

## **Hazelwood v. Kuhlmeier/ Background •**

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As you read the background summary of the case below, look for the **important vocabulary terms**. You can find definitions for these terms on the separate vocabulary handout.

The First Amendment protects the right to free speech and a free press. This means that people have the right to express themselves without **interference** or punishment from the government. This freedom is one of the most important freedoms because it helps people to obtain information, share ideas, make decisions, and communicate those decisions to the government. It protects expression of popular and unpopular ideas.

The freedom of speech is not always guaranteed. The government can generally limit the time and places where people can speak. With few exceptions, however, the government cannot limit or punish speech based on what is being said.

The freedom of press protects people from government **censorship** of newspapers, magazines, books, radio, television, and film. This means that the government cannot try to **censor** publications before they are published unless they were very likely to cause serious harm and stopping the publication is the only way to prevent the harm.

There are some special places where the rules about free speech are different, including schools. The U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that public schools (which are run by the government) can limit speech more than the government can outside of school. In schools, students do have some free speech rights. But student speech can also be limited when it disrupts the learning environment or interferes with rights of others.

The journalism class at Hazelwood East High School wrote articles and put them together for the school paper. They gave the newspaper to their teacher, Howard Emerson to review before it was printed. Mr. Emerson showed the newspaper to the principal. He asked the principal if it was okay to make copies and hand them out to students at the school.

Principal Reynolds did not like what he read. First, there was an article about pregnant students. It described the students, but it did not give their names. Principal Reynolds was afraid that students would be able to figure out who the pregnant students were. He also noticed that the article mentioned sex and birth control. He did not think that students in ninth grade should be reading about sex and birth control.

There was another article that Principal Reynolds did not like. This one was about divorce. In it, one student said things about her father. For example, she said that her father went out too much and did not spend enough time with his family. The father did not get a chance to tell his side of the story. Principal Reynolds thought this was unfair.



