most appropriate space according to the timeliness of the publication.
3. The portrait of that individual will appear in the yearbook as it would under normal circumstances.
4. Any current student, staff member, faculty member or building administrator who dies during the year will be recognized in the yearbook if still within press time. Coverage will include a memorial box with the person's name and birth/death dates.
5. The publications will maintain the dignity of the student or staff member by striving for accurate, fair coverage of the death.
6. As a courtesy, the student publications will work to obtain permission from the deceased's family before publishing any information regarding the cause of death. If permission is not granted, the student editors reserve the final say in publication of cause of death.
7. The student publications will treat all deaths in a tasteful, respectful way.
8. An issue, or portion of a publication, should not be dedicated to or in memory of the deceased, but student publications may run stories about scholarships, events etc. in that person's name.

## **VII. ILLUSTRATIONS, PHOTOGRAPHS, VIDEOS, GRAPHICS, ETC.**

1. All captions will record the necessary information in the photo.
2. All photographs must be captioned and bylined, with the exception of mugs and cutouts.
3. Any photographs need to be deemed appropriate by the editors.
4. Artwork represents the interpretations of the artist, and not necessarily the publications staff.
5. Electronic manipulations changing the essential truth of the photo or illustration will be clearly labeled as a photo illustration.
6. All student publications staff members will adhere to all copyright laws concerning use of images, music and video and properly credit items generated using outside resources.

## **IX. OWNERSHIP OF MATERIAL**

1. All pictures, video, audio and copy made by student journalists or professionals contracted by the publications staff are the property of student publications. Portraits taken by the contracted photographer are property of the school district and part of the student's official record.
2. It is at the editor's discretion whether to release any or all of the photos/video/audio/copy created during the year.
3. Equipment belongs to the Student Publications staffs and should not be used by student staff members for any work other than publications assignments without permission of the adviser.

## **X. REPORTING**

1. Sources interviewed for publication should be made aware beforehand by a student publications staff member that their name will be published and the interview may be recorded.
2. Students involved in a school-sponsored event or public activity may be photographed for publication without explicit permission.
3. Reporters should make every effort to conduct interviews in person. The writer of a story should conduct all of his/her own interviews. If another reporter completes some interviews, he/she must be given credit.
4. Sources may request to have quotes read back at the time of the interview but will not be able to read the reporter's completed story.
5. Student publications staff members will endeavor to include the name and identity of all sources. If they believe doing so will result in endangerment, harassment or any other form of undue physical, mental, emotional anguish for the source, editors may determine to withhold a source's name from publication.
6. Staff members should use publications' social media accounts for crowdsourcing but should not use social media to conduct interviews.
7. Surveys will occasionally be conducted by publications staff members via social media or email. All survey material must be approved by the editors. All survey participation is optional. In reporting the results of a survey, the student staff will clearly communicate the method used to collect all data and accurately report the results.

## **XI. STUDENT IDENTIFICATION**

1. Names in the yearbook portrait section will run as they appear on the student's official school record in Infinite Campus at the time those pages are submitted to the printer. If a nickname is listed on that record, it will be used in the portrait section. Changes to the official student record must be made through the registrar.
2. In all other student publications coverage, the publications staff will accommodate a student's request for preferred name/gender/pronoun to be used and will identify the student that way.

## **XII. LETTERS TO THE EDITOR**

1. Participation through letters to the editor or comments online by students, faculty and the community is encouraged.
2. Letters must be signed but names may be withheld upon request and with the approval of the editor.
3. Letters are limited to 250 words. The staff reserves the right to reject, edit or shorten letters.
4. Letters may be submitted in writing to the publications adviser or to any publications staff member or via the adviser or publications email.
5. No material that falls under the category of unprotected speech will be printed.
6. The student publications editor reserves the right to withhold a letter or column or other submission and/or return it for revision if it contains unprotected speech or grammatical errors that could hamper its meaning. Deadlines for letters and columns will be determined by each year's student staff to allow sufficient time for verification of authorship prior to publication.
7. Personal attacks of private individuals are not allowed.

## **XIII. ONLINE COMMENTS**

1. Participation through comments on the website or social media by students, faculty/staff and the community is encouraged.
2. Comments that are abusive, vulgar, racist, threatening, harassing, or personally attacking an individual will not be allowed. Libel, slander or personal attacks of any kind, including the use of offensive terms that target specific

individuals or groups will not be allowed. Spam, political advertisements or other types of propaganda will also not be allowed on publications sites. Comments will be suspended if policies above are violated.

3. Student publications editors make the decisions concerning which comments will be removed for violating the above standards.

#### **XIV. SOCIAL MEDIA**

1. Social media will be used to inform, promote the publication, promote published content and engage the community.
2. Information posted on social media platforms should be held to the same standard as all other reporting in terms of information gathering and fact checking.
3. The official student publications social media accounts should promote events fairly and remain objective, reporting what is fact. Student publications staff members may choose to share content from other social media outlets if the content is relevant to their followers.
4. Information gained through social media channels should be verified through multiple sources or by confirming a source's validity before passing it along on a social media account.
5. In breaking news situations, extreme caution will be exercised and speculation will never be published.
6. Engagement of the audience through social media should be done in a professional manner.
7. Student publications are only responsible for content they create and post or share. They are not responsible for advertisements or other linked material.
8. Mistakes in coverage or content made on social media posts should be corrected as soon as possible and any deleted posts should be acknowledged and corrected as soon as possible. In the event that a personal post is inadvertently posted from a student publications account, it will be immediately deleted. It will be acknowledged if deemed necessary by the editor.

#### **XV. ERRORS**

1. Concerns about errors in the student publications may be submitted through the adviser(s) via the district email or through the student editors.
2. The student editors will determine whether, in fact, an error has been made.
3. Known and/or found errors that are brought to the attention of the student publications will be addressed regardless if realized by author, audience or staff member.
4. Staff members will strive to correct errors prior to publication; however, if the student editors determine a significant error has been published, the student editors will determine the manner and timeliness of a correction.

#### **XVI. ADVERTISING**

1. Student publications will not accept ads for products that are illegal for minors to purchase and/or use.
2. Students not of legal age whose photographs appear in an advertisement created by student publications staff members are required along with their legal guardian to sign a model release form.
3. The student publications reserve the right to refuse any ad. All ads need to be approved by the editors. Any ad deemed not appropriate by the editorial board will not run.
4. The publications may choose to publish public service ads at the discretion of the editors.
5. The student publications will accept political ads that comply with federal, state and local campaign laws.
6. All advertising must meet the same guidelines as editorial content.
7. Acceptance of ads does not constitute endorsement by the school, the staff as a whole or its individual members.

8. The publications will cease to publish advertising that does not meet payment obligations specified in the publications' contracts.
9. If a published advertisement is incorrect as a result of publication staff error, a reduced price or corrected run will be negotiated.
10. Web advertisements appear in a specific section of the website determined by the staff and run in a timeframe agreed to through the advertiser/publications contract.

## **XVII. YEARBOOK INDIVIDUAL PORTRAIT POLICY**

1. All students must have their portraits taken by the approved/contracted school photographers to be in the portrait section(s) of the yearbook. By having portraits taken by only approved photographers, the yearbook staff can be assured of the highest quality reproduction and consistency of all portraits.
2. Underclassmen will have their portraits taken at school during registration/orientation.
3. Seniors will have individual sittings with the school-approved photographer.
4. The section/grade placement of student portraits will be determined by the student's cohort year as listed on the official school record on Infinite Campus.
5. Portraits provided by the school photographer will be used for students in grades 9-12 and for school staff members. Because of plant deadlines and the possibility of students missing portrait day, the yearbook staff is not responsible for unavailable portraits of students.
6. Requests to remove the official school portrait from the yearbook must be made in writing by the parent/guardian.
7. The student editors reserve the right to review or omit questionable and/or inappropriate portraits. All students photographed must adhere to dress code policies.
8. Portraits will consist of one individual only. No other persons or props are permitted.

## **XVIII. GROUP PORTRAIT POLICY**

1. Any groups with school sponsors are eligible to take a group photo for the yearbook.
2. Yearbook will cover school-sponsored, board-approved and established clubs/sports. All other sports or clubs will be reviewed by the student editors and included at their discretion.
3. The student editors reserve the right to review or omit questionable or inappropriate portraits.
4. Portraits will consist of group members and sponsors only. Props are not permitted without prior approval.

## **XIX. YEARBOOK SALES**

1. Any customer who does not wish to keep his/her book may obtain a refund provided the book is returned in the same condition in which it was distributed. Once returned, the book becomes the property of the staff and can be resold at the current price.
2. 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, no exchange can be made unless the adviser determines the flaw to be major.
3. It will be the responsibility of the buyer to provide proof of purchase if no record can be provided by the staff. A canceled check or receipt will constitute proof of purchase.
4. Books not claimed by the end of the first quarter of classes in the fall automatically become the property of the yearbook staff and can be sold at the current price.