

8th Grade

3rd Place

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Q: Suppose a student creates a Facebook group to insult a teacher. Should a Principal be allowed to suspend a student for disrespecting a teacher online?

Elijah Lovejoy once stated "... I shall hold myself at liberty to speak, to write, and to publish whatever I please on any subject." Because I strongly believe these words, I feel that a principal should not be allowed to suspend a student for disrespecting a teacher online. The Core Democratic Value liberty, in my opinion, is one of the most important core democratic values. Liberty ensures personal, political, and economic freedom. This is freedom for people to gather in groups, and have their own beliefs, ideas, and opinions. As such, it is a student's right if he chooses to use Facebook as a medium for disrespecting a teacher. This student should have no reason to expect punishment from the principal for this freedom of expression. This is one reason why I believe that a student should be able to publish a Facebook page disrespecting a teacher.

The First Amendment to the constitution ties in greatly with liberty by stating "Congress shall make no law... abridging the freedom of speech or of the press..." The First Amendment helps protect our rights to liberty by giving us the freedom to speak, and to publish whatever we want on any subject that interests us – even a Facebook page disrespecting a teacher. If a principal were to suspend a student for making a Facebook page disrespecting a teacher he would not only be violating the student's rights to liberty, but he would also be in violation of the first amendment.

In the court case *Tinker v. Des Moines*, 393 U.S. 503 (1969) three students were suspended from school for wearing black armbands protesting the government's policy in Vietnam. In this case it is held that "in wearing armbands the petitioners were quiet and passive" and "a prohibition against expression of opinion, without any evidence that the rule was necessary to avoid substantial interference with school discipline or the rights of others, is not permissible under the first ... amendment". As long as whoever is making the Facebook page is not disrupting or disturbing others or their rights they should not have to worry about getting in trouble.

In 1958 when President Dwight D. Eisenhower first declared Law Day, he stated "...it is fitting that the people of this nation should remember with pride and vigilantly guard the great heritage of liberty... it is our...obligation as free men and as Americans to preserve and strengthen that great heritage..." This means that, as Americans, it is our job to uphold and honor the Core Democratic Value liberty, and thereby our freedom of speech and expression. A student is protected by liberty to post a Facebook page disrespecting a teacher. This is why I believe that a principal should not be allowed to suspend a student for disrespecting a teacher online.