



*“Congress shall make no law...abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press....”  
-The First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States of America*

*“The vigilant protection of constitutional freedoms is nowhere more vital than in the community of American schools.”*

*-Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District*

### STATEMENT OF POLICY:

The Voice of Terra Linda High School’s Editorial and Ethics Policy pertains to all components of the TLHS Journalism program, including the newspaper, *The Voice*, the website, [thevoice.srscs.org](http://thevoice.srscs.org), and any other future programs. The full editorial and ethics policy is available at [thevoice.srscs.org](http://thevoice.srscs.org).

TLHS Journalism is the student-produced news and information created and executed by TLHS Journalism students. TLHS Journalism has been established as a designated public forum for student editors, reporters, and other staff to inform and educate their readers as well as for the discussion of issues of concern to the audience. It will not be reviewed or restrained, commonly called “prior review,” by school officials before publication and distribution. Advisers may – and should – coach and discuss content during all stages of the production process.

Because school officials do not engage in prior review, and the content of TLHS Journalism is determined by and reflects only the views of the student staff and not the school officials or the school itself, its student editorial board and responsible student staff members assume complete responsibility for the content of the publication.

The Terra Linda High School Journalism program adheres to the “Seven Key Ethics Points” created by National Scholastic Press Association, the Society of Professional Journalists’ Ethical Guidelines, and the Editorial Policy adapted from the Student Press Law Center.

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### ETHICS POLICY

#### SEVEN KEY ETHICS POINTS:

1. **Be Responsible.**
2. **Be Fair.**
3. **Be Honest.**
4. **Be Accurate.**
5. **Be Independent.**
6. **Minimize Harm.**
7. **Be Accountable.**

#### NSPA Code of Ethics for High School Journalists

##### **1 Be Responsible.**

**(1.1)** Understand that student journalists are custodians, not owners, of their news medium, and they have an inherent obligation in decision-making to consider the heritage of their news medium, the values of the school community, the tenets of the school mission, the pedagogic concerns of school officials, and the wants and best interests of readers/listeners/ viewers.

- (1.2) Keep** yourself, the reporter, out of print. It's not about you; it's about the readers/listeners/viewers you serve. For the most part, student reporters and editors should not appear in the media they represent unless they are legitimate newsmakers. In those cases, the particular student journalists should have no influence on the coverage, and any conflict of interest should be disclosed.
- (1.3) Strive** for substantive stories that produce insight, generate account- ability and inspire reader interest and engagement. Do not yield to those who would suppress such insight or resist accountability.
- (1.4)** Remember that protections of the First Amendment were created to serve not the press but rather the people, and as a journalist guard the people's interests above all others.
- (1.5)** Know the legal rights of student journalists and balance those rights with ethical responsibilities. Having the right to say something doesn't make it right to say it.
- (1.6)** Defend relentlessly the First Amendment rights of students. Protect relentlessly media advisers from re- criminations brought about by their advocacy of student rights.
- (1.7)** Demonstrate credibility and exemplify trustworthiness, reliability, depend- ability and integrity in and beyond journalism work. Your personal at- tributes affect the integrity of the news medium you work for.
- (1.8)** Be careful in covering stories about wrongdoing not to perpetuate misdeeds. Printing a photograph of malicious graffiti expands the vandal's canvas.
- (1.9)** Do not allow vulgar or profane language to overshadow the essence of a story. If used, have compelling purpose and rationale to justify the audience's need to read/hear vulgar or profane words. Consider alternatives to using profanity. For example, words may be partially obscured or bleeped. Do not use profanity in opinion articles, such as editorials, columns and letters to the editor.
- (1.10)** Maintain a commendable work ethic—pursuing excellence, taking initiative, keeping to task, meeting deadlines and taking care of the work- place and equipment. Inspire fellow staff members to do the same.
- (1.11)** Cultivate respect for your adviser, fellow staffers, school officials and others. Nurture an effective working relationship within the staff. Keep emotions in check. Support team effort in gathering and reporting news. Be loyal in protecting the best interests of your news medium.
- (1.12)** Know when to show restraint in pursuing stories. For example, a spontaneous demonstration in the cafeteria by three students protesting the in- school suspension of a friend may receive notoriety, but its news value likely is insignificant. Furthermore, coverage of the incident may bolster the participants and embolden others to disrupt the cafeteria too.
- (1.13)** Exemplify effective leadership through the power of performance rather than the power of position. Express genuine interest in every staff member. Be sensitive to other points of view. Inspire teamwork and intrinsic motivation. Prioritize mentoring over clout.

## **2 Be Fair.**

- (2.1)** Begin the search for truth with a neutral mind. Do not prejudge is- sues or events; wait until the facts and perspectives have been gathered and weighed. Discover truth without letting personal biases get in the way. Teach people to live by truth by presenting information objectively in a context that reveals relevance and significance.
- (2.2)** Explore controversial issues dispassionately and impartially. Don't go into a story with a personal agenda.
- (2.3)** Justify coverage decisions by showing newsworthiness of story. Do not use your position with the paper to inflate your ego, favor friends, or advance other personal agendas that are self- serving. If you profile an "athlete of the week," be ready to show the criteria and objective process for selection.
- (2.4)** Pursue a panoramic vision of issues and events to achieve balance and fairness. You may not know what the story really is until the story un- folds as you research it and talk with sources.
- (2.5)** Welcome diverse perspectives and particularly rebuttals to editorial positions.
- (2.6)** Refrain from "getting in the last word" by attaching an editor's note to a letter to the editor. In rare circumstances, a clarification note may be justified.
- (2.7)** Take initiative to give subjects of allegations an opportunity to respond in a timely manner. Make a serious effort to contact those subjects before going with a story in order to allow a response.
- (2.8)** Label or otherwise clearly identify editorials, opinion columns and personal or institutional perspectives.
- (2.9)** Disclose any potential conflict of interest by a journalist or news medium. For example, conflicts of interests could involve personal relationships with news subjects or sources, associations with organizations, gifts and "perks" and vested interests in issues or events.

(2.10) Appreciate the fact that at any given time a reporter sees only a part of what can be seen. Don't jump to conclusions.

### 3 Be Honest.

(3.1) Do not plagiarize. Plagiarism is defined as the word-for-word duplication of another person's writing or close summarization of the work of another source without giving the source credit. A comparable prohibition applies to the use of graphics. Information obtained from a published work must be independently verified before it can be reported as a new, original story. This policy also forbids lifting verbatim paragraphs from a wire service without attribution or pointing out that wire stories were used in compiling the story. Material that is published on the Internet should be treated in the same way as if it were published in more traditional broadcast media. Because plagiarism can significantly undermine the public trust of journalists and journalism, editors should be prepared to consider severe penalties for documented cases of plagiarism, including suspension or dismissal from the staff. Plagiarism is not only unethical, it is illegal if the material is copyright protected.

(3.2) Do not fabricate any aspect journalism work without full disclosure. The use of composite characters or imaginary situations or characters will not be allowed in news or feature stories. A columnist may, occasionally, use such an approach in developing a piece, but it must be clear to the reader that the person or situation is fictional and that the column is commentary and not reporting. The growth of narrative story development (storytelling devices) means that reporters and editors should be especially careful to not mix fact and fiction, and not embellish fact with fictional details, regardless of their significance.

(3.3) Identify yourself as a reporter and do not misrepresent yourself while engaged in news media tasks. For example, a source deserves to know if he is engaged in casual conversation with a student or more guarded conversation with a reporter. For another example, don't misrepresent yourself by pretending to conduct an official survey for the school when in fact you are conducting it for the student newspaper.

(3.4) Do not tolerate dishonesty of any staff member. One dishonest act of an individual can profoundly damage the reputation of a whole news organization. Be completely honest in reporting. Remember, half-truths can be just as egregious as outright lies.

(3.5) Stand by promises, including protecting the identity of confidential sources. Consider sources' motives before promising anonymity. Verify information given by an anonymous source. Be cautious in making promises; consult editors; take time to consider ramifications of promises; don't be pressured.

(3.6) Be guarded about the credibility of sources, and confirm questionable assertions. Do not be misled by insincere or unreliable sources. Try not to make reader guess whether a source is sincere. For example, an untruthful or embellished Q&A response can taint belief in the sincerity of other contributors as well.

(3.7) Be cautious of using satire. Because it involves irony and sarcasm, it is often misunderstood. Because it usually involves ridicule, it could be carried to an inappropriate level in a school setting. Because special April Fool's Day editions can damage a paper's integrity and credibility, and because they can pose a libel risk, they are strongly discouraged.

(3.8) Do not electronically alter the content of news and feature photos in any way that affects the truthfulness of the subject and context of the subject or scene. Technical enhancements, such as contrast and exposure adjustments, are allowed so long as they do not create a false impression. Photo content may be altered for creative purposes as a special effect for a feature story if the caption or credit line includes that fact and if an average reader would not mistake the photo for reality.

Strive to record original action in photos, and make sure readers are aware if a photo is set up or posed.

(3.9) If using a recording device, get interviewee's permission or make it obvious with the placement of the device that you intend to record. Know state laws regarding the legality of secretly recording private conversation.

(3.10) Do not be cavalier about truth. Truth breeds trust — an essential component of free and responsible media.

(3.11) Know "journalistic truth" must be accurate, should promote understanding and should be fair and balanced.

### 4 Be Accurate.

(4.1) Remember that accuracy is often more than just a question of getting the facts right. Accuracy also requires putting the facts together in a context that is relevant and reveals the truth.

(4.2) Be a first-hand witness whenever you can. Gather raw facts. News releases, press conferences, official statements and the like are no substitute for first-hand accounts and original investigation.

- (4.3) Review story to make sure information is presented completely and in proper context that will not mislead the news consumer.
- (4.4) Know your subject's history to help measure his credibility as a source. If the subject has a reputation for embellishing information, make sure to verify information with another source.
- (4.5) Be willing to read back quotes to check for accuracy. Sometimes a source may not be saying what he really means.
- (4.6) Record accurate minutes of student media staff meetings that involve policy decisions and other actions that will have a lasting effect.
- (4.7) Verify questionnaires answered by sources. Make sure no one posed as another person. Check comments for sincerity and accuracy.
- (4.8) Tell not only what you know but also what you do not know. Invite a source or news consumer to fill you in on something he knows but you don't.
- (4.9) Engage in fact-checking every story. Train copyreaders to spot red flags and to verify questionable information.
- (4.10) Be cautious about information received via the Internet. Not all sources are consistently credible, including sites such as Wikipedia, YouTube, blogs, and Facebook. Verify questionable information by consulting other sources.

### **5 Be Independent.**

- (5.1) Recognize inherent differences between the professional news media and the student news media, and understand that the latter will always be subject to some oversight by school administrators. Show administrators how it is in their best interests and the school community's best interests to recognize student independence, within the parameters of law, in controlling the content of their news medium.
- (5.2) Work to have your student news medium recognized as a public forum, which will provide greater independence in controlling editorial content.
- (5.3) Resist prior review as a practice of administrative oversight in favor of less intrusive and more effective oversight strategies. Prior review dilutes student responsibility and puts more responsibility in the hands of administrators. Should the journalism experience teach responsibility or obedience?
- (5.4) **Hold** no obligation to news sources and newsmakers. Journalists and news media should avoid even the appearance of conflict of interest.
- (5.5) **Accept** no gifts, favors or things of value that could compromise journalistic independence, journalistic ethics or objectivity in the reporting task at hand. For example, a reporter covering a Spanish Club buffet event should not put his or her note pad and camera down to partake in the event.
- (5.6) **Declare** any personal or unavoidable conflict of interest, perceived or certain, in covering stories or participating in editorial or policy decisions.
- (5.7) **Learn** state laws regarding freedom of information, open meetings and shield laws. News media serve an essential function as a watchdog of government, and student journalists should not be asked to engage in any activity that is the responsibility of outside agencies, such as law enforcement, school administration and government. Cooperation or involvement in the work of these agencies should be restricted to what is required by law. Legal agencies, such as the Student Press Law Center in Virginia, may be contacted for advice.
- (5.8) **Avoid** working for competing news media or for people, groups or organizations that the journalist covers.
- (5.9) **Show** courage and perseverance in holding school officials and other decision-makers accountable when student control of student news media is threatened. Remember, students who produce non-public forum news media still have some rights regarding content decisions.
- (5.10) Give no favored news treatment to advertisers or special interest groups.
- (5.11) Guard against participating in any school organizations or activities that would significantly create a conflict of interest. Journalists particularly should avoid holding office in student government, or they should be prepared to recuse themselves in either journalism or government forums when decision-making could pose a conflict of interest.
- (5.12) Do not use a byline for editorials that represent the opinions of the news medium.

### **6 Minimize Harm.**

- (6.1) Look beyond the likely impacts of each story, keeping alert to identify and respond to any unintended or undesirable consequences the story may hold in the shadows. Identify options for dealing with

undesirable consequences. Determine if full disclosure of information may jeopardize student welfare unnecessarily; if so, decide what can be held back without jeopardizing the public's right to know.

**(6.2)** Report immediately to school authorities any person who threatens the safety of himself or others.

**(6.3)** Choose an option less offensive than self-censorship when it is prudent to do so. For example, the son of a secretary accused of embezzling from the student activity fund may be in distress when learning the student paper will cover the story. Tapping the school counselor rather than engaging in self-censorship is a better remedy to help the son deal with his fear of humiliation.

**(6.4)** Do not put student reporters in legal jeopardy or physical danger. Under-cover stories may be unethical and may pose significant risks. Student journalists must obey the law. For example, a minor student who illegally purchases liquor to show readers/ listeners which stores violate the law also incriminates himself. Covering gang issues and other volatile topics require close faculty supervision and safeguards to protect student welfare.

**(6.5)** Be especially sensitive to the maturity and vulnerability of young people when gathering and reporting information. Take particular care to protect young sources from their own poor judgment when their comments can put themselves and others in jeopardy.

**(6.6)** Do not allow sources to use a news medium in malicious ways or ways that serve self-interest above the best interests of news consumers. Be on constant guard to spot clandestine efforts publish inappropriate messages.

**(6.7)** Show respect and compassion for students who may be affected detrimentally by news coverage.

**(6.8)** Be sensitive when covering stories involving people in distress, and reject unreasonable intrusion by student media in their lives.

**(6.9)** Balance the public's right to be informed with an individual's right to be let alone.

**(6.10)** Understand and respect the different privacy expectations for private citizens, public figures and public officials when covering issues and events.

**(6.11)** Be cautious about identifying students accused of criminal acts or disciplinary infractions. Avoid naming minors. (Check local jurisdiction for legal definition of a minor.) If a student is legally an adult, be ready to show a compelling reason for identifying the name. Relevancy and news value can constitute a compelling reason. For example, if an 18-year-old student were suspended from school for attending the homecoming dance drunk, the name likely would not be used in a news story. However, if the student is the homecoming king, the news element of prominence may justify using the name. The names of some crime victims, especially victims of sex crimes, should be protected from disclosure when prudent. Do not implicate by association. For example, do not say, "a school secretary was arrested and charged with ...." The reader could suspect any school secretary.

## **7 Be Accountable.**

**(7.1)** Admit mistakes and publicize prompt corrections.

**(7.2)** Expose unethical practices of student journalists and student news media, and make remedies.

**(7.3)** Use press passes for admission or special privileges only in the capacity of a working journalist.

**(7.4)** Provide news media consumers with opportunities to evaluate student news media.

**(7.5)** Be friendly and sincere in welcoming criticism and weighing grievances from news consumers.

**(7.6)** Have dialogue with student media overseers, and be prepared to justify decisions, policies and actions.

**(7.7)** Keep notes and recordings of inter-views for an indefinite time as evidence of responsible reporting.

**(7.8)** Hold school administrators and other student media overseers accountable for their actions and decisions just as they hold student journalists and student media accountable for their actions and decisions.

**(7.9)** Use the power of student media judiciously, and be prepared to provide rationale for any decisions or actions taken by news staffs.

**(7.10)** Use anonymous sources only if there is a compelling reason and only if the information given can be verified through another, known source. When sources are not given, people may question the credibility not only of the source but also of the news medium.

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## **EDITORIAL POLICY**

### **I. FREEDOM OF THE PRESS**

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

The media will serve the best interest of the students and faculty of Terra Linda High School, keeping itself free from any commercial obligations distracting from this purpose; this is defined by the media itself;

- Any decisions affecting the publications on all levels will be made by the editorial board, the adviser is allowed to give legal advice and his/her opinion, but the final decision rests in the hands of the editorial board;
- Only the editorial board may prevent material it judges to be in violation of the media editorial policy, from being printed;
- All media will vigorously resist all attempts at censorship, particularly pre-publication censorship;
- All media retain the right to publish any and all material attained through an interview by a staff member of the publications staff, holding that the interviewee was made aware that the information could be published in any form at any time;
- All student media referenced in this editorial policy are designated public forums;
- Student journalists may use print and electronic media to report news and information, to communicate with other students and individuals, to ask questions of and consult with experts and to gather material to meet their newsgathering and research needs;
- TLHS Journalism and its staff 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;
- TLHS Journalism will not publish any material determined by student editors or the student editorial board to be unprotected, that is, material that is libelous, obscene, materially disruptive of the school process, an unwarranted 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;
- 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. OFFICIAL STUDENT MEDIA

- A. Responsibilities of Student Journalists:** Students who work on official, school-sponsored student publications or electronic media determine the content of their respective publications and are responsible for that content. These students should:
- a. Determine the content of the student media;
  - b. Strive to produce media based upon professional standards of accuracy, objectivity and fairness;
  - c. Review material to improve sentence structure, grammar, spelling and punctuation;
  - d. Check and verify all facts and verify the accuracy of all quotations; and
  - e. In the case of editorials or letters to the editor concerning controversial issues, determine the need for rebuttal comments and opinions and provide space therefore if appropriate.
- B. Protected Speech**
- a. School officials cannot:
    - i. Ban student expression solely because it is controversial, takes extreme, "fringe" or minority opinions, or is distasteful, unpopular or unpleasant;
    - ii. Ban the publication or distribution of material relating to sexual issues including, but not limited to, virginity, birth control and sexually-transmitted diseases (including AIDS);
    - iii. Censor or punish the occasional use of indecent, vulgar or so called "four-letter" words in student publications;
    - iv. Prohibit criticism of the policies, practices or performance of teachers, school officials, the school itself or of any public officials;
    - v. Cut off funds to official student media because of disagreement over editorial policy;
    - vi. Ban student expression that merely advocates illegal conduct without proving that such speech is directed toward and will actually cause imminent unlawful action.
    - vii. the publication or distribution by students of material written by non-students;
    - viii. Prohibit the endorsement of candidates for student office or for public office at any level.
  - b. Commercial Speech
    - i. Advertising is constitutionally protected expression. Student media may accept advertising. Acceptance or rejection of advertising is within the purview of the publication staff, which may accept any ads except those for products or services that are illegal for all students. Ads for political candidates and ballot issues may be accepted; however publication staffs are encouraged to solicit ads from all sides on such issues.
- C. Unprotected Expression:** The following types of student expression will not be protected:
1. Material that is "obscene as to minors." "Obscene as to minors is defined as material that meets all three of the following requirements:

- a. the average person, applying contemporary community standards, would find that the publication, taken as a whole, appeals to a minor's prurient interest in sex; and
  - b. the publication depicts or describes, in a patently offensive way, sexual conduct such as ultimate sexual acts (normal or perverted), masturbation and lewd exhibition of the genitals; and;
  - c. the work, taken as a whole, lacks serious literary, artistic, political or scientific value.
  - d. Indecent or vulgar language is not obscene.
2. Libelous material. Libelous statements are provably false and unprivileged statements of fact that demonstrate injury to an individual's or business's reputation in the community. If the allegedly libeled party is a "public figure" or "public official" as defined below, then school officials must show that the false statement was published "with actual malice," i.e., that the student journalists knew that the statement was false or that they published it with reckless disregard for the truth without trying to verify the truthfulness of the statement.
- a. A public official is a person who holds an elected or appointed public office and exercises a significant amount of governmental authority.
  - b. A public figure is a person who either has sought the public's attention or is well known because of personal achievements or actions.
  - c. School employees will be considered public officials or public figures in relationship to articles concerning their school-related activities.
  - d. When an allegedly libelous statement concerns an individual who is not a public official or a public figure, school officials must show that the false statement was published willfully or negligently, i.e., the student journalist who wrote or published the statement has failed to exercise reasonably prudent care.
  - e. Students are free to express opinions. Specifically, a student may criticize school policy or the performance of teachers, administrators, school officials and other school employees.
3. Material that will cause "a material and substantial disruption of school activities."
- a. Disruption is defined as student rioting, unlawful seizures of property, destruction of property, or substantial student participation in a school boycott, sit-in, walk-out or other related form of activity. Material such as racial, religious or ethnic slurs, however distasteful, is not in and of itself disruptive under these guidelines. Threats of violence are not materially disruptive without some act in furtherance of that threat or a reasonable belief and expectation that the author of the threat has the capability and intent of carrying through on that threat in a manner that does not allow acts other than suppression of speech to mitigate the threat in a timely manner. Material that stimulates heated discussion or debate does not constitute the type of disruption prohibited.
  - b. For student media to be considered disruptive, specific facts must exist upon which one could reasonably forecast that a likelihood of immediate, substantial material disruption to normal school activity would occur if the material were further distributed or has occurred as a result of the material's distribution or dissemination. Mere undifferentiated fear or apprehension of disturbance is not enough; school administrators must be able affirmatively to show substantial facts that reasonably support a forecast of likely disruption.
  - c. In determining whether student media is disruptive, consideration must be given to the context of the distribution as well as the content of the material. In this regard, consideration should be given to past experience in the school with similar material, past experience in the school in dealing with and supervising the students in the school, current events influencing student attitudes and behavior and whether there have been any instances of actual or threatened disruption prior to or contemporaneously with the dissemination of the student publication in question.
  - d. School officials must protect advocates of unpopular viewpoints.
  - e. "School activity" means educational student activity sponsored by the school and includes, by way of example and not by way of limitation, classroom work, official assemblies and other similar gatherings, school athletic contests, band concerts, school plays and scheduled in-school lunch periods.

### III. THE EDITORIAL BOARD

- a) The editorial board will consist of all student staff editors.
- b) The editorial board decides on all decisions that pertain directly to the TLHS media and their interests.

- c) No member of the editorial board shall have more than one vote on the board.
- d) All members of the editorial board and the adviser will elect a replacement for board members who have been dismissed.
- e) All members of the editorial board are expected to know their duties and jobs in the room and must understand the consequences of not fulfilling said jobs.
- f) 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 shall remain with the student editorial board.
- g) The duly appointed editor or co-editors shall interpret and enforce this editorial policy.

#### **IV. THE ADVISER**

- a) The adviser is a professional teaching staff member and is in charge of the class just as in a conventional classroom situation.
- b) Is a certified journalism teacher that serves as a professional role model, motivator, catalyst for ideas and professionalism, and an educational resource.
- c) Provides a journalistic, professional learning atmosphere for students by allowing them to make the decision of content for the media and ensuring the media will remain an open forum.
- d) Guides the newspaper staff in accordance with approved editorial policy and aids the educational process related to producing the newspaper.
- e) May caution, act as legal consultant and educator terms of unprotected speech, but has no power over censorship or veto except for constitutionally valid reasons.
- f) Will keep abreast of the latest trends on journalism and share these with students.
- g) Will submit the school newspaper, yearbook, podcast, and online content produced by the students to rating services and contests in order for the school publications staff to receive feedback.
- h) Will forward any received correspondence and/or information to the appropriate editors.
- i) Will provide information to the staff about journalism scholarships and other financial aid, and make available information and contacts concerning journalism as a career.
- j) Will work with the faculty and administration to help them understand the freedoms accorded to the students and the professional goals of the school publications.
- k) The adviser will not act as a censor or determine the content of the paper. 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 student media that is determined and published by the student staff

#### **V. THE BUILDING ADMINISTRATION**

- a) The Terra Linda High School administration will provide the students of TLHS with a qualified journalism instructor to serve as a professional role model, adequate classroom equipment, and space for a sound journalism program.
- b) TLHS administration will offer equal opportunity to minority and/or marginalized students to participate in journalism programs.
- c) TLHS administration is not required to view and approve publication content before publishing.

#### **VI. CONTENT OF TLHS MEDIA**

##### **A. INTRODUCTION:**

All content decisions will be made in occurrence to the following provisions, while keeping in mind that the overall purpose, role and goal of all TLHS Journalism is to

1. Inform, interpret, and entertain their viewers through accurate and factual reports, where information has been thoroughly gathered and information has been completely verified;
2. Serve as an educational laboratory experience for those on staff;
3. Be accurate, fair, and impartial in its coverage of issues that affect the school community;
4. TLHS Media will not avoid publishing a story solely on the basis of possible dissent or controversy;
5. Cover the total school population as effectively and accurately as possible;
6. The staff of TLHS Media will 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 concerning accuracy, responsibility, integrity, conflict of interest, impartiality, fair play, freedom of the press, independence, sensationalism, personal privacy, obstruction of justice, creditability and advertising.

**B. REGARDING PROFANITY**

1. The media will not print unnecessary profanity.
2. The editorial board will make the decision on whether content is considered profane or whether it is a cultural or non-vulgar slang term.
3. The editorial board reserves the right to edit quotes for unnecessary profanity or unnecessarily offensive words, quotes that have been edited will be noted accordingly when published.
4. Any edited quote will be read back to the source prior to publishing and sources will have a chance to make changes.
5. Staff interviewers have the right to ask a source when necessary to repeat a quote without the use of profane language.

**C. REGARDING STAFF WRITING**

1. All writing in the media, other than letters to the editor in the newsmagazine, will be written by students of the journalism program and will not be accepted otherwise.
2. TLHS students outside of the media staffs will have the opportunity to submit writing to the media.
3. Any writing submitted from an outside source for use will be accepted upon request of the editorial board or when open opportunities arise, and will be viewed by EICs and adviser for verification.
4. Any material submitted from an outside source can be edited by the editorial board and must comply with this policy.
5. Writing must be the original work of the writer and not previously published in any publication, unless otherwise specified by the adviser and EICs.

**D. REGARDING EDITORIALS**

1. All editorials printed will be bylined as: "on behalf of Editorial Staff".
2. All members of the appropriate staff may submit editorial ideas to the editorial board.
3. The editorial board will determine all printed editorial subject matter.
4. The media will not publish any material for which there is evidence that the author is using the paper for inappropriate personal gain.
5. The media will endeavor to provide a chance for comment on all sides of a critical issue in the same edition.
6. The editorial board, which consists of the staff's student editors, will determine the content, including all unsigned editorials. The views stated in editorials represent that of a majority of the editorial board. Signed columns or reviews represent only the opinion of the author.

**E. REGARDING CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES**

1. All coverage of controversial issues will occur upon a timely subject.
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, unwarranted invasive of privacy.
5. The media will not attack
6. If question on the veracity of publication persists, the issue will be brought to the editorial board who must 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 POV omitted?
  - e. How would we feel if the story was about ourselves or someone we know?
  - f. What are the consequences' of the publication?
  - g. Is there a logical explanation to anyone who challenges issue?
  - h. Is it worth risking our credibility?
  - i. What are the alternatives?

**F. REGARDING BYLINES**

1. All articles, graphics, photos, art, columns, pages, reviews, and other material creatively conceived, with exception to staff editorials, mug shots and cutouts 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.

#### **G. REGARDING NEWS AND FEATURES**

1. The media will specialize in and emphasize on informing their readers of school news and unique students of the Terra Linda High School community.
2. The media will cover community, state, national, and international news if it is directly relevant to the school community, and includes local angle.
3. The media will strive to provide coverage to all school organizations and functions.
4. When faced with the undesirable news such as student or staff or faculty crimes, the publications will endeavor to publish the facts correctly, explain the issue, and put a stop to any speculative stories that inevitably develop.
5. Major district issues and news will be priority over school news (these major issues will be decided by the editorial board).

#### **H. REGARDING DEATHS**

1. Any current student, staff member, faculty member or building administrator that dies during the year may be recognized in the school media.
2. The media will publish factual information (date of birth, date of death, survivors, organizations, hobbies, interests) in a 300-word obituary including one mug shot if possible in newspaper and [thevoice.srcs.org](http://thevoice.srcs.org).
3. The school media 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 editorial board reserves the final say in publication of cause of death. Suicide will not be listed as a cause of death.
4. The school media will treat all deaths in a tasteful, respectful way.
5. An issue, or portion of an issue, should not be dedicated to or in memory of the deceased.

#### **I. REGARDING ILLUSTRATIONS, PHOTOGRAPHS, GRAPHICS, ETC.**

1. All cutlines/captions will record the subject and other necessary information in the photo.
2. All photographs must be captioned and bylined, with the exception of mugs and cutouts.
3. Bylines are required on all online photos and galleries.
4. Any photographs that contain any inappropriate attire or actions must be reshot.
5. Artwork represents the interpretations of the artist, not necessarily of the staff or TLHS.
6. The publications will not publish any photos, illustrations etc. that ridicule, demean, or misleadingly represent any individual or group.
7. Electronic manipulations changing the essential truth of the photo or illustration will be clearly labeled if used.

#### **J. REGARDING ERRORS**

1. Concerns about errors in the school media may be submitted through the adviser, the phone number to the classroom is 415-492-3100, email is [dtow@srcs.org](mailto:dtow@srcs.org) /[tlthevoice@srcs.org](mailto:tlthevoice@srcs.org).
2. The editorial board retains the right to determine whether, in fact, an error has been made.
3. Known and or found errors that are brought to the attention of the school media 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 editorial board determines a significant error is printed, the editorial board will determine the manner and timeliness of a correction.
5. The editors and adviser determine major corrections.
6. If changes are made to a web story once a story has been posted, the change will be noted along with the date and time the change was made.

#### **K. REGARDING ADVERTISING**

1. The publications will not accept advertising for products that are illegal for minors to purchase and/or use.
2. Students not of legal age whose photographs appear in an advertisement of the publications are required to sign a model release form, as well as their legal guardian.

3. The publications will not run advertising without a proper signature on the advertising contract which explains terms of payment, content, size, publishing dates, includes attached layout which explains the terms of payment, content, size.
4. The publications will not accept personal or classified advertising.
5. All ads need to be approved by editorial board; any ad not deemed appropriate by board will not run.
6. The publications will cease to publish advertising of any advertiser that does not meet payment obligations specified in school contact.
7. All advertisers will receive a complimentary subscription of The Voice in which their ad has run.
8. If a published advertisement is incorrect in substantive content, a reduced price or corrected run will be negotiated.
9. If \$200 is spent on print advertising, a complimentary online ad is given to the advertiser.
10. Web ads appear in a specified section of the website and randomly rotate through the area each time the page is refreshed.
11. Advertisers who specifically purchase web ads, as opposed to being given the complimentary one, will have their ad appear more frequently in the designated area.
12. Advertising that appears in the media is not necessarily endorsed by the media or its staff members, editorial board or adviser.

#### **L. REGARDING DISTRIBUTION AND CIRCULATION**

1. The paper will begin at no less than 12 pages in tabloid newspaper format unless it is a special edition. The number of pages can however be altered if need be under the decision of the adviser and/or editorial board.
2. Daily updates will be made to the website throughout the week during the school year. While less frequent, updates will be made to the site during breaks.
3. The school newspaper will be distributed free of charge to all students according to a distribution schedule approved by the adviser and editors. Newspapers will be distributed every 4-8 weeks, unless specified otherwise by the adviser and editorial board.
4. Current copies of the school newspaper will also be displayed in the library, main office, guidance office and in room 307.
5. Advertising revenues and fundraising are to be used to pay for the media printing costs, supplies and other media expenses.
6. All budget surpluses are to be used for future production of the school media.
7. The paper will be distributed during first hour on day of publication
8. The school newspaper will accept subscriptions for the price of \$35 for the entire year.
9. Total press run each issue is approximately 1,000 unless specified otherwise by adviser or editorial board.
10. Exchange publications are received and displayed in journalism laboratory.
11. Exchange publications are mailed to other media rooms across the US.

#### **M. REGARDING LETTERS TO THE EDITOR AND ONLINE COMMENTS**

1. Letters to editor will be printed in the opinion section of the newspaper or on the website.
2. Guidelines to write letters to the editor will be printed every issue in the opinion section of the paper and available online at [thevoice.srcs.org](http://thevoice.srcs.org).
3. Letters to the editor may be submitted to Mr. Tow's mailbox, room 307 or emailed at this address: [dtow@srcs.org](mailto:dtow@srcs.org) / [tthevoice@srcs.org](mailto:tthevoice@srcs.org)
4. Letters to editor should not exceed 300 words, must be signed and must include writers' address and phone number for verification.
5. A member of the editorial board to determine the authenticity of the writer will verify letters to the editor.
6. No material will be printed where content is obscene, invasive of others' privacy, encouraging physical disruption of school activities, and/or implies libel.
7. The TLHS Media editorial board 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, allowing sufficient time for verification of authorship prior to publication.
8. The Voice will only publish one letter, per author, per issue.

9. All letters to the editor become the property of the school newspaper upon receipt and will not be returned to the author.
10. Online comments will require a name and email address submitted that are verifiable.
11. Online comments will automatically post.
12. Alerts will be sent to staff editors each time a comment is posted to the site.
13. Online comments that are found in violation of the editorial policy will be removed as quickly as possible.
14. Personal attacks are not allowed.

**O: REGARDING REVIEWS**

1. The reviewer must have experience in the area in which they are reviewing.
2. All reviews will be bylined and all reviews will be expressed opinions of authors, the editorial board and newspaper staff does not express opinions on the subject matter.
3. All reviews will be to evaluate and inform, not to promote.
4. Evaluative criteria used will be determined by editorial board depending on whether the event or item being reviewed is professional or amateur in nature.
5. All members of the TLHS media may submit review ideas to the editorial board.
6. All reviews must first be reviewed by the opinions editor prior to publishing.
7. All reviews need to be reviewed and printed in a current and timely manner.

**P. SOCIAL MEDIA**

1. Social media will be used to promote TLHS media, to promote published content and to engage the TLHS community.
2. The editorial board reserves the right to remove comments that violate any provisions hitherto outlined by this policy.
3. 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.
4. The official social media accounts should avoid promotion of events and remain objective, reporting what is fact. Reporters using personal social media to cover events should do the same.
5. Information gained through social media channels should be verified through multiple channels before passing it along to others.
6. Audience engagement through social media should be done in a professional manner.
7. Staff members using applications to post updates to social media accounts should have separate applications for their personal account and for the school media accounts. This will limit the chance of a post being sent from the wrong account.
8. Transparency is important. Mistakes made on social media posts should be corrected as soon as possible and any deleted posts should be acknowledged in subsequent postings.

**Q: PUBLICITY**

1. The goal of the media marketing is to promote and expand the media viewing audience.
2. The publicity team will work with all aspects of the media.
3. Every contest must have its own set of rules that will be posted in a place visible to the student body and contest participants.
4. All contest rules will be posted online.
5. All contest rules are to be tailored and agreed upon by the editorial board before start of contest.
6. Members of media staffs will not be allowed to enter or win contests put on by the publicity team.
7. The publicity team will work to attend all major events held by the district or school with the intent of promotion.
8. All events or important dates known by adviser, staff members or editorial board will be passed along to the Business Manager.
9. The Business Manager will work to create a marketing team for each new event.
10. The Business Manager will work with the web team to promote the publication through outside sources such as Facebook or Twitter.

**R: PRIOR REVIEW POLICY**

1. Sources will be able to have quotes read back at the time of interview or at reporter's initiative.
2. Sources will not be able to arbitrarily demand to read the reporters completed story and then perform editing tasks on that story.

3. The media reporters will endeavor to include the name and identity of all sources if reporter believes that doing so will not result in endangerment, harassment or any other form of undue physical, mental, emotional anguish for the source.
4. The media reporters will not, within all boundaries of law, reveal a source who asks to remain nameless.
5. All media interviewers will respect the interviewees rights to have information remain “off the record” if the fact is known before giving the information to the interviewer.
6. The media will not be reviewed by anyone outside of the editorial board aside from the adviser prior to its release to the public, the adviser is allowed to review the publication, but not required to, for the sole purpose of acting as legal consultant and educator in terms of unprotected speech; the adviser reading content is not considered prior review unless he/she makes changes or directs changes.

#### **S: STUDENT & STAFF PUBLICATION POLICY**

1. All students and staff of Terra Linda High School are eligible for publication in the TLHS student media.
2. Any student or staff member wishing to ‘opt out’ of being published in the student media needs to alert the student media adviser of plans to ‘opt out.’
3. All efforts will be made to keep students and staff who have ‘opted out’ of coverage from publication in the TLHS media

### **VII: STAFF POLICY FOR SELECTION AND DISMISSAL**

#### **A. EDITOR AND STAFF SELECTION PROCESS**

1. Editor in chief(s) and other editor level positions are chosen by faculty adviser, with input previous year’s editorial board.
2. New and returning staff are judged by application, previous work, potential and prerequisite class work.
3. Applicants are not turned down because of age, race, sex, religion, mental or physical handicap that do not impair editorial responsibilities.
4. Staff applications are due in March of each year prior to registration.
5. The staff and editors are selected prior to the end of the school year. The adviser reserves the right to make changes to the list as he/she deems necessary after the registration deadline.
6. Editor titles and positions are not named until after all media have finalized publication for the previous year.

#### **B. REGARDING STAFF DISMISSAL**

1. All individuals involved with TLHS media are considered a team, each member is expected to complete all assigned stories, pages, photos, etc. on or before the assigned deadline. Staff members, including editors, may be dismissed from their positions and/or the publications staff itself if any of following violations occur:
  - a. Continuously missed deadlines (dismissal procedures will take place by choice of adviser and EICs)
  - b. Plagiarism
  - c. Quote falsification
  - d. Vandalism or theft of publication equipment
  - e. Continuous negative or pessimistic attitude toward staff member or adviser
  - f. Submitting an advanced page design, story, photo or other publishable item to anyone outside the media staff without approval by the editorial board
  - g. Two suspensions in one academic year
  - h. Failing to fulfill job as outlined in job description
2. Major infractions will result in immediate dismissal from staff duties and dismissal from class and staff at the end of semester (major infractions include but are not limited to following: plagiarism, vandalism, theft).
3. Minor infractions will be given a written warning for the first one. The second one is immediate dismissal from staff duties and dismissal from class and staff at end of semester.
4. Warnings will be written and signed by the adviser and editor-in-chiefs, as well as staff member in question.
5. An editor will be stripped of his her title if suspended.
6. First misdemeanor or arrest will result in the loss of editor’s title, and second will result in dismissal from staff.

7. Each member of the editorial board and adviser will attend a meeting with potentially dismissed student to discuss the issue, adviser will make final decision.
8. The academic nature of the school newspaper class allows removal of editors or staff members when school and or established media policy is violated.
9. The above list infractions could all result in dismissal however; staff dismissals are not limited to the listed infractions.
10. A dismissed staff member receiving academic credit may be given a grade of F and will not be allowed to register for any other journalism courses (will not preempt school policy).
11. Dismissal procedures are reviewed and approved by the editorial board
12. The dismissed staff member may appeal their dismissal in writing to the editorial board within three school days following dismissal
13. All dismissal appeals will be directed to the building principal and the editorial board

#### **VIII. QUERIES**

1. Questions or complaints concerning material published in the media should be made in writing to the editor in chief(s) who will present the concern at the next scheduled editorial board meeting.
2. Complaints and suggestions may be emailed [dtow@srcs.org](mailto:dtow@srcs.org) / [tlthevoice@srcs.org](mailto:tlthevoice@srcs.org) or dropped off in room 307 or Mr. Tow's mailbox.
3. Resolutions will be made within limits of deadlines.

#### **IX. PROFESSIONAL AFFILITAITON**

1. The TLHS media should be a member of state, national, and/or international organizations.
2. The TLHS media will work to be in contact with professional media such as the Marin Independent Journal and The San Francisco Chronicle as well as other individuals and companies in the communications field ranging from public relations and advertising to promotions and copy writing