

Editorial Policy

MANHEIM TOWNSHIP HIGH SCHOOL MEDIA EDITORIAL POLICY

“Congress shall make no law...abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press....”

-The First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States of America

“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

The Township Times Editorial Policy pertains to all media specific to The Township Times including TownshipTimes.net, the publication’s Instagram feed: @TownshipTimes, and all extensions of the Media. The full editorial policy is available on TownshipTimes.net.

The Township Times is the official student-produced media of news and information published and produced by MTHS students. The Township Times has been established as the designated public forum for student editors to inform and educate their readers as well as for the discussion of issues of concern to their audience. It will not be reviewed or restrained by school officials prior to publication. Advisers may – and should – coach and discuss content during the writing process.

Because school officials do not engage in prior review, and the content of The Township Times is determined by and reflects only the views of the student staff and not school officials or the school itself, its student editorial board and responsible student staff members assume complete legal and financial liability for the content of the publication.

I. FREEDOM OF THE PRESS

As it is essential to preserve the freedom of the press in order to preserve a free society,

1. The media will keep itself free from any commercial obligations distracting from this purpose.
2. Any decisions affecting the publications on all levels will be made by the editorial board. The adviser is allowed to give legal advice and his/her opinion, but the final decision rests in the hands of the editorial board.

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3. The editorial board may prevent material it judges to be in violation of the media editorial policy from being printed.
4. All media will vigorously resist all attempts at censorship, particularly pre-publication censorship.
5. All media retain the right to publish any and all material attained 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.
6. All student media referenced in this editorial policy are designated public forums.
7. 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 newsgathering and research needs.
8. The Township Times and its staff are protected by and bound to the principles of the First Amendment and other protections and limitations afforded by the Constitution and the various laws and court decisions implementing those principles.
9. The Township Times will not publish any material determined by student editors or the student editorial board 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 (illegal) as to minors as defined by state or federal law;
10. 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.

II. THE EDITORIAL BOARD

1. The editorial board will consist of all student staff editors.
2. The editorial board decides on all decisions that pertain directly to The Township Times and their interests.
3. No member of the editorial board shall have more than one vote on the board.
4. All members of the editorial board and the adviser will elect a replacement for board members who have been dismissed/graduated.
5. All members of the editorial board are expected to know their duties and jobs in the room and must understand the consequences of not fulfilling said jobs.
6. The student editor and staff who want appropriate outside legal advice regarding proposed content – should seek attorneys knowledgeable in media law such as those of the Student Press Law Center. Final content decisions and responsibility shall remain with the student editorial board.
7. The duly appointed editor-in-chief or co-editors shall interpret and enforce this editorial policy.

III. THE ADVISER

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1. The adviser is a professional teaching staff member and is in charge of the class just as in a conventional classroom situation.
2. Is a certified journalism teacher that serves as a professional role model, motivator, catalyst for ideas and professionalism, and an educational resource.
3. Provides a journalistic, professional learning atmosphere for students by allowing them to make the decision of content for the media and ensuring the media will remain an open forum.
4. Guides the newspaper staff in accordance with approved editorial policy and aids the educational process related to producing various media.
5. May caution, act as legal consultant and educator in terms of unprotected speech, but has no power over censorship or veto except for constitutionally valid reasons.
6. Will keep abreast of the latest trends on journalism and share these with students.
7. Will submit the content produced by the students to rating services and contests in order for the staff to receive feedback.
8. Will forward any received correspondence and/or information to the appropriate editors.
9. Will provide information to the staff about journalism scholarships and other financial aid, and make available information and contacts concerning journalism as a career.
10. Will work with the faculty and administration to help them understand the freedoms accorded to the students and the professional goals of the school publications.
11. The adviser or building administration will not act as a censor or determine the content of the paper. The adviser will offer advice and instruction, following the Code of Ethics for Advisers established by the Journalism Education Association as well as the Canons of Professional Journalism.

IV. THE BUILDING ADMINISTRATION

1. The Manheim Township High School administration will provide the students of MTHS with a qualified journalism instructor to serve as a professional role model, adequate classroom equipment, and space for a sound journalism program.
2. MTHS administration will offer equal opportunity to minority and/or marginalized students to participate in journalism programs.
3. MTHS administration is not required to view and approve publication content before publishing.
4. Is not entitled to or endowed with any right to censor any of the content the Media staffs produce;
5. Shall not fire or otherwise discipline Advisers for content in student Media that is determined and published by the student staff.

V. CONTENT OF MTHS MEDIA

INTRODUCTION

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All content decisions will be made in occurrence to the following provisions, while keeping in mind that the overall purpose, role and goal of The Township Times is to:

1. Inform, interpret, and entertain their viewers through accurate and factual reports, where information has been thoroughly gathered and information has been completely verified;
2. Serve as an educational laboratory experience for those on staff;
3. Be accurate, fair, and impartial in its coverage of issues that affect the school community;
4. The Township Times will not avoid publishing a story solely on the basis of possible dissent or controversy;
5. Cover the total school population as effectively and accurately as possible;
6. The staff of The Township Times 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.

REGARDING PROFANITY

1. The media will not print unnecessary profanity including but not limited to social media used by all parts of Township Times media.
2. The editorial board will make the decision on whether content is considered profane or whether it is a cultural or non-vulgar slang term.
3. The editorial board reserves 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 brought to the attention of the original source prior to publishing. Sources have the choice to rephrase the quotation to avoid use of profanity.
5. Staff interviewers have the right to ask a source when necessary to repeat a quote without the use of profane language.

REGARDING STAFF WRITING

1. All writing in the media will be written by students of the journalism program and will not be accepted otherwise.
2. MTHS students outside of the media staff will have the opportunity to submit writing.
3. Any writing submitted from an outside source for use will be accepted upon request of the editorial board or when open opportunities arise, and will be viewed by EICs and adviser for verification.

4. Any material submitted from an outside source can be edited by the editorial board and must comply to this policy.
5. Writing must be the original work of the writer and not previously published in any publication, unless otherwise specified by the adviser and EICs.

REGARDING EDITORIALS

1. All editorials printed will be bylined as: “on behalf of Editorial Staff”.
2. Editorial ideas may be submitted to the editorial board by all members of the appropriate staff.
3. All printed editorial subject matter will be determined by the editorial board.
4. The media will not publish any material for which there is evidence that the author is using the paper for inappropriate personal gain.
5. The media will endeavor to provide a chance for comment on all sides of a critical issue in the same edition.
6. The editorial board, which consists of the staff’s student editors, will determine the content, including all unsigned editorials. The views stated in editorials represent that of a majority of the editorial board. Individual columns or reviews represent only the opinion of the author.

REGARDING CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES

1. All coverage of controversial issues will occur upon a timely subject.
2. All sides of the issue will be presented and reviewed so as to refrain from any bias, with exception of opinions.
3. In news, all sides of a school, community, city, state, national, or international political issue will be presented factually so as to inform rather than promote or endorse.
4. The media will not publish material that is unnecessarily obscene, libelous, or an unwarranted invasion of privacy.
5. If question on the veracity of publication persists, the issue will be brought to the editorial board who must consider the following questions before publication of the piece:
 1. Why is it a concern?
 2. What is its journalistic purpose?
 3. Is the information accurate and complete?
 4. Are any important points of view omitted?
 5. How would we feel if the story was about ourselves or someone we know?
 6. What are the consequences of the publication?
 7. Is there a logical explanation to anyone who challenges the issue?
 8. Is it worth risking our credibility?
 9. What are the alternatives?

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REGARDING BYLINES

1. All articles, graphics, photos, art, columns, pages, reviews, and other material creatively conceived, with exception to staff editorials will be bylined with the producer's name.
2. All bylined writers will be held accountable for their work.
3. When more than one person has contributed creatively to a piece of work, any person who has contributed to the work must be bylined as a producer.

REGARDING NEWS AND FEATURES

1. The media will specialize in and emphasize on informing their readers of school and student news for the students of the Manheim Township High School community.
2. The media will cover community, state, national, and international news if it is directly relevant to the school community, and includes a local angle.
3. The media will strive to provide coverage to all school organizations and functions.
4. The Media will publish the facts correctly, explain the issue, and put a stop to any speculative stories surrounding news.
5. Major District issues, news and developments will be priority over school news (these major issues will be decided by the Editorial Board.)

REGARDING DEATHS

1. Any current student, staff member, faculty member or building administrator that dies during the year will be recognized in the school media.
2. The school media will work to obtain permission from the deceased's family before publishing any information regarding the cause of death, if permission is not granted, the editorial board reserves the final say in publication of cause of death. Suicide will not be listed as a cause of death.
3. The school media will treat all deaths in a tasteful, respectful way.
4. An issue, or portion of an issue, should not be dedicated to or in memory of the deceased.

REGARDING ILLUSTRATIONS, PHOTOGRAPHS, GRAPHICS, ETC.

1. All cutlines will record the who and other necessary information in the photo.
2. All photographs must be captioned and bylined, with the exception of mugs and cutouts.
3. Bylines are required on all online photos and galleries.
4. Any photographs that contain any inappropriate attire or actions must be reshot.
5. Artwork represents the interpretations of the artist, not necessarily of the staff or MTHS.

6. The publications will not publish any photos, illustrations etc. that ridicule, demean, or misleadingly represent any individual or group.
7. Electronic manipulations changing the essential truth of the photo or illustration will be clearly labeled if used.

REGARDING AI USAGE

1. The Township Times is run by a team of dedicated students. Our copywriters help edit all of the writing content we create, our videographers and photographers capture all of their own content and the pages our designers create are all done by our design team.
2. We know that generative AI has the potential to assist us in our work. If generative AI helps work more efficiently, then it may be permitted.
3. We think it's important to approach generative AI with a clear understanding of its limits and a healthy skepticism about its ability to create rather than its ability to plagiarize.
4. Although generative AI produces content in seconds, that content is often inaccurate and includes falsehoods. It relies on outdated data sets, which often produces content that isn't in line with today's realities. It draws exclusively from already-published material and it often produces content that includes plagiarism and is deprived of fresh ideas.

We will never use AI to:

Produce copy for content ranging from stories to outlines

Create images, designs, or videos unless they are clearly labeled as such

Replace the work of a human editor

Replace credible sources of information, such as original research articles, personal interviews, or trusted news outlets

We may use AI to:

Generate story ideas

Suggest social media posts

Suggest headlines

Summarize long reports

Provide SEO recommendations

Provide basic information about a new topic, knowing that the information may be untrustworthy and that we will need to vet it in the same way we would vet information from Wikipedia

Suggest ways to clarify confusing sentences

Transcribe interviews

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Enhance content using AI tools built into softwares

Any suggestions provided to us by AI will be carefully evaluated by the Editorial Board.

REGARDING ERRORS

1. Concerns about errors in the school media may be submitted through the adviser at mccartch@mtwp.net.
2. The editorial board retains 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 editorial board determines a significant error is printed, the editorial board will determine the manner and timeliness of a correction.
5. Major corrections are determined by the editors and adviser.
6. 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.

REGARDING LETTERS TO THE EDITOR AND ONLINE COMMENTS

1. Letters to editor will be printed in the opinion section on the website.
2. Guidelines to write letters to the editor are available online at TownshipTimes.net.
3. Letters to the editor may be submitted to Mr. McCarthy at mccartch@mtwp.net.
4. Letters to the editor should not exceed 300 words, must be signed and must include the writer's email address for verification.
5. Letters to the editor will be verified by a member of the editorial board to determine the authenticity of the writer.
6. No material will be printed where content is obscene, invasive of others' privacy, encouraging physical disruption of school activities, and/or implies libel.
7. The MTHS Media editorial board 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 school newspaper upon receipt and will not be returned to the author.
9. Online comments will require a full name and email address submitted that are verifiable.
10. Online comments will be reviewed by the adviser and posted if they adhere to the publication guidelines, include a full name and have had their email verified.
11. Online comments that are found in violation of the editorial policy will not be published.
12. Personal attacks are not allowed.

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REGARDING REVIEWS

1. The reviewer must have experience in the area in which they are reviewing.
2. All reviews will be bylined and all reviews will be expressed opinions of authors, the editorial board and newspaper staff does not express opinions on the subject matter.
3. All reviews will be to evaluate and inform, not to promote.
4. Evaluative criteria used will be determined by the editorial board depending on whether the event or item being reviewed is professional or amateur in nature.
5. Review ideas may be submitted to the editorial board by all members of The Township Times.
6. All reviews must first be reviewed by the opinions editor prior to publishing.
7. All reviews need to be reviewed and printed in a current and timely manner.

SOCIAL MEDIA

1. Social media will be used to promote Township Times published content and to engage the MTHS community.
2. The editorial board reserves the right to remove posts and comments 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 promotion of events and remain objective, reporting what is fact. Reporters using personal social media to cover events should do the same.
5. Information gained through social media channels should be verified through multiple channels before passing it along to others. 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. Staff members using applications to post updates to social media accounts should have separate applications for their personal account and for the school media accounts. This will limit the chance of a post being sent from the wrong account.
8. Transparency is important. Mistakes made on social media posts should be corrected as soon as possible and any deleted posts should be acknowledged in subsequent postings.
9. Social media posts used for publication elsewhere must be verified to be a valid user.
10. Permission must be granted from the author of the social media post before publication in the Media.

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11. Students wishing to post Township Times media content on their own terms must link at least one outlet of Township Times media on their personal media account.

PRIOR REVIEW POLICY

1. Sources will be able to have quotes read back at the time of interview or at reporter's initiative.
2. Once an interview is consented to and completed, the Editorial Board reserves the right to determine what can be published and removed from the publications.
3. Sources will not be able to demand to read the reporter's completed story and/or perform editing tasks on that story.
4. The media reporters will endeavor to include the name and identity of all sources if the reporter believes that doing so will not result in endangerment, harassment or any other form of undue physical, mental, emotional anguish for the source.
5. The media reporters will not, within all boundaries of law, reveal a source who asks to remain nameless.
6. 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.
7. The media will not be reviewed by anyone outside of the editorial board aside from the adviser prior to its release to the public. The adviser is allowed to review the publication, but not required to, for the sole purpose of acting as legal consultant and educator in terms of unprotected speech; the adviser reading content is not considered prior review unless he/she makes changes or directs changes.

STUDENT & STAFF PUBLICATION POLICY

1. All students and staff of Manheim Township High School are eligible for publication in The Township Times.
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 coverage from publication in the MTHS Media.

VI: STAFF POLICY FOR SELECTION AND DISMISSAL

EDITOR AND STAFF SELECTION PROCESS

1. Editor in chief(s) and other editor level positions are chosen by faculty adviser, with input from the previous year's editorial board.
2. New and returning staff are judged by application, previous work, potential and perquisite class work.

3. Applicants are not turned down because of age, race, sex, religion, mental or physical handicap that do not impair editorial responsibilities.
4. Staff applications are due in March of each year prior to registration.
5. The adviser reserves the right to make changes to the list as he/she deems necessary after the registration deadline.
6. Editor titles and positions are not named until after all media have finalized publication for the previous year.

B. REGARDING STAFF DISMISSAL

1. All individuals involved with The Township Times are considered a team. Each member is expected to complete all assigned stories, pages, photos, etc. on or before the assigned deadline. Staff members, including editors, may be dismissed from their positions and/or the publications staff itself if any of following violations occur:
 1. continuously missed deadlines (dismissal procedures will take place by choice of adviser and EICs)
 2. Plagiarism
 3. Quote falsification
 4. Vandalism or theft of publication equipment
 5. Continuous negative or pessimistic attitude toward staff member or adviser
 6. Submitting an advanced page design, story, photo or other publishable item to anyone outside the media staff without approval by the editorial board
 7. Two suspensions in one academic year
 8. Failing to fulfill job as outlined in job description
2. Major infractions will result in immediate dismissal from staff duties (major infractions include but are not limited to following: plagiarism, vandalism, theft).
3. Minor infractions will be given a written warning for the first one. The second one is immediate dismissal from staff duties
4. Warnings will be written and signed by the adviser and editor-in-chiefs, as well as staff member in question.
5. An editor will be stripped of his/her title if suspended.
6. First misdemeanor will result in the loss of editor's title, and second will result in dismissal from staff.
7. Each member of the editorial board and adviser will attend a meeting with potentially dismissed student to discuss the issue; adviser will make final decision.
8. The academic nature of the school newspaper class allows removal of editors or staff members when school and or established media policy is violated.
9. The above list infractions could all result in dismissal however, staff dismissals are not limited to the listed infractions.

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10. Dismissal procedures are reviewed and approved by the editorial board
11. The dismissed staff member may appeal their dismissal in writing to the editorial board within three school days following dismissal.
12. All dismissal appeals will be directed to the building principal and the editorial board.

VII. QUERIES

1. Questions or complaints concerning material published in the media should be made in writing to the editor in chief(s) who will present the concern at the next scheduled editorial board meeting.
2. Complaints and suggestions may be emailed to mccartch@mtwp.net.
3. Resolutions will be made within limits of deadlines.