

I. Policy Statement

The Board of Education of Howard County recognizes that collaboration with the broader community is critical in the achievement of the Howard County Public School System's (HCPSS) mission and goals. Therefore, as a service to the community, the Board allows distribution and display of information through school- or system-designated communication channels, or through students.

The Board recognizes the responsibility of the school system to provide a learning environment free from disruption. It is also the Board's intention that the use of school time, personnel and resources to accommodate the distribution of materials be kept to a minimum and not interfere with educational functions.

In this regard, it is the intent of the Board to designate the appropriate manner for materials to be distributed and/or displayed. Approval to disseminate or display materials in one or more Howard County public schools, or through school system communication channels, does not imply Board or school system endorsement of the organization or the information it disseminates.

II. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to inform the public and staff about criteria for displaying, posting or distributing informational materials and announcements, including but not limited to: information sent home to or through students or distributed electronically; information on community display tables, racks or bulletin boards; and information made available at back-to-school nights, open houses, or other school-related activities.

III. Definitions

Within the context of this policy, the following definitions apply:

- A. Distribution – Dissemination/Communication to students, parents, or the community via print or electronic format, or through multi media. (Distribution also includes the delivery to another student or students on school property of a publication when the distributor has or has had in his/her possession multiple copies of the publication or the posting of a copy of the publication in one or more locations within the school or on school property.)

- B. School-Related Activity – Any school system activity, whether held on or off school property, in which a student directly participates (e.g., school field trip, athletic event, or class/graduation activity), or in which the student does not directly participate but represents the school or student body simply by being there (e.g., spectator at a school event).
- C. School-Sponsored – Taking place with the knowledge and approval of school-based administration and including the promotion, leadership, and/or participation of school employees. The assignment of a teacher, administrator, or other school employee to a meeting for custodial purposes does not constitute sponsorship of the meeting.
- D. School Property – Any property owned or leased by the HCPSS. The concept of property will extend to school activities such as field trips, use of parks and recreation facilities, proms at hotels, etc. School buses, bus stops, and facilities scheduled by the school system for student use are considered an extension of school property.

IV. Standards

- A. All distribution and display of materials and announcements by community organizations in or through schools or students, or through HCPSS communication channels, will comply with established HCPSS processes for such distribution.
- B. Public agencies or non-profit service organizations will request permission to distribute free informational materials through the school system's Public Information Office. Such materials will bear the sponsoring organization's name.
- C. The principal/designee will permit HCPSS students to disseminate materials and announcements that are not associated with school-sponsored or school-related activities, providing the materials or announcements comply with established procedures.
- D. Violations of this policy and the associated procedures are subject to the following consequences:
 - 1. Confiscation of the material.
 - 2. Criminal prosecution of non-students for trespass.
 - 3. Disciplinary action against students.

V. Responsibilities

- A. The Public Information Office will ensure that all community organizations approved to disseminate materials in or through schools or students, or through HCPSS communication channels, are informed of the requirements of this policy and related procedures.

- B. The principal/designee will ensure that HCPSS students who disseminate materials and announcements that are not associated with school-related activities, comply with this policy and related procedures.
- C. HCPSS will inform parents annually of their right not to receive materials from community organizations approved for distribution in schools.

VI. Delegation of Authority

The Superintendent is authorized to develop procedures for the implementation of this policy.

VII. References

- A. Legal
The Annotated Code of Maryland, Education Article, Section 4-205
- B. Other Board Policies
Policy 2070 Ethics
Policy 4010 Donations
Policy 4020 Fund Raising
Policy 6080 Sustainability
Policy 8070 Religion and Religious Materials
Policy 8080 Responsible Use of Technology and Social Media
Policy 10000 Parent, Family, and Community Involvement
- C. Relevant Data Sources
- D. Other

VIII. History

ADOPTED: October 9, 1973
REVIEWED:
MODIFIED:
REVISED: December 13, 1990
June 28, 2007
March 10, 2016
EFFECTIVE: July 1, 2016

DISTRIBUTION AND DISPLAY OF
MATERIALS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Effective: July 1, 2016

I. Approval to Distribute Information Originating from the Community

A. Approved Organizations

1. An organization is approved to submit information for distribution to students, parents, or the community via print or electronic format, if the requesting organization is:
 - a. A tax-supported agency of the federal, state, or local government; or
 - b. A non-profit organization as documented by a letter from the United States Internal Revenue Service (IRS); or
 - c. Distributing materials as part of approved fund raising activities in the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS); or
 - d. A local, state, and national parent teacher organization or a recognized booster club affiliated with any school in the HCPSS.
2. Non-profit organizations requesting distribution of material will submit proof of non-profit status to the Public Information Office in the form of a letter from the IRS.
3. The Public Information Office will maintain a current list of approved non-profit organizations for online access by schools.
4. The Public Information Office will provide the procedures governing the distribution of information or materials to the organization at the time that the distribution request is approved.

B. Requirements for Approval of Materials

1. Announcements, flyers, and other materials from approved community organizations, groups, or agencies will not be disseminated through school or system communication channels or to or through students without prior written approval in accordance with these procedures.
2. The distribution of announcements or other materials from approved organizations will be approved provided that such distribution is in accordance with this policy and procedures. However, the HCPSS retains the right to deny such distribution if the content could reasonably be predicted to

cause a substantial disruption to or a material interference with the normal operation of the school or school activities.

C. Organizations are encouraged to distribute information through HCPSS electronic channels designated for this purpose when feasible.

D. Dissemination by PTAs, PTSAs, and Booster Clubs

Organizations approved under section I.A.1.d of these procedures will submit announcements, flyers, or other materials to the principal for approval in accordance with section I.B of these procedures.

E. Dissemination by Other Approved Organizations

Approved organizations other than PTAs, PTSAs, or recognized booster clubs will submit a copy of announcements, flyers, or other materials to the Public Information Office in accordance with section I.B of these procedures and adhere to the following:

1. Requests for distribution, including the content of announcements, flyers, or other materials will be submitted to the Public Information Office at least two weeks in advance of the intended dissemination date.
2. Announcements or notices to be published in school or system newsletters are limited to the name and a brief description of the event or activity, the date(s), time(s) and location(s) of the event or activity, the name of the sponsoring organization, a contact number or email address, and a link to the sponsor's website if available. School newsletters containing community announcements will bear a statement that the information is neither sponsored nor endorsed by HCPSS or the school, in accordance with Policy 10010 Distribution and Display of Materials and Announcements.
3. If used, printed flyers and other materials will be properly bundled and labeled per instructions from the Public Information Office. Multiple copies of flyers will be delivered to the schools by the organization. Schools will disseminate the information to parents via Friday folders, student backpacks or other methods as determined by the school. Printed materials will bear a statement that the content is neither sponsored nor endorsed by the HCPSS, in accordance with Policy 10010 Distribution and Display of Materials and Announcements.

F. Approved materials are disseminated on a space and time available basis.

G. Any third-party cost incurred in distributing materials will be borne by the sponsoring organization.

H. Right to Not Receive Information

1. HCPSS will inform parents annually regarding the distribution of information from community organizations, groups and agencies and their option to not receive this information.
2. Parents who exercise this option will continue to receive information from the school system; their local school; the school's PTA, PTSAs, and booster clubs; federal, state, and local government agencies only. They will not receive printed information from any other community organizations, groups or agencies.
3. Students will not be pressured or coerced to take or respond to announcements, flyers or other materials.

II. Distribution of Non-School-Sponsored or Non-School-Related Materials/Announcements by Students

- A. HCPSS students who wish to disseminate on school property more than ten (10) items of materials or announcements that are not school-sponsored or school-related will obtain prior permission from the principal/designee.
1. Three (3) copies of the materials or announcements will be given to the principal/designee five (5) school days prior to the requested distribution date.
 2. The materials or announcements will bear the name of the sponsoring organization or individual(s) when applicable.
 3. Materials or announcements distributed in schools will not include content that:
 - a. Is libelous or obscene, or violates the rights of privacy of any person.
 - b. Might reasonably lead school authorities to forecast substantial disruption of or material interference with school activities.
 - c. Would endanger the health or safety of students or staff.
 4. Materials or announcements will not be sold on school property.
 5. A decision regarding distribution of the information will be rendered by the principal/designee within five (5) school days.
 6. To aid in the decision, the principal may solicit input from a representative, group of faculty, parents, students, or other stakeholders.
 7. If the principal/designee approves the material or announcement for dissemination, the principal/designee will notify the student(s) in writing who

submitted the information that it may be distributed and establish a time, place, and manner for distribution.

8. If, in the opinion of the principal/designee, the information contains any of the content specified in II.3, the principal/designee will notify the student(s) who submitted the material or announcement that it may not be distributed on school property, citing in writing the specific reasons for the decision.
9. The principal/designee's decision concerning distribution will be attached to each of the three copies of the materials or announcements.
 - a. One copy will be returned to the student who submitted the material.
 - b. The second copy will be sent to the appropriate Administrative Director.
 - c. The third copy will be retained by the principal/designee.
10. If the principal/designee makes no decision within the prescribed time, the material or announcement will be considered approved.

B. Appeal Procedures

1. Any appeal of a principal/designee's denial of a request to distribute information will be made to the Administrative Director within five (5) school days of the denial. The Administrative Director's decision will be forwarded to the appellant in writing within two (2) school days after receipt of the appeal.
2. Any appeal following the Administrative Director's denial of a request to distribute information will be made to the Superintendent of Schools within five (5) school days of the denial. The decision of the Superintendent of Schools will be forwarded to the appellant within two (2) school days.
3. Further right of appeal is governed by Section 4-205 of the Education Article of The Annotated Code of Maryland.

III. History

ADOPTED: December 13, 1990

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July 13, 2006

June 28, 2007

March 10, 2016

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