

**Grade: English 10**

**Unit: Informational Essay**

**Summative Assessment Task:**

**Create a Product to Inform an Audience**

What is the power of an individual in a democratic society? What is at stake if Americans forget our American ideals and our American character? After reading seminal U.S. documents and related readings, do shared research to examine one aspect of these complex questions. Design, plan, write, and develop a digital product. What conclusions can you draw? Support your discussion with evidence from secondary, primary research, and/or personal experience.

**This prompt is from the MAISA English 10 Informational Essay unit.**

#FreeSpeech

Freedom of speech is defined as the right to express any opinions without censorship or restraint (Bill of Rights). That was written in the Bill of Rights over 200 years ago, and times have changed. When the amendment was written, its purpose was to allow citizens to criticize the government without punishment. It was first applied to just the federal government, but trickled down to state and local governments. Now, it is viewed that the freedom will allow us to speak freely without discipline. Thanks to the evolution of technology, social media has erupted, allowing people to speak their mind; however, some are getting penalized for what they say on social media. This is a problem since people need to be able to express how they feel and get people to assemble and demand corrective action. Freedom of speech is currently being challenged as seen in the issues of social media in schools. There has been recent evidence that students are getting into trouble for what they post online and that this is occurring across the country.

**Comment [1]:** The writer uses a hashtag in the title, which helps convey the message of the essay: This freedom is currently at risk.

**Comment [2]:** The writer provides limited background about the freedom of speech, telling the audience about the purpose if the amendment.

**Comment [3]:** The writer is already embedding her claim in the thesis paragraph with this transition.

**Comment [4]:** The writer presents a problem with the first amendment today: That people get in trouble on social media for what they say, and this could be an issue because people need to be able to express themselves and also use social media as a way to assemble/protest. She is using the inverted pyramid to structure her thesis paragraph and is getting more specific as she moves to her claim.

**Comment [5]:** Claim: The writer now narrows her focus to how the freedom of speech is at risk for students, specifically.

**Comment [6]:** Evidence: The writer previews the evidence she will use to prove the claim. The writer could be more specific here about the cases she plans to use in the paper.

In the modern age of social media, it is easy to post feelings on the internet. This offers the opportunity for schools to see what students are up to and potentially bust them for what they say. In the article [A Minnewaska student won \\$70k from school over Facebook post](#), a student posted on Facebook a few years ago how she felt about a school staff member. The school found out and forced the student to give up her Facebook password. The student felt that her freedom of speech was violated so she pressed charges and won the case. She won due to the argument that “Kids’ use of social media is the family’s business” (Brown). As a result of the student’s winning of the case, the school will “...rewrite its policies to limit how intrusive the school can be when searching a student’s e-mails and social media accounts off school grounds” (Brown), since it was not clear what the school’s social media policy was, but their hidden rules potentially violate the freedom of speech. So, thanks to the student, schools are now making their policies toward social media more known and hopefully not violate students’ freedom of speech.

Even as social media evolves, technology that helps schools monitor what students do on social media is expanding, as well, which can potentially affect people’s free speech. Recently, many schools have turned to businesses that specialize in filtering through students’ social media to see what students are up to (Sengupta). This issue is expressed in “[Warily, Schools Watch Students on the Internet](#),” where there are many cases in which students received punishment for what they post online. For example, a student threatened the school over Myspace and spent jail time for it. He felt that his rights were violated and sued the school. In another case, a school believed that the action they took towards student’s tweet does not violate their freedom of speech, as seen in [this article](#). A principal tried to monitor students online by creating a fake Facebook account and snooping on the students ([Full Story](#)). A Twitter user responded to this

**Comment [7]:** Topic sentence: The writer should begin the paragraph with a stronger topic sentence that tells the reader what the paragraph will prove—specifically, she should mention the issue/case she provides as evidence in the paragraph.

**Comment [8]:** This is the student’s first hyperlink, which is a requirement for this digital product. The student needs to more clearly introduce the article she is hyperlinking, perhaps by giving its title. She could also provide more context for the reader about where and when this issue occurred. The writer may be assuming that the reader is able to click the link and learn more about the particular case; however, she should provide adequate context for her audience and the link should be used as a supplement to her own writing.

**Comment [9]:** This section of the paragraph shows good use of evidence from the paragraph, and the writer has embedded the quotes and cited them appropriately in MLA style.

**Comment [10]:** The writer appropriately cites the paraphrase.

with “It was our children she was monitoring” (Rayford). [The Freedom of Speech is violated](#) since students are punished for what they do or say online that schools feel are ‘inappropriate.’ What students say is done outside of school, so it should not matter to the school, and also, to snoop on students should require a warrant, but in these cases, the schools do not have warrants. It’s interesting that schools do not listen in to private conversations in the hallways at the school, but feel that it is okay to go online and lurk to see what students are chatting about there. Schools are taking advantage of technology to help them punish students for expressing their freedom of speech online.

**Comment [11]:** Again, the writer should provide more context about the issue. She is relying on the hyperlink to do that for her audience. Students writing hyperlinked essays should be reminded that the hyperlink is not a substitute for context, and their writing can sound awkward if they do not clearly introduce the issue and/or the source.

**Comment [12]:** The writer includes a lot of opinion in this section of the paragraph. She should connect it more to her evidence so her stance is supported.

As times have changed, students' free speech in school is still a sticky situation. In the article, "Do Students Still Have Free Speech in School?", during the Vietnam War, a student, Mary Beth Tinker, wore an armband to school in protest of the war, and got into trouble. She brought the issue to court since her freedom of speech and expression was violated (Wheeler). The phrase that won the case was "[students do not] shed their constitutional rights to freedom of speech or expression at the schoolhouse gate" (Supreme Court). Tinker is back now to help students gain back their speech rights in the age of social media. As stated before, there have been many cases where students have gotten into trouble with what they post online, but would have gone unread in the pre-digital age. School authorities are very powerful and feel that they can impose their wishes on the students. Schools are also trying to limit what students say online by having policies that say that students can't post things that would intimidate the school, which is very vague since schools have different definitions of the word intimidate. These policies violate student's free speech.

**Comment [13]:** This topic sentence should focus more on the evidence in the forthcoming paragraph.

**Comment [14]:** The writer does not make it clear to whom this phrase is attributed. Was it a lawyer? A Supreme Court justice?

Freedom of Speech is very important in a society like the one we live in. We have to be able to communicate freely and let people know what is up. Thanks to censorship, this freedom is currently being challenged as seen in the issues of social media in schools. Some believe that students should not be allowed to say whatever they want online since it could offend someone. Each person has different tolerance levels, so what is the point of sharing anything if someone says that you cannot post something if it offends even a single person. It is that one person's opinion and they are simply sharing it with others. Expressing your opinion on social media is just like sharing your opinion with a group of people, you never know how people will react to it. Some may react positively while others may react negatively. People should be more aware of this issue since this country has worked very well based on this basic right. This freedom of

**Comment [15]:** This paragraph is the weakest of the body paragraphs. While the evidence may illustrate yet another case that proves free speech for students is at risk, the writer's warranting is repetitive. She needs to more clearly discuss the case, which seems important since it made it to the Supreme Court. The writer does not elaborate on how the student who sued during the Vietnam War, Mary Beth Tinker, has made change in today's schools or for today's students. Her warranting needs development.

**Comment [16]:** The writer's voice is casual ("let the people know what is up") here, as it has been at other places in the essay. She is writing for an audience of other high school students, besides her teacher, and perhaps feels that it is acceptable to less formal.

**Comment [17]:** This is the writer's attempt at counterclaim, of sorts. It is not exactly countering her actual claim that the freedom of speech is at risk. This seems more like the counterargument to her own opinion.

speech allows people to be informed about many topics, feelings, and issues. One way to ensure that this right is not violated is for people to not take everything they see or hear so personally, and for people not to be penalized for simply expressing their opinions even if the people in power do not agree with it. Everyone should recognize that allowing students' freedom of speech and expression to be violated can eventually translate into allowing the freedom of speech of other groups to be violated. I feel that our freedom of speech has been violated due to the punishing of students by powerful school authorities for what the students post online. This must be stopped.

**Comment [18]:** This is the student's attempt at a rebuttal to the counterclaim. It The thinking needs to be extended.

**Comment [19]:** The writer uses the first person to state her opinion, which she was told was acceptable for the conclusion of this paper.

### Teacher's Final Summative Comments:

The original prompt from the English 10 Info Essay MAISA unit focuses on the power of the individual in a democratic society. This writer does not delve deep enough into the people behind the issue of the freedom of speech being at risk. She could more fully address the prompt by discussing the people she learned about during her research, like Mary Beth Tinker.

This was the student's first time writing a hyperlinked essay, and it proved to be a challenging task for all students. The use of the hyperlink presents a problem unique to 21<sup>st</sup> century literacy. The writer has to consider what the hyperlink is doing in the essay: Is it evidence? Is it part of the warrant? Is it something entirely different? It is challenging to know how and when to use the hyperlink, but the writer does a good job for a first attempt; she chose good sources to find evidence to prove her claim, and she does include hyperlinks to those sources; however, she relies too heavily on the link to do the "talking." Another feedback and revision loop would be beneficial to the writer; however, she will be ready to further hone the skills needed to create informational, digital products in other classes or in her junior year, when there is another informational essay unit.

<b>Informational Product Rubric</b>			
	<b>Highly Proficient</b>	<b>Meets Expectations</b>	<b>Attempting to Meet Expectations</b>
<b>Focus</b>	Addresses all aspects of prompt with a highly focused and detailed response.	Addresses prompt with a focused response.	Attempts to address prompt but lacks focus or is off-task.
<b>Reading/ Research</b>	Accurately presents and applies information relevant to the prompt with specific examples/events.	Presents and applies information relevant to prompt with general accuracy and sufficient detail.	Attempts to present information relevant to task but may lack sufficient or relevant details.
<b>Development</b>	Presents detailed information in order to answer questions and solve problems. Concisely explains key information with details. Identifies evidence from sources to clarify development and assesses any conclusions, implications, and consequences.	Presents information in order to answer questions and solve problems. Explains key information with some details. Identifies evidence from sources, but does not fully consider the conclusions, implications, or consequences.	Presents limited information. Ideas do not include details or examples.
<b>Organization</b>	Applies appropriate structure(s) to explain, examine, convey, define, analyze, synthesize, compare, or explain cause/effect, problem/solution.	Applies a generally effective structure to explain, examine, convey, define, analyze, synthesize, compare, or explain cause/effect, problem/solution.	Applies an ineffective structure; text rambles or line of thought is disconnected.
<b>Conventions</b>	Demonstrates a well-developed command of standard English conventions and cohesion; employs language and tone appropriate to audience and purpose.	Demonstrates a command of standard English conventions and cohesion; employs language and tone appropriate to audience and purpose.	Demonstrates a weak command of standard English conventions; lacks cohesion; language and tone are inappropriate to audience and purpose.

## Works Cited

Brown, Curt. "Minnewaska Student Wins \$70K From School Over Facebook Post." *Star Tribune*. N.p., 25 Mar. 2014. Web. 28 Mar. 2014.

Brown reports that schools should rewrite their social media policies due to the story of a student who won \$70,000 in damages from her school for getting too involved in her personal social media account. The student was simply expressing her feelings online and received an in-school suspension. Schools think it is easier to see what students are up to through social media, and use this opportunity to bust the students. The source is mediocre since it does not provide a lot of insight into the issue, and is evident that the author is siding with the student, and therefore is biased. The goal of this source is to inform readers about the case of social media and freedom of speech in schools. This article supports my argument that freedom of speech is being challenged since it shares that one can get into trouble due to what they post online, which violates their first amendments rights. This article will be helpful in my research because it shows how a student won a freedom of speech case.

Duffy, Lizzy. "School District Doesn't See Student Retweets As Freedom Of Speech." *www.dailyastorian.com*. N.p., 13 Mar. 2014. Web. 12 Apr. 2014.

Duffy reports that there is a gray area between punishment and student's free speech. The article also says that what students say online and outside of school can be counted as cyberbullying if a specific name is mentioned, which leads to punishment. In the case of this article, 20 students were suspended due to what they retweeted, and the school counted it as cyberbullying. This source is reliable since Duffy gives an argument and a counterargument. The

source was objective considering it isn't opinionated, and I will use this article in my research since it challenges freedom of speech. This article did not change my thinking on the topic of freedom of speech.

Sengupta, Somini. "Warily, Schools Watch Students on the Internet." *The New York Times*. N.p., 28 Oct. 2013. Web. 29 Mar. 2014.

Sengupta shows that schools are turning to technology to help monitor students on social media in order to mitigate cyberbullying and other potential dangers. Sengupta sees this as a potential threat to students' freedom of speech. She also gives an example of a student who spent jail time for threatening the school over Myspace, and felt that his free speech was violated. This source is useful because it uses many people's opinions. However, the article only gathers opinions of those who are for the monitoring of students. This article is biased because the article is clearly for the monitoring of students online. The main goal of the article is to inform readers that students should have limited free speech in schools. The article shows how schools are reacting to social media and how they will protect students, which fits my research.

Wheeler, David R. "Do Students Still Have Free Speech in School?" *The Atlantic*. N.p., 7 Apr. 2014. Web. 8 Apr. 2014.

The article's main focus is the suppression of student's freedom of speech by schools looking at what the students post online outside of school. It is also noted that schools do not listen in on private conversations, but snoop online to see what students are up to. Having viewpoints from Mary Beth Tinker, an advocate for freedom of speech, and offering recent cases of punishments of students for their online activity, the article shows that the smallest act of opinion sharing online can end up in discipline, which goes against the purpose of freedom of



speech. Wheeler gives excellent points in the article and backs them up with hard facts. This article is biased since it only gives opinions of those who feel that student's speech is being suppressed. The goal of the article is to inform readers that people's rights are being taken away, even 200 years after the Bill of Rights was written. This article is helpful because interesting points about the topic are discussed. Since the freedom of speech is being challenged, I will use this article in my research.

Zetter, Kim. "Principal Accused of Spying on Students, Parents With Fake Facebook Account."

*Wired*. N.p., 12 May 2012. Web. 4 May 2014.