

Program Guidelines (revised 3/07)

*Used by the National Association of Secondary School Principals in
Placing Contests, Competitions, Tournaments, and Other Non-Athletic Activities on the National Advisory
List*

NASSP Student Contests and Activities Committee: Statement on the Release of Student Information

Both the Committee and the Association have long been concerned about the release of students' names and directory information. Although the initial release of students' information may be for a worthy cause, once released the school no longer has control over its distribution. Acknowledging growing sensitivity to the legal question of distributing such information, the committee cautions school personnel against releasing student information without the consent of parents or students 18 years of age or older.

All contests and activities listed on NASSP's Advisory List will be reviewed by NASSP's National Committee on Student Contests and Activities based on the following standards.

Educational Standards

- A. Contests and activities should be designed solely to benefit middle school and high school youth in educational, civic, social, and ethical development. Statements expressing the educational benefits, objectives, and justification of service to the school and students are to be submitted with all applications.
- B. Contests and activities that motivate students to be creative and to demonstrate excellence are encouraged.

Financial and Organizational Standards

- A. Sponsoring organizations shall have sufficient financial backing to protect all monies paid by participating students or schools, and fulfill all responsibilities. All applicants will submit a financial accounting, giving specific per student or per school cost estimates in such areas as administration, promotion, housing, travel, food, and other incidental expenses along with applications.
- B. Cost of participation should be appropriate to the educational benefits to the student, school, and community.
- C. Sponsors shall provide insurance to protect the interests of the sponsoring organization and individuals participating in scheduled program activities.
- D. Contests and activities must not place an undue burden on students, teachers, or schools.
- E. Sponsoring organizations shall disclose all fees, along with other required or optional costs prior to student or school enrollment into the contest or activity.
- F. The administrative organization related to the contest or activity shall be clearly defined.
- G. The organization shall operate under the laws of one of the 50 states or the District of Columbia.

Promotion Standards

- A. Organizations conducting contests or activities for middle level and high school students are expected to provide program notification to the principal or other designated responsible school administrator prior to student contact. In the event student contact is made via the Internet, organizations are expected to provide a means of notifying the principal in accordance with the guidelines outlined in the *Direct Marketing Practices that utilize the World Wide Web*. (See *Direct Marketing Guidelines*)
- B. Program advertising must accurately portray the contest or activity, stating its purpose, benefits and cost to the students, and sponsorship information.
- C. Promotional materials and activities shall distinguish the program and sponsoring organization from others operating under related corporate structures, the same or similar names or symbols.
- D. Promotional materials must refrain from including advertisement for local recreational activities or other commercial entities beyond the listing of program sponsors.
- E. Organizations conducting contests and activities for middle level and high school students should refrain from using titles, symbols, or names that imply a relationship to a federal or government agency or entity, unless such a relationship exists.

Program Standards

- A. Contests and activities involving the use of representatives or group leaders, working directly with students, shall maintain an effective system of screening, selection, training and supervision by the sponsoring organization.
- B. Sponsors of contests and activities requiring off-site participation shall provide adequate support services such as medical care or other program-related needs to all participants. The program sponsor shall have in place adequate comprehensive plans, including trained staff, for dealing with emergency/crisis situations that may occur.
- C. Contests and Activities must not discriminate on the basis of race, color, sex, religion, sexual orientation, national or ethnic origin, or disability in the selection of otherwise eligible or qualified participants.
- D. The eligibility of a student to participate shall not depend upon an individual teacher's membership in the sponsoring organization.
- E. Sponsoring organizations must provide for appropriate and adequate supervision for the duration of an event. ***Parents or guardians must have the ability to accompany middle level students, grades 5-8, at events requiring overnight stays.***
- F. Contests and activities should be held on non-school time. Those involving extensive or multiple day travel will be evaluated in terms of educational benefits to the students measured against the loss of instructional time.
- G. Sponsoring organizations should provide the opportunity for students and school staff to participate in a post-program evaluation.
- H. Programs that engage in the sharing of student lists must obtain permission from parents and students 18 years of age or older, before releasing student information. (3/05)

Music Programs

The National Committee on Student Contests and Activities will consider listing music activities that meet the Standards and qualify for national or regional (open to out-of-state participants) program listings. NASSP recognizes the National Association for Music Education (MENC) as the leader in the field of musical arts. Beginning with applications for 2007-2008, MENC will provide professional input on music program applications. Input from MENC will be taken into consideration by the Committee during its review process. (*Adopted May 2006*)

Music learning and music programs in middle level and high schools should be enhanced by the experience of participating in any contests or events for student musicians and performers. For this reason, music activities and programs applying for inclusion on the National Advisory List of Student Contests and Activities must also show evidence of meeting the following guidelines that are in addition to the general Standards:

- A. Sponsors of music programs will provide or make available adequate facilities and equipment to meet the needs of the music contest or activity participants
- B. By taking part in the music program, student participants will have met one or more state or national music standards. Also, age and content appropriate literature will be utilized for all performances
- C. Music activities must include a clinical portion that provides instruction, analytical critique of the performance and evaluation. Recognized clinicians with quality credentials will be utilized for adjudication and or evaluation of participants.
- D. Guidelines to be used for entry consideration or adjudication are clearly stated in entry materials and adequate time for groups or individuals to submit application materials for the music event is reflected in the entry deadlines.
- E. Participant travel arrangements, housing, and meals shall be offered by the sponsor to the school as an optional service. Music activities associated with theme parks may not apply admission charges to program registration costs or otherwise require park admission to participate.
- F. The amount of time spent by participating groups in musical performance, instruction and evaluation should be appropriate in proportion to the time spent at the site of the activity.

*Music programs included on the Not Reviewed list will continue with the exception of theme park programs that can meet the Standards and additional guidelines.

Adjudication and Awards Standards

- A. The involvement of teachers and/or principals in the selection or judging process is discouraged where there is a conflict of interest.
- B. Awards should be appropriate in number, kind, and value.
- C. Scholarships should be paid directly to the institution selected by the student or directly to the student when the scholarship payment requires an agent of the selected educational institution to cosign the check.

Activities Not Reviewed or Listed

The Committee has determined that it will not review or list as part of the Advisory List the following activities:

- A. Poster contests that are not components of broader art competitions.
- B. Music events tied to athletic events, recreational activities, tourist areas, or those related to holiday parades.
- C. All-star events, bowls, out-of-season games, or (athletic) events declaring a national champion.
- D. Activities designed to raise funds for groups or individuals within the school.
- E. National or regional competitive programs for cheerleading, pompon, drill teams and spirit groups.

Student Recognition Programs

Programs that only publish student names in publications usually titled “who’s who,” “distinguished,” “outstanding,” or the like do not fall within the definition of a contest or activity and, therefore, are not reviewed by the Student Contests and Activities Committee. However, NASSP does recognize that these publications exist and the students’ and their parents’ right to make the determination to participate in these programs. To assist principals, parents, and students in evaluating these programs, the following guidelines should be considered:

- A. Individual fees or dues should be minimal, applying only to the processing of scholarship applications, and should be clearly stated as such in all program materials.
- B. Selection criteria should be clearly and accurately stated in program literature and must be adhered to.
- C. The source of the referral should be specifically stated in program publications and correspondence.
- D. Programs should seek written verification from authorized local school officials of students’ school-related achievements and activities.
- E. Programs must not imply that recognition is automatically a major consideration of college admissions, but rather is only one of many potential reference sources.
- F. Programs must not engage in the sale, rental, or sharing of student lists, nor publish home addresses without the express written permission of the student’s parents.
- G. Programs should maintain a policy of providing refunds for any unsatisfactory product or service marketed.
- H. Programs should make available to any person requesting, a list of the names of those who received awards.
- I. The basis for awarding any scholarships as part of the program should be clearly stated, including numbers, amounts, and funding methods.
- J. Programs shall respond to all inquiries, complaints, and requests for background information on the program in a timely manner.
- K. Unless sponsored by a governmental entity, programs should not use a program title implying a connection with the federal or state government without a disclaimer prominently included in the literature.
- L. Programs should maintain an external advisory council for the purpose of reviewing the program and making recommendations.

As with any program or activity being considered, students and parents are urged to be aware of the exact nature of recognition programs and of what role such programs may play in the college admissions process. School personnel are urged to be aware of the exact nature of recognition programs and to alert students to the possible costs of participation and to be cautious concerning the use of student lists and personal information.

Direct Marketing Guidelines

The Committee recognizes that in a competitive marketplace the use of direct marketing can be an ethical and viable means of soliciting students. It also recognizes that it is the students' and their parents' right/responsibility to make the determination to participate in contests and activities. To assist principals, parents, and students in evaluating these programs, the following guidelines should be considered.

The Committee encourages all contests, activities, or programs presented to students by means of direct marketing apply for review and listing on the *NASSP National Advisory List of Contests and Activities* and meet all applicable standards.

When direct marketing practices to students are utilized using surface or electronic mail:

1. Organizations should notify the principal/authorized school personnel prior to sending program materials to students.
2. A copy of early registration materials should be sent to the school prior to being mailed to students.
3. Organizations or businesses using letters of nomination and/or identification should include the following information in program invitation letters to students:
 - a. Clearly name the person who nominated the student for the program, or
 - b. Clearly identify the source from which the student's name was acquired.
4. The initial contact letter should clearly disclose all program fees along with other required or optional costs to the students and direct them to check with their principals to ensure that the program is in compliance with local guidelines and policies.
5. Program applications should be signed by the principal or authorized designee.
6. Organizations should maintain a policy of removing groups of student names from their mailing list at the request of the schools.

When direct marketing practices utilize the World Wide Web:

1. Program web pages should include a notice to students instructing them to invite principals to visit the web site in order to assist the students and parents in evaluating the programs being considered.
2. Program web page information should clearly disclose all program fees, along with other required or optional costs to the students.
3. The application should direct students to check with their principal to ensure that the program is in compliance with local guidelines and policies.
4. Program applications that may be downloaded should require the signature of the principal or authorized designee.
5. Direct registrations over the web should include a check box indicating that the principal or authorized designee has been consulted or notified by student and/or parents prior to registration.
6. Direct registrations over the web should include fields for students to include the name and E-mail address of their principal.

Educational Student Travel

The Committee recognizes that educational student travel experiences supplement and enrich the learning process and that middle and high schools are increasingly contracting educational tour operators and companies for student travel needs. As with any student program, principals, faculty, and parents should follow good consumer practices before entering into contracts with tour operators or travel companies. Although the National Committee on Student Contests and Activities does not address student travel directly in its National Guidelines, the Committee recognizes the need for resources and recommends that principals and student trip planners review the standards and guidelines developed and adopted by the Student & Youth Travel Association (SYTA). The Committee found the SYTA standards and travel guidelines to be a useful evaluative tool in the selection of a student tour operator.

SYTA is a professional, non-profit association that represents the interest of student and youth travel and has developed standards to help students, parents and educators with educational travel needs. The National Committee on Student Contests and Activities' recognition of the SYTA standards as a valuable resource for its members does not imply endorsement of the organization by the Committee or NASSP.

To review the SYTA standards and other student travel information, click on <http://www.syta.com>.

Scholarships and Related Services

The Committee recognizes that many students seek scholarships to attend post-secondary schools and that to date there are well over a half million scholarships advertised. Due to the large number and widely varied application requirements, the National Committee on Student Contests and Activities does not review individual scholarship programs. The Committee does encourage students and parents to be smart consumers when considering applying for scholarships and recommends that they refer to the Scholarship Warning Signs developed by the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) and found on the FTC website at <http://www.ftc.gov>.

Because an increasing number of students are using internet search services to search and apply for scholarships, the Committee suggest that the following FTC guidelines be used to evaluate such services and reminds administrators, parents and students that a common practice for scams involves the use of high pressure sales tactics.

- 1. Consumers are guaranteed a scholarship or their money back,**
Guarantees usually include requirements that effectively prevent consumers from qualifying to receive any refunds.
- 2. The service claims itself as the “only” source for certain information,**
There are a number of free scholarship lists available in schools and on the Internet.
- 3. Consumers are asked to provide credit card, checking, or bank account numbers to hold a scholarship,**
Giving out financial information may lead to an unauthorized bank account withdrawal.
- 4. The service boasts that it will do all of the work,**
Credible scholarships and grants require students to complete the application process.
- 5. The service indicates that a scholarship will cost money, and**
While some scholarship programs do assess a small processing fee for applications, holding fees may signal other intent on the part of the service.
- 6. The student receives notice of winning an unsolicited scholarship.**
Research to determine if the scholarship sponsor is legitimate before applying or sending money for any unsolicited scholarship.

Many students and parents are turning to scholarship search services to assist in their efforts to secure financial assistance. According to the FTC, the increased use of these services has also led to more incidents of scams that promise search assistance. The Committee recommends that students and parents considering registration to a scholarship search service should consider those that do not charge for services. It is also recommended that parents and students consider search services that maintain websites, which refrain from alcohol, tobacco and firearm advertising, and provide a clear explanation of policies regarding the use of personal directory information (such as name, address, email, date of birth, gender, and country of citizenship) that a number of scholarship search companies collect and sell. Parents should read and understand the company’s procedures for opting out on the release of student information before completing the registration process.

Fundraising for Student Contests and Activities

Programs that individual students and student groups wish to participate in or attend often involve a variety of costs, ranging from travel and registration to the purchase of specialized contest-related materials. To help students and schools acquire the monies necessary to cover these costs, some program sponsors offer fundraising kits and suggestions.

While the majority of the ideas and materials provided by program sponsors are safe, and ethical, there exists the chance that some fundraising recommendations may conflict with local law or school district policy. Parents and school personnel should review fundraising policy with students prior to the beginning of their efforts.

Any fundraising that will entail the sale of products should be carefully monitored and supervised by a parent or school personnel. It is also recommended that before selecting a vendor for the product that the fundraising organizer review the fundraising information published by the Association of Fund Raisers & Direct Sellers (AFRDS). Tips on fundraising and related checklists can be found on AFRDS website at www.afrds.org.

The National Committee on Student Contests and Activities’ recognition of AFRDS as a valuable resource for its members does not imply endorsement of the organization by the Committee or NASSP. (5/02)

Student Mail

NASSP members have often expressed concern about a school's obligations regarding mail addressed to students and delivered to the school. Some of this mail is personal in the sense of being responsive to student requests for college information or scholarship aid, but the larger part is commercial solicitation sent in bulk by other than first-class mail or by programs recruiting student participation.

D042.5.2 of the U. S. Postal Service Domestic Mail Manual states that Mail addressed to a person at a hotel, school, or similar place is delivered to the hotel, school, etc. If the addressee is no longer at that address, the mail must be redirected to the current address, if known, or endorsed appropriately, i.e., marked "Refused" and returned by the institution to the post office.

The U.S. Postal Service has advised that:

1. A school may refuse to accept letters addressed to students in care of the school. If it elects to do so, it should mark "REFUSED" on the envelope and return it by placing it in a mailbox or mailbag for return to the post office.
2. Since mail delivered to the school is regarded as belonging to the recipient school, one sample of a mass mailing addressed to students may be opened and, if it does not pertain to school business, all of it maybe placed in one container, marked "REFUSED" and returned to the post office, which will return it to the sender. While refusal of mail should usually be made at the time of delivery, the Service recognizes the impracticality of such a demand in the case of deliveries of large amounts of mail to an institution. It, therefore, permits refusal of mail when it is sorted, except for "accountable" mail, that is registered, certified, or insured which must be signed for when received.
3. Because federal law provides criminal penalties for obstruction of correspondence (Title 18, Section 1702), intentional discarding of mail, even if delivered in mass distribution categories, is not recommended.
4. Finally, as recipient of mail delivered to the school, the school's assigned staff may choose to accept some mail addressed to students and refuse other mail. If accepted, however, it must make a good faith effort to see that the mail is delivered to the student addressee.