

Name _____

Central Ideas

Directions: Read the passage. Highlight or underline key ideas in each passage. When summarizing, describe all key ideas from the text. Do **not** include opinions or personal info in your summary.

Just how far can you take the right to free speech? Matthew N. Fraser, a student at Bethel High School, discovered its limits when he was suspended for three days for making an obscene speech to the student body of 600. The purpose of the speech was to nominate a fellow classmate for elected school office, and in it he endorsed his friend for office using a graphic sexual metaphor. Bethel High School responded by suspending Fraser from school for two days, citing a school rule prohibiting students from conduct which "substantially interferes with the educational process . . . including the use of obscene, profane language or gestures." Fraser took the school all the way to the Supreme Court (Bethel School District #43 v. Fraser, 1987), alleging that they had violated his First Amendment right of free speech. In an earlier court case, Tinker v. Des Moines Independent School Board (1969), in which students had claimed that it was their First Amendment right to wear black armbands to school in protest of the Vietnam War, the court upheld the students' right to free speech, which dealt with a major issue of public policy. However, in a 7 – 2 ruling in the Fraser case, the court found in favor of Bethel High School, stating that it was appropriate and consistent with the "fundamental values of public school education" for the school to prohibit the use of vulgar and offensive language, and that Fraser's speech did not constitute a "political speech" which might otherwise be protected.

1. Create a title for this article. _____

2. Identify the central idea of the passage. _____

3. Briefly summarize the passage. _____

ANSWERS

1. Will vary
2. The First Amendment does not permit the use of lewd and offensive language in schools.
3. Summaries will vary.