

RCW 28A.600.027 Student expression in school-sponsored media.

(1) Student editors of school-sponsored media are responsible for determining the news, opinion, feature, and advertising content of the media subject to the limitations of subsection (2) of this section. This subsection does not prevent a student media adviser from teaching professional standards of English and journalism to the student journalists. A student media adviser may not be terminated, transferred, removed, or otherwise disciplined for complying with this section.

(2) School officials may only prohibit student expression that:

(a) Is libelous or slanderous;

(b) Is an unwarranted invasion of privacy;

(c) Violates federal or state laws, rules, or regulations;

(d) Incites students to violate federal or state laws, rules, or regulations;

(e) Violates school district policy or procedure related to harassment, intimidation, or bullying pursuant to *RCW 28A.300.285 or the prohibition on discrimination pursuant to RCW 28A.642.010;

(f) Inciting of students so as to create a clear and present danger of:

(i) The commission of unlawful acts on school premises;

(ii) The violation of lawful school district policy or procedure;

or

(iii) The material and substantial disruption of the orderly operation of the school. A school official must base a forecast of material and substantial disruption on specific facts, including past experience in the school and current events influencing student behavior, and not on undifferentiated fear or apprehension; or

(g) Is in violation of the federal communications act or applicable federal communication commission rules or regulations.

(3) Political expression by students in school-sponsored media shall not be deemed the use of public funds for political purposes, for purposes of the prohibitions of RCW 42.17A.550.

(4) Any student, individually or through his or her parent or guardian, enrolled in a public high school may file an appeal of any alleged violation of subsection (1) of this section pursuant to chapter 28A.645 RCW.

(5) Expression made by students in school-sponsored media is not necessarily the expression of school policy. Neither a school official nor the governing board of the school or school district may be held responsible in any civil or criminal action for any expression made or published by students in school-sponsored media.

(6) Each school district that includes a high school shall adopt a written student freedom of expression policy in accordance with this section. The policy may include reasonable provisions for the time, place, and manner of student expression.

(7) The definitions in this subsection apply throughout this section unless the context clearly requires otherwise.

(a) "School-sponsored media" means any matter that is prepared, substantially written, published, or broadcast by student journalists, that is distributed or generally made available, either free of charge or for a fee, to members of the student body, and that is prepared under the direction of a student media adviser. "School-sponsored media" does not include media that is intended for distribution or transmission solely in the classrooms in which they are produced.

(b) "Student journalist" means a student who gathers, compiles, writes, edits, photographs, records, or prepares information for dissemination in school-sponsored media.

(c) "Student media adviser" means a person who is employed, appointed, or designated by the school to supervise, or provide instruction relating to, school-sponsored media. [2018 c 125 § 2.]

***Reviser's note:** RCW 28A.300.285 was repealed by 2019 c 194 § 5.

Finding—Intent—2018 c 125: "The legislature finds that freedom of expression through school-sponsored media is a fundamental principle in our democratic society granted by the First Amendment to the United States Constitution and by Article I, section 5 of the state Constitution. It is the intent of the legislature to protect freedom of expression through school-sponsored media for both public school students and students at public institutions of higher education in this state in order to encourage students to become educated, informed, and responsible members of society." [2018 c 125 § 1.]