

# Lee's Summit West High School Media Policy

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## Mission Statement

*Lee's Summit West High School student media provides complete and accurate coverage of material that is journalistically responsible and ethically gathered, while empowering the learner to become a responsible, productive member of a diverse and changing world. Student-determined expression promotes democratic citizenship through public engagement diverse in both ideas and representation.*

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.”

*—The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution*

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*

## Introduction

**The Lee's Summit West High School Media Policy pertains to all LSW media, including the Titan Scroll newspaper; the Epic yearbook; lswestonline.com and its related social media; and the Titan TV broadcast program. The full media policy is available on lswestonline.com**

LSW Media are the official student-produced media of news and information published and produced by LSW Media staffers. LSW Media practices as limited public forums for student Editors and News Directors to educate and inform their audience of issues of concern. It is not reviewed or restrained by school officials prior to publication or distribution. Advisers may—and should—coach and discuss content during the production process, however, the News Directors and Editors make all decisions of content.

Because school officials do not engage in prior review, and the content of LSW Media is determined by, and reflects only the views of the student staff, and not school officials or the school itself; its student Editors and News Directors, and responsible student staff members assume legal and financial liability for the content of the publication.

## Freedom of the Press

It is essential to preserve the freedom of the press in order to preserve a free society and provide students of Lee's Summit West with relevant information pertinent to their educational growth and to their concerns as students of the school and community.

1. The Media will keep itself free from any commercial obligations distracting from this purpose.
2. Any decisions affecting the Media on all levels will be made by the Editors and News Directors. The Advisers must provide legal advice, but the final decision rests in the hands of the Editors/News Directors.
3. Only the Editors/News Directors may prevent material from being published or authorize its publication pursuant to the material's compliance with provisions outlined in this policy.
4. All Media will vigorously resist all attempts at censorship, particularly pre-publication censorship, and also commit to fighting any censorship if it shall occur.
5. All Media retain the right to publish any and all material obtained 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 prior to the dissemination of said information.
6. 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 news-gathering and research needs.
7. LSW Media and its various staffs are protected by, and bound to the principles of the First Amendment and other protections and limitations afforded by the Constitution, various laws, and court decisions implementing those principles.
8. LSW Media will not publish any material that is libelous, obscene, unnecessarily disruptive of the school process, an unwarranted invasion of privacy, a violation of copyright or a promotion of products or services unlawful for minors as defined by state or federal law.
9. 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.

## The Adviser

As the execution of ethical and proper journalism is a skill that provides students with practical skill sets, there shall be an Adviser to guide and educate the student editors and staff to these ends.

1. The Adviser is a professional teaching staff member and is in charge of the class as in a conventional classroom situation.
2. The Adviser is a certified journalism teacher who serves as a professional role model, motivator, catalyst for ideas and professionalism, and an educational resource.
3. The Adviser provides a journalistic, professional learning atmosphere for students by allowing them to make the decision of content for the Media and ensuring the Media practices as a public forum.
4. The Adviser guides the Media staffs in accordance with this Editorial Policy and aids the educational process related to producing the various media.
5. The Adviser should caution, act as legal consultant and educator in terms of unprotected speech, but exercises little censorship or veto except for constitutionally valid reasons which are still subject to approval by Editors and News Directors.
6. The Adviser will keep abreast of the latest trends on journalism and share these with students.
7. The Adviser will submit the various Media content produced by the students to rating services and contests in order for the Media staffs to receive feedback.
8. The Adviser will forward any received correspondence and/or information pertinent to the proper execution of duties to the appropriate editors.
9. The Adviser will provide information to the Media about journalism scholarships and other financial aid, and make available information and contacts concerning journalism as a career.
10. The Adviser will work with the faculty and administration to aid in the understanding of the freedoms accorded to the students and the professional goals of the student Media.
11. The Adviser or the Building Administration will not act as a censor or determine the content of the Media. The Adviser will offer advice and instruction in compliance with the Code of Ethics for Advisers established by the Journalism Education Association as well as the Canons of Professional Journalism.

## The Building Administration

1. The Lee's Summit West administration will provide the students of LSW with a qualified journalism instructor to serve as a professional role model, adequate classroom equipment, and space for a sound journalism program.
2. LSW administration will offer equal opportunity to minority and/or marginalized students to participate in journalism programs.
3. LSW administration is not required to view and approve publication content before publishing.

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# The Media Staff

## Regarding Staff Selection

1. Editor in chief(s), News Directors and other editor level positions are chosen by faculty advisers, who may or may not seek outside input from colleagues or previous year student leadership.
2. New and returning staff are judged by application, previous work, potential and/or pre-requisite class work.
3. Applicants are not turned down because of age, race, sex, religion, mental or physical handicap that do not impair staff responsibilities.
4. Staff applications are due in February of each year prior to registration.
5. Staff lists are made prior to the enrollment deadline each year. The adviser reserves the right to make changes to the list as he/she deems necessary after the registration deadline.
6. Leadership titles and positions are not named until after enrollment is complete.

## Regarding Staff Dismissal

1. All individuals involved with LSW media are considered a team; each member is expected to complete all assigned stories, photos, graphics, videos, pages, etc. on or before the assigned deadline. Staff members, including Editors and News Directors, may be dismissed from their positions and/or the publications staff itself if any of following violations occur:
  2. Continuously missed deadlines
  3. Plagiarism
  4. Quote falsification
  5. Vandalism or theft of publication equipment
  6. Continuous negative or pessimistic attitude toward staff member or adviser
  7. Submitting an advanced page design, story, photo or other publishable item to anyone outside the media staff without approval by the Editor or News Director and related adviser.
  8. Failing to fulfill job as outlined in job description

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# Content

## Introduction

All content decisions will be made in accordance to the following provisions, while keeping in mind that the overall purpose, role and goal of all LSWHS Media is to:

1. Inform, interpret, and entertain their viewers and readers through accurate and factual reports, where information has been thoroughly gathered and completely verified;
2. Serve as an educational laboratory experience for those on staff;
3. Be accurate, fair, and impartial in its coverage of issues affecting school community;
4. Cover the total school population as effectively and accurately as possible.
5. LSWHS Media will not avoid publishing a story solely on the basis of possible dissent or controversy.
6. The staff of LSWHS 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, credibility and advertising.
7. LSWHS media will not publish any material determined 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 for minors as defined by state or federal law;
8. 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.

## Regarding Sources

1. All media retain the right to publish any and all material obtained 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;
2. Reporters will make every effort to obtain as much information as possible from all sides of an issue or story to ensure the accuracy of information.
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.

## Regarding Issues of Controversy

1. All sides of the issue will be presented and reviewed as to refrain from any bias, with exception of pieces labeled opinions.
2. In news, all sides of a school, community, city, state, national, or international political issue will be presented factually, as to inform, rather than promote or endorse.
3. LSWHS media will not publish material that is unnecessarily obscene, libelous, or an unwarranted invasion of privacy.
4. If question on the veracity of publication persists, the issue will be brought to the publication's student leadership who must consider the following questions before publication of the piece:
  - Why is it a concern?
  - What is its journalistic purpose?
  - Is the information accurate and complete?
  - Were all possible related sources interviewed for the story?
  - Are any important points of view omitted?
  - How would the editors/producers feel if the story was about staff members or someone they know?
  - What are the consequences of the publication of the piece?
  - Is there a logical explanation to anyone who challenges issue?
  - Is it worth risking media credibility?
  - Does it comply with the provisions outlined in this policy?
  - Does it comply with the purpose and goal of the media?

## Regarding Prior Review

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 or view the reporter's completed story before publication.
3. As a matter of regular practice, the media will not be reviewed by anyone outside of the publication staff, aside from the adviser, prior to its release to the public. The advisers review the publications for the sole purpose of acting as legal consultant and educator in terms of unprotected speech.

## Regarding Profanity

1. The media will not publish unnecessary profanity.
2. After considering adviser input, Editors and News Directors will make the decision on whether content is considered profane or whether it is a cultural or non-vulgar slang term.
3. Editors and News Directors reserve 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.

## Regarding News & Features

1. The media will specialize in and emphasize on informing their audience of school news and unique students of the Lee's Summit West High School community.
2. The media will cover community, state, national, and international news relevant to the school community, and include a 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, 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 Editors and News Directors.

## Regarding Submissions

1. LSW students outside of the Media staffs will have the opportunity to submit pieces for publication to the Media by way of Letters to the Editor, guest columns, or comments on lswestonline.com.
2. Letters to editor will be printed in the opinion section of the Titan Scroll or on lswestonline website.
3. Letters to the editor may be submitted to the adviser's mailbox, emailed or dropped off in the publications classrooms.
4. Letters to the editor must be signed and must include the writer's email for verification.
5. Any work submitted by students who are not a member of a Media staff must be verified for accuracy prior to publication, printing, or dissemination. Letters will be verified by the editor to determine authenticity of the writer.
6. No material will be printed where content is obscene, invasive of other's privacy, encouraging physical disruption of school activities, and/or implies libel.
7. LSW Media 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. All letters to the editor become the property of the publications upon receipt and will not be returned to the author. Writing must be the original work of the writer and not previously published in any publication, unless otherwise specified by the Adviser and editor(s)-in-chief.
9. All online comments will be reviewed by Editors, News Directors and/or lswestonline staff members. Any comments that are found in violation of this editorial policy will be removed as quickly as possible.
10. Personal attacks are not allowed.

## Regarding Printed Editorials

1. All printed editorial subject matter will be determined by the Editors.
2. The media will not publish any material for which there is evidence that the author is using the publication for inappropriate personal gain.
3. The media will endeavor to provide a chance for comment on all sides of a critical issue in the same edition.
4. The student editors will determine the content of the staff editorials. The views stated in editorials should represent that of a majority of the staff. Signed columns or reviews represent only the opinion of the author.

## Regarding Deaths

1. Any current student, staff member, faculty member or building administrator who passes away during the year will be recognized in the student Media.
2. The Media will publish factual information (date of birth, date of death, survivors, organizations, hobbies, interests) and a photograph if possible.
3. The student Media will work to obtain permission from the deceased person's family before publishing any information regarding the cause of death. If permission is not granted, the Editors and News Directors reserve the final say in publication of cause of death. Suicide will not be listed as a cause of death unless requested by parents or guardians, or as a part of a larger story on suicide prevention.
4. The student Media will treat all deaths in a tasteful, respectful way.

## Regarding Errors

1. Concerns about errors in the school media may be submitted through the appropriate adviser emails: [carol.ullery@lsr7.net](mailto:carol.ullery@lsr7.net), [karrie.smythia@lsr7.net](mailto:karrie.smythia@lsr7.net) or [ashlin.owensby@lsr7.net](mailto:ashlin.owensby@lsr7.net)
2. The Editors/News Directors retain 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 Editors/News Directors determine a significant error is published, they will determine the manner and timeliness of a correction.
5. Corrections will not be published for typographical errors that do not change the content or understanding of a story.
6. Major corrections are determined by the editors and adviser.
7. 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.

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# Yearbook Photo Policy

## Individual Portrait Policy

1. Senior portraits must be taken by company specified by yearbook staff.
2. All senior portraits must arrive to the yearbook staff by the posted date given to the yearbook staff by the senior portrait photographer.
3. Any senior who fails to get their yearbook portrait taken by the senior photographer contracted by the yearbook staff, will not be pictured in the yearbook senior section.
4. Portraits provided by the school photographer will be used for students in grades 9-12 and for the faculty members. Because of plant deadlines and the possibility of students missing portrait day, the yearbook staff is not responsible for unavailable portraits of students. Students are provided multiple opportunities during the school day to have their portrait taken. If students do not take their portrait on one of the designated school days, students may arrange a time with the photographer before the deadline. A sitting fee may be charged by the photography studio.
5. The section/grade placement of student portraits is determined by first semester status.
6. Grade designations will only be changed with written permission by student, student's parent, and a member of the administration.
7. Photo omissions will only occur for students or faculty with written request by the student, student's parent, and a member of the administration.
8. Editors reserve the right to review or omit questionable or inappropriate portraits.
9. Names in mugs section will appear as supplied by the student during portrait day unless otherwise requested.
10. Portraits will consist of one individual only. No other persons or props are permitted.
11. School dress code must be followed for all portraits. For seniors, formal wear is required, including a jacket and tie for male students. If dress code is not followed, student may be asked to take their portrait at a different time in appropriate attire.
12. Spelling of all names follows the legal name format the school district has on file for the student, and is what is used in the yearbook for indexing purposes.

## Group Portrait Policy

1. Any groups with school sponsors are eligible to take a group photo for the yearbook.
2. Yearbook will cover school sponsored, board approved, and established clubs/sports. All other sports or clubs will be reviewed by the editorial board.
3. Editors reserve the right to review or omit questionable or inappropriate portraits.
4. Portraits will consist of group members and sponsors only. Props are not permitted without prior approval.
5. Students absent the day of group portraits may not be included in his/her group portrait.
6. Groups that are not present at their assigned portrait time may schedule another time with staff editors. If another time is not scheduled, the group portrait may not be included in the yearbook.

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## Advertising

1. The publications will not accept advertising for products that are illegal for minors to purchase and/or use.
2. 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.
3. All ads need to be approved by Editor/News Director Any ad not deemed appropriate will not run.
4. The publications will cease to publish advertising of any advertiser that does not meet payment obligations specified in the contract.
5. If a published advertisement is incorrect in substantive content, a reduced price or corrected run will be negotiated.
6. Web ads appear in a specified section of the website on a set schedule and rate based on contract.
7. Advertising that appears in the media is not necessarily endorsed by the media or its staff members, or adviser.
8. Advertising revenues, class fees and fundraising are to be used to pay for the student Media production costs, supplies and other Media expenses.
9. All budget surpluses are to be used for future production of the student Media.
10. Advertising contracts not paid in full by the date due will be assessed one percent (1%) per month finance charge.

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## Broadcast, Distribution and Circulation

1. Daily updates will be made to lswestonline.com throughout the week during the school year. While less frequent, updates will be made to the site during breaks.
2. Titan TV is distributed online via lswestonline.com. Titan TV will produce the newsmagazine show approximately 10 times every school year.
3. The Titan Scroll will be distributed free of charge to all students and staff during Titan Time, according to a distribution schedule approved by the adviser and editors. Newspapers will be distributed every 4-5 weeks, unless specified otherwise.
4. Current copies of the Titan Scroll are displayed and available in the newsrack by the front entrance of the building. Past copies are available outside Room #2048 and at the Mid-continent Library.
5. Subscriptions for the Titan Scroll are available for the price of \$20 per year.
6. Total press run for each issue is approximately 2,500, averaging 32 pages each.
7. The Epic yearbook will be sold for \$62 from registration until the end of the first semester. At that point, the price will increase to \$67. After the ordering deadline has passed, which is the last day of school, extra copies of the book will be sold for \$72 at registration on a first-come, first-served basis.
8. The Epic yearbook will be distributed during registration for the following school year, unless specified otherwise by the adviser and editors.

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## Social Media

1. Appropriate social media will be used to promote the Media, to promote published content and to engage the LSW community.
2. The Advisor, Editors and News Directors reserve the right to remove posts 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 biased promotion of events and remain objective, reporting what is fact. Content posted by specific clubs' accounts promoting events may be shared by the Media accounts on a fair basis.
5. Information gained through social media channels should be verified through multiple channels or by confirming a source's validity before passing it along on a social media account. In breaking news situations, extreme caution will be exercised and speculation will never be published. Staff members posting from these accounts should make every effort to have a school administrator as a source in a situation where a breaking news event pertains directly to the school.
6. Audience engagement through social media should be done in a professional manner.
7. Mistakes made on social media posts should be corrected as soon as possible and any deleted posts should be acknowledged in subsequent postings. In the event that a personal post is inadvertently posted from a Media account, it will be immediately deleted. It will be acknowledged if deemed necessary

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## Publication of Students and School Staff

1. All students and staff of Lee's Summit West High School are eligible for publication in the LSW student media.
2. Any student or staff member wishing to 'opt out' of being published in the student media needs to fill out the appropriate 'opt out' form with the guidance office and 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 school news, feature and promotional coverage from publication in the LSW Media.
4. The opt-out does not cover elimination of news coverage of public information on a magnitude that would be covered by local professional media, such as crime stories. Editors and News Directors, with recommendations from the adviser, will make determination about regular news coverage.

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# Professional Affiliations

1. Each Media and the advisers should maintain memberships in local, state, national, and/or international organizations, such as:
  - Academy of Scholastic Broadcasting
  - Journalism Education Association
  - Journalism Educators of Metro Kansas City
  - Missouri Interscholastic Press Association
  - Missouri Journalism Education Association
  - National Scholastic Press Association
  - Student Press Law Center
  - Student Television Network
2. The Media will work to be in contact with professional media, as well as other individuals and companies in the communications and journalism fields to ensure LSW students the best opportunities in a diverse and changing world.

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The Lee's Summit West Media Policy is an adaptation of the Journalism Education Association's model student media policy, following recommendations from the Student Press Law Center and respected experts in the field of scholastic journalism. This policy should be revisited regularly, and revised as necessary according to professional, educational and legal requirements of our changing society.

*Original document adopted August 2016*

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