

Help with the code

“Material and substantial disruption of the orderly operation of the school” means student actions or behaviors that can reasonably be believed or feared to significantly interrupt school activities or intrude unreasonably in school affairs. The phrase also includes interference with the rights of others. Examples that might reasonably lead to the forecast of material and substantial disruption include, but are not limited to, student violence or rioting; unlawful seizures of property; vandalism to or destruction of property; boycotts, sit-ins, walkouts or related activities at school.

The undifferentiated fear or apprehension of a potential disturbance is not adequate justification for suppressing student expression; the ability to show substantial facts that reasonably support a forecast of disruption is required. Past experience under similar circumstances, current events influencing student actions and behavior, and instances of actual or threatened disruption relating to the material in question may be considered.

Colorado Student Free Expression Law

(Cite as: Colo. Rev. Stat. 22-1-120)

Section 22-1-120 — Rights of free expression for public school students

(1) The general assembly declares that students of the public schools shall have the right to exercise freedom of speech and of the press, and no expression contained in a student publication, whether or not such publication is school-sponsored, shall be subject to prior restraint except for the types of expression described in subsection (3) of this section. This section shall not prevent the advisor from encouraging expression which is consistent with high standards of English and journalism.

(2) If a publication written substantially by students is made generally available throughout a public school, it shall be a public forum for students of such school.

(3) Nothing in this section shall be interpreted to authorize the publication or distribution by students of the following:

- (a) Expression which is obscene;
- (b) Expression which is libelous, slanderous, or defamatory under state law;
- (c) Expression which is false as to any person who is not a public figure or involved in a matter of public concern;
- (d) Expression which creates a clear and present danger of the commission of unlawful acts, the violation of lawful school regulations, or the material and substantial disruption of the orderly operation of the school or which violates the rights of others to privacy.

(4) The board of education of each school district shall adopt a written publications code, which shall be consistent with the terms of this section and shall include reasonable provisions for the time, place, and manner of conducting free expression within the school district’s jurisdiction. Said publications code shall be distributed, posted, or otherwise made available to all students and teachers at the beginning of the 1991-92 school year and at the beginning of each school year thereafter.

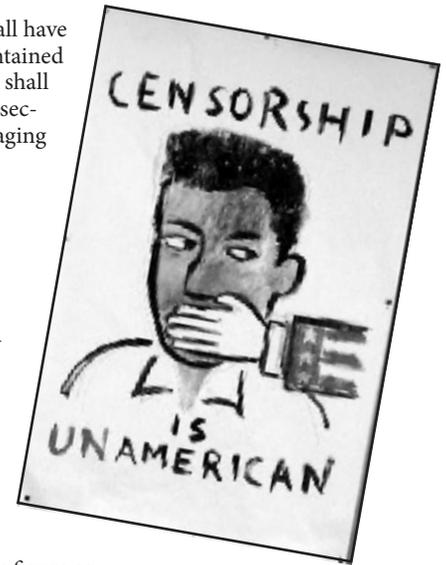
(5) (a) Student editors of school sponsored student publications shall be responsible for determining the news, opinion, and advertising content of their publications subject to the limitations of this section. It shall be the responsibility of the publications advisor of school-sponsored student publications within each school to supervise the production of such publications and to teach and encourage free and responsible expression and professional standards for English and journalism.

(b) For the purposes of this section, “publications advisor” means a person whose duties include the supervision of school-sponsored student publications.

(6) If participation in a school-sponsored publication is part of a school class or activity for which grades or school credits are given, the provisions of this section shall not be interpreted to interfere with the authority of the publications advisor for such school-sponsored publications to establish or limit writing assignments for the students working with the publication and to otherwise direct and control the learning experience that the publication is intended to provide.

(7) No expression made by students in the exercise of freedom of speech or freedom of the press shall be deemed to be an expression of school policy, and no school district employee, or parent, or legal guardian, or official of such school district shall be held liable in any civil or criminal action for any expression made or published by students.

(8) Nothing in this section shall be construed to limit the promulgation or enforcement of unlawful school regulations designed to control gangs. For this purpose of this section, the definition of “gang” shall be the definition found in section 19-2-1111(2)(d)(II), C.R.S.



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“Obscenity” for high school publications is usually interpreted as forms of expression that are vulgar, indecent, lewd or sexually explicit.

“Libelous statements” are false, unprivileged statements the average reader would interpret as statements of fact and which damage the reputation of an individual or business.

the rock editorial policy

There's a reason for everything we do, and there's a philosophy behind our decisions

Version 3.3, June, 2009

The goals of *The Rock*, the monthly student newspaper of Rock Canyon High School, are to inform, educate and entertain its readers; to provide a forum for the Rock Canyon community to express attitudes and opinions; to provide an educational opportunity for both the students who produce *The Rock* and those who read it; and to provide a medium for commercial messages.

The Rock receives some DCSD funds, though a majority of its income comes through the sale of advertising at the basic rate of \$50 per 1/8 page unit.

The newspaper is published nine times per year, approximately once every four weeks beginning in early September. It is distributed to students and faculty free of charge, with a limit of five copies per issue. Possession of more than five copies of this publication with intent to prevent other individuals from reading an edition is illegal. Subscriptions are available for \$15 per year, and are mailed to subscribers. *The Rock* also participates in exchange programs with numerous schools throughout the nation. Extra copies of the newspaper are distributed to the general public through numerous local supportive businesses and our feeder schools.

The Editorial Board retains the right to choose all content and to determine story priority. This Board is made up of 7 students – Executive Editor, News Editor, Sports Editor, Culture Editor, Visual Editor, Community Editor – with the adviser a non-voting member of the Board. This Board also oversees the finances of the publication as well as various production operations.

Work on The Rock is not limited strictly to members of the Newspaper Lab class, though anyone serious about staff membership must at least complete the Journalism course and at least one semester of Lab.

All material – writing (other than editorials), photography, or art – appearing in the newspaper will receive credit, with the method of credit being at the discretion of the Editorial Board.

The Editorial Board will select editorial topics. These editorials will not be signed by the writer, but will reflect the opinion of the majority of the Editorial Board. The Board takes full responsibility for all editorials.

Commentaries and columns, on the other hand, will be signed and reflect the views of the writer alone. They are not the official position of *The Rock*. Editorial cartoons fall into the same category as com-

mentaries.

Any person with an interest in the Rock Canyon community who has an opinion to be voiced is encouraged to submit letters to the editor. All letters must be signed, but anonymity may be requested. It will be granted only if deemed necessary by the Editorial Board. Each request will be reviewed on a case by case basis. Letters may be submitted to a designated box in the school library, brought to room 3000, mailed to Rock Canyon High School, care of *The Rock*, or e-mailed to the publication. All signatures will be verified through a phone call or personal interview.

Letters should be fewer than 300 words in length. If excessive editing is needed, the letter will be returned to the author for corrections. It is preferred that letters be typed, although handwritten copies will be accepted, if legible. *The Rock* reserves the right to edit any letter for grammatical errors, libelous content or space limitations.

The Rock will strive to present information in a fair, impartial, accurate and truthful manner. The newspaper will function in accord with all applicable laws, both in regards to the rights and restrictions of journalism. The Statement of Principles of the American Society of Newspaper Editors serves as the basis for the publication's ethical standards. The basis for the publication's legal positions include the DCSD policy and regulations pertaining to school publications and Colorado Rev. Stat. 22-1-120, student exercise of free expression.

The Rock reserves the right to refuse any advertising not found to be within the publication's standards, particularly in reference to good taste and to product and/or services that are illegal for the majority of high school readers.

In the event of error (omission, mis-identification, etc.) the Editorial Board will attempt to mitigate the damage. Every reasonable precaution is made in avoiding errors, but some amount of error is perhaps inevitable. Each case will be evaluated on its own merit.

Reporting on student, faculty and community deaths can be sensitive, and the Editorial Board will confine its coverage to the News and Echoes (opinion) sections. The publication will always take into consideration the wishes of families, but maintains its responsibility to report truthfully on all aspects of life, and death, at Rock Canyon.

As members of a student newspaper, reporters and editors may find themselves aware of violations of the law committed by students which do not involve

authorities. However, only crimes and transgressions that result in official charges will be reported in *The Rock*. It is not the Editorial Board's goal to embarrass any member of the Rock Canyon community, but that discretion must be balanced with the Board's responsibility to dispel rumors, report the facts and provide perspective on the community.

The Editorial Board will regularly survey the student body on topical matters. These surveys will always be conducted through a random selection of Advisement sections, and will strive to include a random sampling of all four grades and both genders. A minimum of 240 students will be surveyed, resulting in an error rate of plus or minus four percent.

Reporters for The Rock will always identify themselves as functioning in that capacity before any interview or survey. It is not our intention to catch people in embarrassing or misleading quotations. The editors reserve the right to correct gross grammatical errors in quotations, if the source's meaning will be distorted without such editing. Otherwise, quotations will be reported as stated by informed sources. **There is one exception** to this policy, and that is in the case of undercover reporting. This happens rarely, and only after considerable discussion within the Editorial Board. The Board recognizes that some stories cannot be adequately reported when sources are fully warned of the potential of publication. The authorities may be consulted prior to any undercover operation, and students will not be asked to break the law in pursuit of a story.

Sources will not be allowed to read the final text of any story to be published in *The Rock* prior to publication. Reporters may read back quotations to sources, and will follow up with sources who wish to supplement their initial interviews. The Editorial Board will consider the relative experience of the source in dealing with the press in each case.

Sources may wish to have their names withheld from a particular story, and some may have valid reasons for this. The Editorial Board will decide on a case by case basis whether anonymity may be granted to protect the source. The Board recognizes that a high school is a very confined community of young people, and that some topics, while important to the community, may involve public embarrassment and official sanctions if names are printed. Once anonymity is granted, the Board must stand behind its decision, whatever the pressure. This, therefore, is a weighty decision.