

San Luis Obispo High School Expressions Newspaper

Statement of Policy

San Luis Obispo High School *Expressions*, the official, school-sponsored student newspaper of San Luis Obispo High School, has been established as a forum for student expression and as a voice in the uninhibited, robust, and open discussion of issues. The newspaper publication will provide a full opportunity for students to inquire, question, and exchange ideas. Content will reflect all areas of student interest, including topics about which there may be dissent or controversy.

Freedom of expression and press freedom are fundamental values in a democratic society. The mission of any institution committed to preparing productive citizens must include teaching students these values, both by lesson and by example.

As determined by the courts, student exercise of freedom of expression and press freedom is protected by both state and federal law, especially by the First Amendment to the United States Constitution. Accordingly, school officials are responsible for encouraging and ensuring freedom of expression and press freedom for all students.

It is the policy of *Expressions* that student journalists shall have the right to determine the content of the student newspaper. Accordingly, the following guidelines relate only to establishing grounds for publication.

Publication Policy

The purpose of San Luis Obispo High School *Expressions* is to factually inform and entertain its readers. As an established forum for the student body, the pursuit of truth will be the staff's number one priority. The staff believes that a journalist must seek truth and provide a fair and comprehensive account of events and issues and always practice ethical behavior to maintain credibility.

Staff Editorials

Unsigned editorials reflect the opinion of at least two-thirds of the *Expressions* staff. Opinion columns reflect the opinion of the writer and do not necessarily represent the opinions of the faculty and administration of SLOHS. Controversial issues will be covered from both points of views. School news will also be covered. Any local, national or international news deemed relevant to the *Expressions* readership may also be covered.

Letters to the Editor

Letters to the editor are welcomed.

1. *Expressions* should try to print all letters received on page 3 of the next print issue.
2. Letters should be 250-300 words long. Letters may be edited for brevity, content, and clarity.
3. The writer must include a full name. Anonymous letters to the editor are strongly discouraged, but exceptions may be made at the discretion of the editors.
4. They should be submitted to room 505 or emailed to snairne@slcusd.org for editorial review and consideration.
5. *Expressions* retains the right to edit letters to comply with journalistic standards.

Corrections

If any error is found in an issue of *Expressions*, it is the duty of *Expressions* to correct the error as soon as possible.

Responsibilities and reporting practices of student journalists

Students who work on the official, school-sponsored student newspaper determine the content of the publication and are responsible for that content. These students should:

1. determine the content of the student newspaper,
2. check and verify all facts and verify the accuracy of all quotations,
3. strive to produce media based upon professional standards of accuracy, objectivity and fairness,
4. review material to improve sentence structure, grammar, spelling and punctuation,
5. in the case of editorials or letters to the editor concerning controversial issues, determine the need for rebuttal comments and opinions and provide space therefore if appropriate, and
6. student editors of school-sponsored media shall be responsible for determining the news, opinion and advertising content of their media subject to the limitations listed.

slohsexpressions.com Website

The same print policy applies to the Expressions website. Comment section on each article will be open for 24 hours after initial publication. Anonymous comments are permitted as long as no derogatory comments are made. Web advertising policy is the same as print policy.

Adviser responsibility

The adviser is not a censor. It shall be the responsibility of the *Expressions* adviser to supervise the production of the school-sponsored newspaper and maintain the provisions of the staff policies. This shall not be construed to prevent an adviser from teaching professional standards of English and journalism to the student staff. The adviser serves to give students a better understanding of the functions and ethics of a free press.

Prior Restraint

No student media, whether non-school-sponsored or official, will be reviewed by school administrators prior to distribution or withheld from distribution. The school assumes no liability for the content of any student publication, and urges all student journalists to recognize that with editorial control comes responsibility, including the responsibility to follow professional journalism standards each school year.

No expression made by students in the exercise of free speech or free press rights shall be deemed to be an expression of school policy, and no school officials or school district shall be held responsible in any civil or criminal action for any expression made or published by students unless school officials have interfered with or altered the content of the student expression.

Freedom of Expression

Unprotected Speech

There are nine categories recognized by the U.S. Supreme Court that **are not protected** by the First Amendment. They are:

1. Obscenity – Expression must meet a three-part obscenity test. Would the “average person find this to be overly sexual? Does the work describe sexual conduct in an offensive way? Does the work lack literary or political value?
2. Defamation – Libel or slander are not permitted.
3. Expression that incites lawless action – Don’t instigate riots or urge people to be truant.

4. Fighting words – No personally abusive language, please.
5. Unwarranted invasions of privacy:
 - a. Public disclosure of private and embarrassing facts;
 - b. Intrusion – improper news gathering acts;
 - c. False light – an unflattering, untruthful portrayal.
6. Deceptive ads for products or services illegal for minors – no drugs or alcohol should be advertised in the paper.
7. Copyright violations.
8. Expression that causes a material and substantial disruption to school activities.
9. Libel.

Libel

All four of these elements must be present for something to be considered libel:

1. Publication – The statement was communicated by the publication to someone other than the person it was about.
2. Identification – The person claiming he was libeled must show he was identified by the statement.
3. Harm – The person must show that his reputation in the community was harmed.
4. Fault – The person suing must show that you are at fault. If you did everything a reasonable reporter would do to verify the information you are publishing, then you are not at fault.

Advertising Policy

Advertising is constitutionally protected expression. San Luis Obispo High School *Expressions* will accept advertising. Acceptance or rejection of advertising is within the purview of the *Expressions* staff, which may accept any ads except those for products or services that promote illegal products, oppose specific religions, or use racial or sexist comments. No advertising that is copyright protected, libelous, irresponsible, or that violates school standards for good taste will be accepted. Ads for political candidates and ballot issues may be accepted; however, publication staffs are encouraged to solicit ads from all sides on such issues.

All advertising accepted by the staff must meet the same guidelines as editorial content. Acceptance of advertising does not constitute an endorsement by the school, the staff as a whole, or its individual members.

5 things to make sure you know about getting ads

1. Any ads placed in a school newspaper must be school appropriate. There will be no ads for liquor, cigarettes, 21+ concerts, etc.
2. Each student in the newspaper class must bring in advertisement sales. Advertisements are essential – they're how we print the paper! That's why ads are a portion of our grades.
3. Be professional when you are asking for ads from businesses. Let them know that the paper reaches over 1500 people.
4. Lure the business in with time-appropriate ads. For instance, you can suggest to a clothing store that they advertise in April – right before Prom.
5. Don't feel bad using your connections to get an ad. Do you have a friend whose family owns a restaurant? Bug them.
6. All web advertisements can be sent to snairne@slcusd.org

Reporting Policy

Principal/Admin

1. Be polite and professional. You're representing *Expressions*.

2. Rather than stating what you've heard as fact, tell them what you heard, ask if it's correct and ask them to give their opinion or to give you the correct facts.
3. Don't only rely on quotes or "facts" received from the principal or one source. Just because they might have a big job doesn't mean they know every little detail. Your articles should be based on multiple sources and quotes from many people.
4. Ask open-ended questions in order to get more information.
5. It's not required that you reveal your sources to the interviewee if he/she asks.
6. We will let administration have prior review, but we will not agree to make any changes they request unless we agree to do so under our own discretion.

School officials cannot:

1. Ban student expression solely because it is controversial, takes extreme, "fringe" or minority opinions, or is distasteful, unpopular or unpleasant,
2. ban the publication or distribution of material relating to sexual issues including, but not limited to, virginity, birth control and sexually-transmitted diseases (including AIDS),
3. cut off funds to official student media because of disagreement over editorial policy, or
4. prohibit the endorsement of candidates for student office or for public office at any level.

The General student population / Grey Slips

A grey slip is used to pull a student out of class. To properly fill out a grey slip you must:

1. Fill "Please Excuse:" line with the first and last name of the student you wish to pull out of class. Do not use nicknames.
2. Circle the period that you want to pull the student out of.
3. Get Nairne's signature.
4. Do not go into a classroom with other staff members. Be quiet and wait for a polite moment to hand the teacher the grey slip.