

Effective: July 14, 2022

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**Policy Outline**

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**I. Policy Value 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. The Board supports the digital dissemination of approved materials with very limited paper distribution due to the excessive impact that distribution of printed materials has on staff capacity, the amount of paper families are receiving, and the environment. 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. Standards**

- A. All distribution and display of approved 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 approved 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.

### **IV. Responsibilities**

- A. The Public Information Office will ensure that all community organizations approved to disseminate approved 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.

### **V. Delegation of Authority**

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

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**VI. Definitions**

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

- A. Approved Materials – Announcements, flyers, and other materials from approved community organizations, groups, students, or agencies authorized by the Public Information Office.
- B. Distribution of Materials – Dissemination/Communication to students, parents, or the community via print or electronic format, or through multimedia. (Distribution also includes the delivery to another student or students on school property of a publication when the distributor has or has had in their 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.)
- C. 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).
- D. 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.
- E. School Property – Any property owned or leased by the HCPSS for school-related activities. The concept of property extends to school activities such as field trips, use of recreation and parks 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.

**VII. References**

- A. Legal  
Md. Ann. Code, Education Article, Section 4-205
- B. 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, Digital Tools, and Social Media  
Policy 10000 Student, Parent, Family, and Community Involvement

C. Relevant Data Sources

D. Other

## VIII. History<sup>1</sup>

ADOPTED: October 9, 1973

REVIEWED: February 24, 2022

MODIFIED: July 14, 2022

REVISED: December 13, 1990

June 28, 2007

March 10, 2016

EFFECTIVE: July 14, 2022

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<sup>1</sup> Key: ***Adopted***-Original date the Board took action to approve a policy; ***Reviewed***-The date the status of a policy was assessed by the Superintendent's Standing Policy Group; ***Modified***-The date the Board took action to alter a policy that based on the recommendation of the Superintendent/designee did not require a comprehensive examination; ***Revised***-The date the Board took action on a policy that based on the recommendation of the Superintendent/designee needed a comprehensive examination; ***Effective***-The date a policy is implemented throughout the HCPSS, typically July 1 following Board action.

**DISTRIBUTION AND DISPLAY OF  
MATERIALS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Effective: July 14, 2022

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**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 fundraising 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 will solely distribute information through HCPSS electronic channels designated for this purpose with the exception of limited situations where paper copies may be necessary or requested by a school administrator.

- 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. Schools may include a link to the HCPSS Community News and Programs web page.
3. In rare instances when printed materials are distributed on a limited basis, the school administrator will identify the number of printed copies required through the Public Information Office.

- F. It is at the school administrator's discretion when and where the approved materials will be shared.

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

- H. Right to Not Receive Printed 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 employees.
  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 Section II.A.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 Community Superintendent/Performance, Equity and Community Response 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 Community Superintendent/Performance, Equity and Community Response Director within five (5) school days of the denial. The Community Superintendent's/Performance, Equity and Community Response 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 Community Superintendent's/Performance, Equity and Community Response 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. Monitoring**

Policy 10010 implementation procedures will be overseen by the Division of Administration.



#### IV. History<sup>1</sup>

ADOPTED: December 13, 1990  
REVIEWED: February 24, 2022  
MODIFIED: August 16, 2012  
              July 14, 2022  
REVISED: May 14, 1992  
              July 14, 2005  
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