

Handout #8: Ethical Situations Plaguing High School Newspapers

1. A national public relations company sends your newspaper staff (and all the other local high school newspapers) a package containing 15 free copies of a recently released CD and requests that a staffer review it in the next issue of the newspaper. The PR company only asks for a copy of the published review. Explain any ethical concerns here. What should the staff do?
2. A group of students are suspended in your school for a scheme involving altering student grades. Your newspaper is writing an article about the situation. Do you print the students' names or not? Explain your reasons.
3. A reporter for your newspaper conducted a lengthy interview with a teacher for a news article using a tape recorder and did not take notes. After the interview, the student realized that the tape recorder did not work and that the quotes he needed were not recorded. The student thinks he remembers the exact wording that the teacher used regarding the important questions he asked. Should he go with his memory? What are the ethical issues involved here? What should the student do? What if the source was a member of the community outside of the school and not likely to read the article in the school newspaper?
4. In a lengthy article on teen-aged drinking and drug use, several students refuse to talk to the student reporter on the record unless they can be promised anonymity. What are the ethical concerns here and what should the reporter and editor do?
5. A local business buys a large advertisement regularly in your school newspaper. Recently, the local business approached the paper and asked to have a student reporter write a feature article about all the services that the business offers to the community. What should be the newspaper's response?