



Youth and First Amendment: Results of Nationwide Studies of High School Students

Peter Jennings Project

National Constitution Center Symposium

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About J-Ideas

- A national project based at Ball State.
- Funded by Knight Foundation and Ball State, located in Muncie, Indiana
- Supports:
 - > --- Excellence in high school journalism.
 - > --- First Amendment awareness.
 - > --- News literacy.
 - > --- Warren Watson, Dir., Gerry Appel, Ed. Spec.

Can You Name the 5 Freedoms?

- 1 in 100 Americans can!
- A 2,000 McCormick Tribune Foundation study showed that more Americans can name the members of the “The Simpsons” than can name the elements of the First Amendment.



Why Should We Care About the First Amendment?



Why Should We Care About the First Amendment?

- Public schools are charged with preparing students for citizenship as well as for a profession.
- Journalism is an application of civics.
- Student media is a meaningful manifestation of journalism.
- Democracy relies on the free exchange of ideas that strong, unfettered journalism provides.



STATE OF THE FIRST AMENDMENT 2004-06



The First Amendment

“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.”

--- Amendment 1 of the Constitution of the United States of America



2004-05 Research Shows High Schools Leave First Amendment Behind

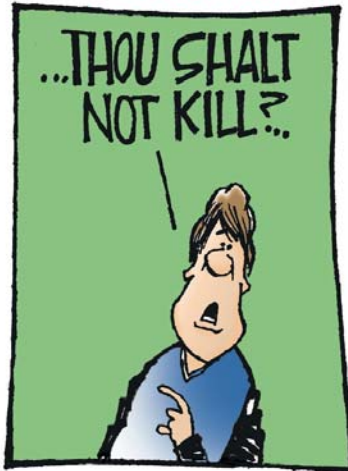
- 2-year, \$1 million research project commissioned by the Knight Foundation and conducted by the UConn Center for Survey Research and Analysis.
- Survey of 112,000 high school students, 8,000 teachers and more than 300 administrators and principals.
- Key finding: Educators are not giving students an appreciation of freedom of speech and a free press.

Major Findings

- Nearly 75% of high school students surveyed either do not know how they feel about the First Amendment or admit they take it for granted.
- 75% erroneously think flag-burning is illegal.
- 50% believe the government can censor the Internet.
- More than a third think the First Amendment goes too far in the rights it guarantees.
- Survey suggests that First Amendment rights would be known if they were emphasized more in class.

“Curiously Strong Mints?”

HEY, KIDS...WHAT'S THE FIRST AMENDMENT??



EDITORS NOTE:
We tried to stop this cartoonist from making you look uninformed... But that's his **First Amendment** right.

WATT HANDLSMAN ©2004

Students should feel free to speak up

DEAR ABBY: You printed a letter from a student who received detention for “respectfully disagreeing” with her teacher during a discussion of world events. In your reply, you suggested that the writer’s comment may have been “disruptive,” justifying the detention, and advised that it would have been more “diplomatic” to have voiced the disagreement in private. I take exception to your answer.

I am semi-retired, but as a manager I had tremendous difficulty convincing subordinates that it was not only safe to disagree with me, but that I needed their frank opinions. I trace this to a situation described by John Holt in his 1964 book, “How Children Fail,” in which he points out that the education system kills creativity, teaching students to anticipate what the teacher wants to hear and to feed it back to him/her.

I am currently co-director of the Master’s in Health Physics Program at the Illinois Institute of Technology, engaged in the training of radiation safety professionals. It is essential that a safety professional be prepared to challenge his/her management when it proposes to do something that’s contrary to law or regulation, or prejudicial to safe operation. The type of education described by Holt

produces individuals who go along with management no matter what is proposed.

It is despicable that a teacher would conduct a “discussion” in which she entertains only opinions that agree with her own and punishes those that don’t. The result for the students and our country is tragic. You should have supported the student.

— Laurence F. Friedman, PhD.

DEAR DR. FRIEDMAN: You’re right; I should have. And thousands of readers wrote to tell me so. (The e-mails, when printed out, weighed more than 15 pounds.) Read on:

DEAR ABBY: Your advice to the student to follow the “diplomatic” approach and wait until after class to comment was still reverberating in my mind when I moved on to a USA Weekend story, “First Amendment Rights Lost on Teens,” describing a Knight Foundation poll of 100,000 students which found that the majority of them assign little or no value to their constitutional right to free speech. Your response to that student makes you part of the problem.

— Upset in Santa Cruz

DEAR ABBY: That teacher was behaving

unprofessionally. I have been teaching for more than 20 years and have strong opinions of my own. One of them is that students be taught to think for themselves. The student should have been listened to with respect instead of punished.

— Teacher in E. Cerrito, Calif.

DEAR ABBY: Any educator who uses the classroom to pontificate on his or her political or religious views and allows no dissent is more a tyrant than a teacher. Send that kid to my classroom and give the teacher detention!

— Encourages thought in Indiana

DEAR ABBY: Prejudice comes in many shapes and forms, and I applaud that student for standing up against it. Punishing a student for having a different political opinion sounds more like North Korea than the United States. As it stands, these students are being cheated in their education because they are being taught about the world only through the narrow opinions of one misguided teacher.

— Outraged in Dublin, Calif.

DEAR READERS: My answer left something to be desired, and for that I apologize.



DEAR ABBY

Everybody’s got a problem. What’s yours? Get it off your chest by writing to: Dear Abby, P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069. For a personal reply, please send a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

Dear Abby is written by Jeanne Phillips, daughter of Pauline Phillips (aka Abigail Van Buren).

— Universal Press
Syndicate

What's at Stake?

“What kind of citizens do we want in 10 or 20 or 30 years? Do we want citizens who will blindly accept whatever the government tells them, or do we want a citizenry that expects the government to operate openly and transparently?”

--- Barbara Thill, Chicago-Area Publications
Adviser, Journalism Teacher

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**STATE OF THE FIRST
AMENDMENT: DEEPER
LOOK AT THE RESEARCH**

Suburban, Urban, Rural

- A deeper analysis of the data showed that high schools in suburban communities (82%) are significantly more likely to offer student media as an activity than high schools in rural communities. (68%). Urban areas (77%) fall in between.
- So-called “blue” states are twice as likely than “red” states to offer no journalism instruction at all.

Philadelphia media clubs

Suburban Schools: More Media, But Less Support of FA

- Suburban students, although exposed to more student media and classes, were less likely to support the First Amendment than their urban and rural counterparts.
- Of the three community types, suburban students expressed less support for a print and electronic media free of government censorship and less support for flag burning as a means of political protest.
- Suburban students also were the least supportive on the issue of whether people should be allowed to express unpopular opinions.

Males and Females

- Female students (46%) are less enthusiastic than male students (56%) at thinking that newspapers should be able to publish freely.
- 56% of male students knew that the government does not have the right to restrict indecent material on the Internet. That compares to 45% of female students.
- African-American students (20%) and female students (21%) were least likely to know that flag-burning is a constitutional right.

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UPDATED FINDINGS

The Latest Research: 15,000 Students Polled in the Spring

- More students are taking classes that deal with the First Amendment. Awareness has been raised.
- Students more likely to support key First Amendment protections for news media in general.
- 2 in 3 students support the right of high school students to report in their own newspapers without school officials' approval (censorship).
- Student attitudes about press freedom are improving.
 - -- Students more likely to think press has right amount of freedom.
 - -- Students less likely to think press has too much freedom.



The Latest Research: Some of the Bad News

- More students personally feel that the First Amendment goes too far in the rights it guarantees:

2004

35 percent

2006

45 percent



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The Latest Research: Some of the Bad News

* Students still say they care very little about the First Amendment and the rights it guarantees:

	2004	2006
Personally think about	27%	24%
Take for granted/ Don't know	73%	76%



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COMPARATIVE FINDINGS

Comparative Data: Does the First Amendment Go Too Far?

- Students 45% said yes
- Teachers 29% said yes
- Principals 24% said yes



Comparative Data: Should People Be Allowed to Express Unpopular Opinions?

- Students 83% said yes
- Teachers 97% said yes
- Principals 99% said yes



Case: Bong Hits 4 Jesus

Coming to a Supreme Court near you!

Comparative Data: Does the Press Have Too Much Freedom?

- Students 32% said yes
- Teachers 38% said yes
- Principals 40% said yes



Comparative Data: Is Flag-Burning Legal?

- Students
- Teachers
- Principals

25% said yes

60% said yes

69% said yes



Comparative Data: Should the Press Be Able To Publish Freely?

- Students 51% said yes
- Teachers 80% said yes
- Principals 80% said yes



Comparative Data: Should High School Students Be Allowed to Publish Freely?

- Students 50% said yes
- Teachers 39% said yes
- Principals 25% said yes



**J-Ideas study update of principals:
Due out in the next 2 months**

Principals and the First Amendment

How involved at your school???

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FINDINGS: KIDS AND MEDIA USE

Latest Study Also Probed Student Media-Use Habits

The research with 14,498 students was done by the University of Connecticut's David Yalof and Ken Dautrich, who did the original 2005 study and eight other First Amendment studies for the Freedom Forum First Amendment Center.

How were kids using media?

The Headlines

- Kids may get more news than we think.
- They rely on online sources, with more than half polled saying that get news online at least once a week.
- They consider TV to be the best source of news, however, with newspapers second and online third. They also consider TV to be the most accurate medium.

Youth and Media: Some of the Key Findings

- 11 percent of students polled say they consume news daily on the Internet.
- 51 percent say they get news on the Internet at least once a week.
- 29 percent say they never get news online.

2nd Key Finding

- Students who go online get most of their news and information from the news pages of Internet service providers (like Google and Yahoo), national TV news sites and local newspaper web sites. Web logs came in fourth place.

- Service providers 66% use weekly
- Network TV web sites 45%
- Local TV/ paper sites 34%
- Blogs 32%
- National newspaper sites 21%

3rd Key Finding

Most high school students find TV and newspapers to be the most accurate news sources. The research says that they don't trust web logs.

4th Key Finding

Despite their reliance on traditional news sources -- mostly through the Internet -- nearly half said they get news and information from entertainment programs at least once a week.

COMPARISON

Teachers: Best Overall Source of News

- Newspapers 48%
- Television 28%
- Internet (other than blogs) 15%
- Radio 5%
- Magazines 3%
- Blogs 1%
- Entertainment programs 1%

Students: Best Overall Source of News

- Television 45%
- Newspapers 23%
- Internet (not blogs) 10%
- Radio 9%
- Entertainment programs 7%
- Magazines 5%
- Blogs 1%

‘Increasing Connection’

“The digital revolution is increasing, not decreasing, the connection between American teens and the news.”

--- Eric Newton, Knight Foundation



For More

Consult the study's web sites:

www.firstamendmentfuture.org

www.jideas.org

THANKS!



Even More

- Consult these organizations: Bill of Rights Institute, ASNE, RTNDF, JEA, Columbia Scholastic Press Association, Quill and Scroll, National Constitution Center, Pennsylvania Newspaper Association (Harrisburg), Prime Movers, others.
- www.teachfirstamendment.org