

Building Healthy Relationships Between Scholastic Press & Administration

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First, some important terminology

- Prior Review
- Prior Restraint

What is the difference between prior restraint and prior review?



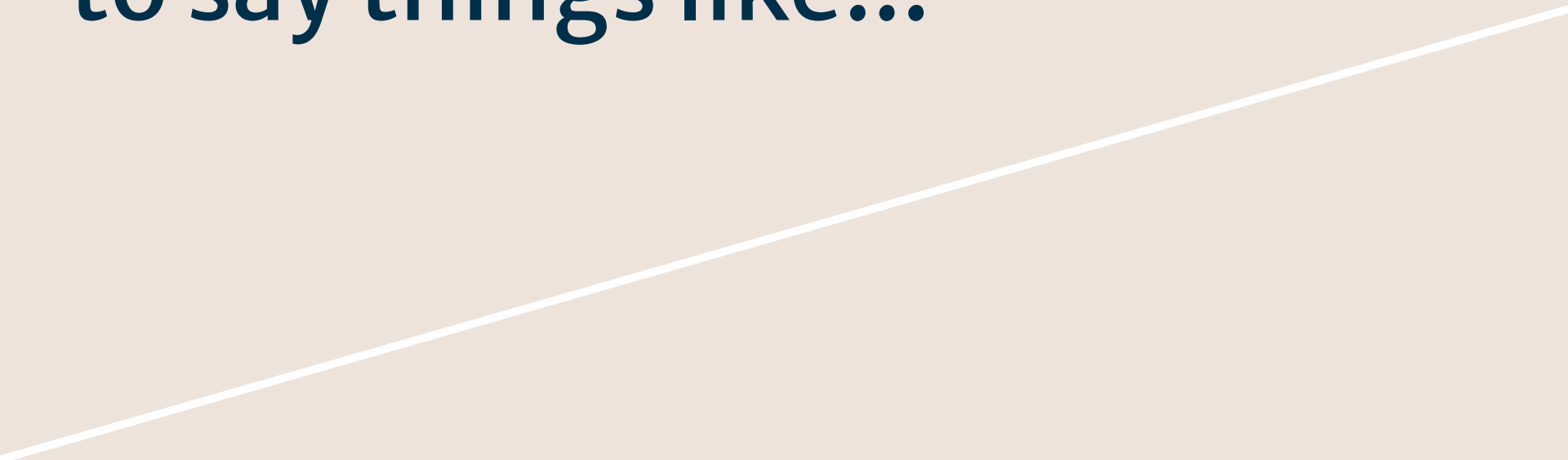
What is a “New
Voices” law? Read
about this movement
at the link.

Even if your state doesn't have a New Voices law or you attend a private school, how can you help your school administration see the value of giving student journalists more freedom?

One (very!) helpful
resource: Quill & Scroll's
Principal's Guide to
Student Journalism.

Share this with your
school leaders!

How do you get administrators
to say things like...



“It’s really important that we are a First Amendment School because I think what we do is we fulfill the basic mission and purpose of schools, which is to create a vibrant democracy...perhaps students may be critical of the administration, of the school — that is only a good thing. It promotes dialogue; it allows the school to improve itself and to listen to student voice.”

Principal Lisa Vardi
Charles E Smith Jewish Day School

“From stories to news to opinion columns, the content of our publications is inspired **by the students for the students**. As an administrator, I find it **inspiring and, frankly, liberating** to afford students the agency of their own voices. Allowing them to **speak for themselves** is a core value.”

Head and Chief Academic Officer
Rachel Simpson
Convent of the Sacred Heart High School

Mission.
Knowledge.
Ethics.
Relationships.
Tenacity.

Tip 1:
Tie press freedom to
your school, district or
state's mission.

Do you know yours?

Example 1

Read the excerpt on the next page from Texas' state educational code, which outlines the broad mission of all public school education in the state. How might the language in this code be useful in making a case for students practicing independent journalism at Texas high schools?

“Educators shall cultivate in students an informed American patriotism and lead students in a close study of the founding documents of the United States and Texas. The purpose of this objective is to:
... enhance students’ intellectual independence so that students may become thoughtful, informed citizens who have an appreciation for the fundamental democratic principles of our state and national heritage.”

Excerpt from the [2025 Texas Statutes Education Code](#)

Example 2

Read the excerpt on the next page from a public school in another state that does not have a New Voices law. How might the language in this code be useful in making a case for students practicing independent journalism at this school?

“To create a safe, collaborative, student-centered learning environment that is responsive to cultural differences, challenges students to think, and prepares them for the rigors of life.”

-Excerpt from a public high school mission statement in a state that does not have a New Voices law

Tip 2:

Know journalistic
best practices, and
own your mistakes.

Fact check. Proofread. Be fair.
Correct mistakes. The more
credible your journalism is, the
harder it is to justify censorship.

Tip 3:

Teach and practice journalistic ethics.

Balance seeking and reporting truth with minimizing harm.

Ethics

Develop an ethical code.

Train editors as ethical leaders

Practice it throughout the year (ethical “workouts”)

Many school codes are based on the four pillars from the Society of Professional Journalists.

- Seek truth and report it
- Minimize harm
- Act independently
- Be accountable and transparent

Ethical codes for inspiration

- [SPJ Code of Ethics](#) (in the process of being revised as of August 2026)
- [NSPA Model Code of Ethics for High School Journalists](#)
- IFJ [Global Charter of Ethics for Journalists](#)
- National Press Photographers Association [Code of Ethics](#)
- Archer Student Media [Code of Ethics](#) (my school's code, which is a blend of SPJ and NSPA's work)

Tip 4

Build a relationship and teach your administrators about journalistic best practices.

Sustain respectful, but independent, communication throughout the year.

Administration

How can you win them over?

- Invite them to class to see your process.
- Engage in conversation about ethical processes and the role of journalism in seeking truth over rumor.
- Stress the educational and civic value of journalism.
- Give them a chance to be interviewed to offer comment on hot topics.
- Give them a heads up when publishing something your community might find controversial (and the steps you took to report accurately) so they aren't surprised by parent phone calls.
- Participate in competitions to provide evidence you are doing good journalism.

Point out the benefits of a hands-off approach.

There's never been a successful lawsuit against a school based on a student-controlled media outlet. They take on legal liability for your publication when they control it.

Tip 5:
Pick your battles,
find allies and be
tenacious.

Outside voices might turn
the tide, but this won't
happen overnight.

Potential Allies & Resources

- Parents and community members
- Religious activists/historical figures within your school's faith if you attend a faith-based school
- Alumni
- The Board
- Other administrators
- JEA's Scholastic Press Rights Committee (SPRC)
- The Student Press Law Center (SPLC)
- Local news organizations

Have patience
and tenacity.

Be ready to pass the torch,
but don't give up.

Need help?

Andrea Negri, Scholastic Press Rights Director: sprc@jea.org

PANIC BUTTON SPRC: <http://jea.org/wp/panic-button/> (to get adviser support)

Student Press Law Center: <https://splc.org/legalrequest/> (get legal help)

Kristin Taylor, SPRC member: ktaylor1164@gmail.com