



Consol given 'free rein'

Any subject is fair game for A&M Consolidated journalism students as long as the story is presented fairly and accurately, said Celeste Hilliard, the student newspaper adviser.

"If they are not given the opportunity to act responsibly, if all they can write on is club news, then they don't ever learn to act responsibly."

"I don't think the walls of the school constitute the student's world. I'm not capable of drawing that line of demarcation where school starts here and stops here."

Rodney LeBoeuf, the high school principal, agrees with Hilliard.

"If a students want to cover an article outside the school, I personally don't see any harm in it."

The article should be of student interest, however he added.

Students can write about politics if they know enough about it, Hilliard said.

"We covered the school bond issue last year. I try to get them to go to school board meetings, but they're really not interested."

Speakers and concerts on the Texas A&M University campus can be covered also, she said.

"We look for audience appeal. We do write for high school kids."

Editorials and letters to the editor that are critical of some school policies have been written by students and printed in the Paper Tiger.

"As long as it's well written and presents both sides, they can print it even if it doesn't jive with the school board."

LeBoeuf agrees with this policy.

The legalization of marijuana was touched on by a student last year, Hilliard said. "The kid who wrote it wrote it responsibly."

Administrators leave the job of editing the content of the newspaper to the adviser.

"I've worked under three principals, including Mr. LeBoeuf, and talked to them about their policies and they said that's what we hired you for."

The general guidelines Hilliard said she set down for the Paper Tiger are: no gossip columns, editorials are to deal only with people, letters to the editor must be answered by the staff.

Obscenity can be worked around she said. "It's not so much censorship, it's just good taste. It would offend some people."

The administration has no written guidelines for the paper to follow.

Hilliard tells her students to remember who the publisher is, who the audience is and to remember the paper is a legitimate arm of the school.

"You've got to treat them responsibly and look at them as human beings able to handle the assignment and you've given them. You can't be looking down your

Courts uphold students' free expression in papers

Freedom of the press in public schools has been a hotly contested legal issue for several years.

Administrative claims that the student newspaper is simply a part of the curriculum provided for journalism students and so not protected by the constitution are no longer standing up in court. Controversial articles, such as ones on birth control and abortion are being permitted in student newspapers since the courts have found the papers to be a forum for student expression.

The landmark decision for students' First Amendment rights was the Supreme Court's ruling in *Tinker vs. Des Moines Independent School District* in 1969.

Although the case did not deal specifically with freedom of the press, the ruling has since been applied by lower courts to such cases.

Students in Des Moines schools wore black arm bands to protest the Vietnam war. School officials ordered the students to remove them. Students who refused were suspended from school.

The Supreme Court ruled that school authorities cannot abridge students' freedom of expression unless they can be shown to interfere with school discipline.

Although courts have been unwilling to allow an unfounded fear of disruption to censor newspaper content, many school

officials are not willing to wait until a disruption occurs.

The 14th Amendment prevents states from abridging the freedom of speech, press and expression.

Public schools are funded with state money, which makes them an arm of the state.

Employees of the school, including administrators and faculty, are considered agents of the state.

There have been several court decisions in recent years affecting freedom of the press in public schools. The decisions directly affecting Texas schools have come from the 5th Circuit Court, although decisions from other circuit courts can be used as precedents for cases in Texas.

The 1st Circuit Court in Boston ruled that abortion, socialism and pre-marital sex are issues that can be dealt with in a student newspaper since it would be difficult to determine community values for them.

The First Amendment allows a wide variety of subjects to be discussed including those that may anger the community, the Court ruled.

School authorities cannot place restrictions on a student publication once it has been established, the New York Court of Appeals ruled.

The 5th Circuit Court ruled that a student publication used as a departmental tool is still protected by the First Amendment.

nose at them as being a child all the time. Let them make their mistakes and learn from them."

Journalism students have mixed feelings about the Paper Tiger.

"It's sometimes redneck and sometimes open-minded," said

Glenn Richards, this year's former editor.

Controversial stories would have run when he was editor, he said.

"I would have raised hell if

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