

# MIPA Code of Ethics

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THE MICHIGAN INTERSCHOLASTIC PRESS ASSOCIATION upholds the right of students to exercise their freedom of expression as guaranteed by the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States, whether it be in the form of print or broadcast media.

Student journalists have the right to report on and editorialize about all topics, events or issues, including those unpopular or controversial, insofar as they affect or interest the school, community, nation and world. However, students have the same legal obligations as those imposed upon all journalists. Students must refrain from publishing or disseminating material that:

- a. is obscene, according to current legal definitions;
- b. is libelous, according to current legal definitions;
- c. creates a clear and present danger of the immediate material and substantial physical disruption of the school;
- d. is an invasion of privacy, according to current legal standards; and
- e. advertises illegal products or services, as currently defined by legal definitions.

Student media shall not be subjected to prior restraints, review or censorship by school administrators, faculty, school boards or any other individual outside the editorial board, except as stated above, and only when these individuals can demonstrate legally defined justification.

In addition, student journalists have the right to determine the content of their media.

Responsible exercise of freedom of expression involves adherence to the highest standards of journalism. Students have an obligation to learn and observe the legal and ethical responsibilities expected of them as practicing journalists.

Accuracy is paramount. News reporters and editors will work to assure that their stories are fair, their facts are correct and the information is as complete, balanced and unbiased as possible. Significant errors of fact or omission should be corrected promptly and prominently.

Sources of information and ideas should be clearly stated. Recognizing that anonymous sources raises serious credibility problems for

a publication, names should be withheld from publication only when there is no other way to obtain vital information and identification may subject a source to harm.

Student journalists do not attack individuals or print material that might be embarrassing to an individual or group except in stories dealing with public responsibility, and even then the story should represent the person's or group's point of view.

Innuendo will not be tolerated.

Rumor and gossip will be dealt with only when they raise an issue of concern to the school community and with the intent to clarify the truth.

In dealing with issue-oriented content, especially when it involves the potential for controversy, staff members should be able to demonstrate that they are sensitive to all components of the school community, that their reporting is based on specific sources representing diverse points of view, and that the story is balanced, fair and represents a full understanding of the issues involved.

Language should be appropriate to the audience encompassing the school community. A journalist does not use inappropriate words, although the use of such words may be considered in direct quotes when they are essential to the story and then would use hyphens following the initial letters.

Student media helps to educate students by providing an open forum of expression for journalists and the media's audiences, and as instruments through which students, faculty, administration and the public can gain insight into student thinking and concerns.

Editorials and articles of opinion should take a clear stance on an issue, but media must provide for different or dissenting views to be published or broadcast elsewhere on the page, in succeeding issues, or at other times.

Michigan Interscholastic Press Association expects each school system having student media to provide a qualified journalism instructor/adviser to teach students to report information accurately, fairly and perceptively.

To make this forum and educational experience possible, the journalism program needs to be supported by an appropriate assortment of finances, equipment and educational philosophy.