

Student Journalist Policy

(Minnesota Statutes § 121A.80 compliant)

1. Purpose

This policy ensures that student journalists in grades 6–8 at Friendship Academy of the Arts can exercise freedom of speech and freedom of the press in school-sponsored media, in alignment with Minnesota Statutes § 121A.80 (2024).

2. Definitions

- **Student Journalist:** A student at Friendship Academy of the Arts in grades 6 through 8 who gathers, compiles, writes, edits, photographs, records, or otherwise prepares information for dissemination in school-sponsored media. Be it noted that all opinions and viewpoints expressed in school-sponsored media are solely those of the student authors and do not represent school or district policies.
- **School-Sponsored Media:** Media that is:
 - Prepared, wholly or substantially written, published, broadcast, or otherwise disseminated by a student journalist enrolled in a school district or charter school;
 - Distributed or generally made available to students in the school;
 - Prepared under the supervision of a student media adviser.
 - Excludes materials prepared solely for classroom distribution or yearbooks
- **Student Media Adviser:** A qualified teacher (per MN Stat § 122A.16) employed or appointed by the district, designated to supervise student journalists or provide instruction related to school-sponsored media. Advisers oversee for legal compliance but do **not** censor protected content.
- **School Official:** A school principal (per § 123B.147) or other person with administrative control or supervision in the school.

3. Rights and Protections

- Student journalists have the right to exercise freedom of speech and press in school-sponsored media—regardless of whether:
 - The media receives school/district funding,
 - Is produced using school equipment or facilities,
 - Is part of a class or course.
- They have the right to determine the content of news, opinions, features, and advertising (subject to limitations in section 4).
- Schools must not discipline or retaliate against student journalists for exercising these rights under paragraph (a) or the First Amendment.
- Student media advisers similarly must not face retaliation for supporting a student's rights.
- Advisers retain the ability to teach professional standards of English and journalism.

4. Unprotected Expression

This policy does **not** protect:

1. Defamatory content,
 2. Profane, harassing, threatening, or intimidating remarks,
 3. Unwarranted invasions of privacy,
 4. Expression that violates state or federal law,
 5. Content causing **material and substantial disruption** of school activities,
 6. Content directing imminent lawless action or violating lawful school policies/rules (e.g., under § 121A.03/031).
- Advertisements promoting products or services unlawful for minors are prohibited.
 - Prior restraint (i.e., review *before* publication) is allowed only under these specific circumstances.

5. Policy Adoption and Posting

- The school district or charter school must adopt a student journalist policy consistent with § 121A.80.
- This policy must be posted on Friendship Academy's website.

6. Commitment to Accuracy, Fairness, and Ethics

Student journalists are encouraged to:

- Strive for **accuracy** in all reporting, ensuring that information is fact-checked and reliable.
- Demonstrate **fairness** by presenting issues in a balanced manner and including multiple perspectives when appropriate.
- Show **respect** for the rights and dignity of all individuals in their reporting.
- Uphold the **professional standards of English and journalism**, including proper grammar, clarity, and adherence to recognized journalistic ethics.

Student media advisers will support students in learning and applying these standards, consistent with their role under Minnesota Statutes § 121A.80, subdivision 3(c), which allows advisers to “teach professional standards of English and journalism to student journalists.”