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## **CARROLL COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS ADMINISTRATIVE REGULATIONS**

### **BOARD POLICY BHD: OPEN COMMUNICATION 2 of 3**

Compliance with the Maryland Public Information Act

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Distribution of materials by the schools and school announcements:

Schools are frequently asked to distribute materials to students and parents or communicate information in school newsletters or on the public address (PA) system on behalf of outside groups and individuals. The following procedures shall be followed when CCPS is requested to distribute materials or communicate information by non-school groups and individuals.

1. All non-school materials offered for distribution must be provided to the school principal prior to any distribution.
2. If the non-school materials are a publication of an entity that has a joint program with the Carroll County Public Schools (for example, the Carroll County Department of Parks and Recreation, Community Recreation Council, PTA/PTO, business partners with individual schools or with CCPS) or as a direct extension of the educational program (for example, notification of sign-up for the SAT test or school photographs), then the principal may permit direct distribution of the materials to the students. No other direct distribution of non-school materials shall be allowed.
3. All other materials that are provided to a school for distribution may be placed by the principal in an area designated by the principal (such as a table) for voluntary pick-up by students and parents, so long as the materials meet the requirements of paragraph 7 below. If non-religious groups are permitted to place materials in the designated area, then religious groups shall be granted the same privileges.
4. Announcements of community events or inclusion of such announcements in school newsletters may only be made by school personnel or students if first approved by the principal and only if they are connected with a joint program of the Carroll County Public Schools or are a direct extension of the educational program. (See no. 2 above)
5. As a component of a business partnership, the principal at each school in Carroll County has the responsibility to accept or refuse any reward or incentive program based on the following guidelines:
  - A. Partnership businesses and organizations should submit proposed incentive/reward programs to the principal at least four (4) weeks in advance of the proposed distribution.

- B. Individual principals have the authority to decide how to make incentives/rewards available to students so long as they are consistent with the manner of distribution for all businesses/organizations with which they maintain partnerships. Principals may choose to make the incentive/reward available for student/parent pick-up or they may distribute the incentive/reward directly to students in their classrooms. No materials/incentives/rewards may be distributed through report cards or official school mailings.
  - C. A principal has the discretion to determine that an incentive/reward program may be appropriate for a particular grade level, but not for the entire school.
  - D. An approved partnership agreement should be in place between the school and the business or community organization.
6. If community organizations not connected with a joint program of CCPS or not a direct extension of the education program are permitted to set up tables during school events, such as “back to school night,” schools must provide the same opportunity to non-secular organizations.
7. Exceptions to the above guidelines may be made by the principal in the event of a health or safety emergency. Any questions about these guidelines should be directed to the Supervisor of Community and Media Relations.
8. No materials may be distributed or placed in the school for voluntary pick-up or communicated over the PA system if the materials or communications are unacceptable for distribution or announcement. Materials or communications deemed unacceptable for distribution or announcement within the Carroll County Public Schools include, but are not limited to, the following: campaign literature, obscenities, advertisements for alcoholic beverages, drugs, drug paraphernalia, contraceptives, abortion services, sexual deviation, tobacco products, fortune telling, palm reading, mind reading, defamatory falsehoods, attacks on person(s) or group(s), or statements of discrimination towards race, culture, religion or sex. The following definitions shall apply in interpreting this guideline:
- A. **Obscene materials:** These are materials that an average, adult person, applying contemporary community standards would find, taken as a whole, appeal to the prurient interest of minors and lack serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value for minor students. These also include materials that depict or describe, in a manner not suited for the education of minors, sexual conduct as defined by applicable Maryland law. See Article 27, Section 416(d) of the Annotated Code of Maryland.

- B. Defamation: Defamation includes both libel and slander. Libel is the false and unprivileged publication by writing, printing, picture, effigy, or other fixed representation to the eye which exposes a person to public hatred, contempt, ridicule, or obloquy, or which causes him/her to be shunned or avoided, or which has a tendency to injury him/her in his/her occupation. Slander is the false and unprivileged publication by the spoken word instead of the printed word.
- 9. For further information see the guidelines entitled “Distribution of Publications” which is found in the Student Services Handbook. These guidelines deal specifically with students’ distribution of publications.