

Checklist for public forum – school news publication:

_____ Does the publication serve as an open public forum for student expression? (may need to review what a forum is: <http://www.firstamendmentschools.org/freedoms/faq.aspx?id=13012>)

_____ Does the staff strive to accurately and thoroughly report news to the school community without bias or conflict of interest?

_____ Does the publication refrain from acting as a public relations vehicle for the school district?

_____ Does the publication distribute not only to the school but to other district schools and the immediate surrounding community?

_____ Are quotations made in context?

_____ Are quotations from reliable and credible sources?

_____ Are all photos and artwork properly credited and do they reflect the content of the accompanying stories?

_____ Do reporters refrain from using personal opinions in news, features and sports stories?

_____ Do unsigned editorials represent the views of the editorial board? Are they written by editorial board members?

_____ Are opinions expressed in columns the opinions of the writers and not necessarily the opinion of the publication?

_____ Are opposing viewpoints presented through letters to the editor or guest writers? Are they open to all members of the school and its community?

_____ Does the publication strive to refrain from material which is libelous, obscene, invasive of privacy, violates copyright law or is likely to create a material interference and substantial physical disruption of educational activities?

_____ Does the publication reserve the right to reject, edit or cancel any advertisement at any time?

For further discussion:

If the publication self censors, is it really covering the students and community?

Should a student publication just be a PR piece for the district? What are the pros and cons of this? (Teacher note: if the publication strays away from anything controversial, do people then trust the information given? Is the publication then a service to the students or just a “fluffy bunny” or “everything is awesome” publication?)

Links for further discussion/study:

What is a public forum? <http://www.firstamendmentschools.org/freedoms/faq.aspx?id=13012>

What to do when facing a forum threat: <http://jea.org/blog/2008/09/11/scjnews-facingthreat/>

Going Public: “Public forum” publications revel in pumped-up press power.
http://www.splc.org/news/report_detail.asp?id=1270&edition=39