

Case 12: When can a school limit what students say?

Content note

The news sources include 2026 student walkouts against federal immigration enforcement, which grew after federal agents fatally shot two people in Minneapolis. Preview them, and keep discussion on the legal questions in Anika’s case.

This case explains general rules. It is not legal advice for your situation.

Overview

Students read about Anika, a high school junior whose poster asks students to wear blue Thursday to keep the library open at lunch. They compare her poster, a posting policy and a group chat about a walkout with a summary of Tinker v. Des Moines (1969). They then compare the fact patterns and write two questions for a school contact about the posting policy.

Before this case

Students should already be able to:

- summarize a court decision for a general reader
- tell a court opinion, a news report and an advocacy guide apart
- write for a younger audience in plain language

Objectives

- Students will be able to:
- state the Tinker ruling accurately and say that it concerns public schools
 - separate the message from the act of leaving class
 - report that schools responded to the 2026 walkouts in different ways, without taking a side
 - label court, news and advocacy sources for readers

Materials

- This chapter, one copy per student
- Evidence A, B and C
- The Tinker summary, the Mahanoy opinion, WFYI’s rights guide, Chalkbeat’s report and the ACLU guide
- A three-column organizer: speech, attendance, discipline

The task in this edition

Task: Write a plain-language explainer on posters and walkouts at public schools for a library teen night or a youth program. Separate the speech question, the attendance rule and possible discipline, and use Anika’s case as the example.

Students make: Explainer, 400—500 words, with a labeled source list

Pacing

- Opener (page 233):** 5 min. Short on time: 5 min.
- Key terms (pages 234 and 235):** 5 min. Short on time: 3 min. Read the key terms aloud. Skip Who is involved.
- Look at the evidence (page 239):** 8 min. Short on time: 8 min.
- Look at the evidence (page 240):** 4 min. Short on time: 4 min.
- Key idea (pages 241 and 242):** 12 min. Short on time: 10 min. Skip the code of ethics.
- Sort the evidence (page 243):** 6 min. Short on time: skip.
- Practice (page 244):** 5 min. Short on time: skip.
- Your task (pages 245 and 246):** 15 min. Short on time: 15 min.
- Your draft (page 247):** 35 min. Short on time: 35 min.
- Check your work (pages 248 and 249):** 8 min. Short on time: 5 min. Students answer the Check your work questions only.
- Questions to discuss (pages 250 and 251):** 10 min. Short on time: 5 min. Use question 3 only.
- Talk about this case at home (page 252):** at home.
- Periods:** full chapter 113 minutes; one period 90 minutes.

Case 12 plan, continued

Standards

Information Literacy VALUE Rubric AAC&U’s rubric for finding, evaluating and using information for a purpose, ethically and legally. In this case: Students weigh a court opinion, two news reports and an advocacy guide for what each can support (Evaluate Information and Its Sources Critically).

Civic Engagement VALUE Rubric AAC&U’s rubric for taking part in community life, including civic communication and working within community structures toward a civic aim. In this case: Students explain rights and school rules to a younger community audience (Civic Communication).

Authority Is Constructed and Contextual A source’s authority depends on its creator’s expertise and on the question it is being used to answer. In this case: Students explain why a Supreme Court opinion and an ACLU guide carry different kinds of authority.

Scholarship as Conversation Experts and communities build knowledge over time through ongoing discussion and disagreement. In this case: Students trace how Mahanoy (2021) builds on and limits Tinker (1969).

Codes of ethics

- **ABA Model Rules of Professional Conduct:** Rule 2.1 Advisor

Codes of ethics, continued

- **PRSA Code of Ethics:** Disclosure of Information
- **AIGA Standards of Professional Practice:** The designer’s responsibility to the public

Heat map

- ■ □ **Opener (page 233):** Medium
- □ □ **Key terms (pages 234 and 235):** Low
- □ □ **Look at the evidence (page 239):** Low
- □ □ **Look at the evidence (page 240):** Low
- ■ □ **Key idea (pages 241 and 242):** Medium
- □ □ **Sort the evidence (page 243):** Low
- ■ □ **Practice (page 244):** Medium
- ■ □ **Your task (pages 245 and 246):** Medium
- □ □ **Check your work (pages 248 and 249):** Low

Try it at your school

Read your school’s expression policy before you print.

- Find your student handbook’s section on posting, dress or expression
- Write down which spaces allow student posters and whether approval is needed
- Make student-made materials clearly student-made, with no school logo

Try it at your school, continued

- Bring questions to student council or an advisor before planning an action

Who to ask: Student council advisor, a civics or government teacher, an assistant principal

Safety: Don’t pressure classmates to join a protest or skip class. Talk with a trusted adult before any action that could lead to discipline.

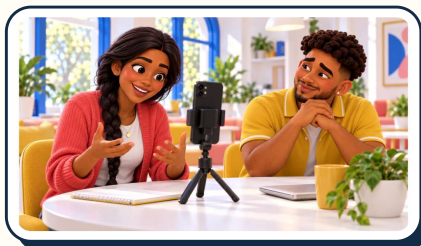
Sources

- U.S. Courts, “Facts and Case Summary: Tinker v. Des Moines,” No date listed
- U.S. Courts, “Fictional Scenario: Tinker v. Des Moines,” No date listed
- Legal Information Institute, Cornell Law School, “Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District, 393 U.S. 503 (1969),” 1969

Case 12: When can a school limit what students say?

Anika's poster asks her school to keep the library open at lunch, and now someone in her group chat suggests a walkout.

On your own Read What happened. Underline each plan: the poster, wearing blue and the walkout. About 5 minutes.



Anika records a voice memo while Mateo listens beside a phone on a small tripod.

Your role: You're the one who compares Tinker with each action before anyone says "can't touch us."

New skill: Apply a precedent by comparing fact patterns.

What happened

Anika is a junior at a public high school. She wants the school library to stay open at lunch. On Tuesday afternoon, she prints a poster that says "KEEP OUR LIBRARY OPEN AT LUNCH. Wear blue Thursday."

Mateo did the photo and layout. He put a photo of the school's sign and logo across the top. The poster does not name Anika or any student group. The student handbook says posters need approval from the main office and the name of the student or group responsible.

Your question: How far does Tinker cover the poster, the wear-blue plan and the walkout, and what facts are missing?

On Wednesday night, someone in the group chat suggests a walkout if the school takes the poster down. The message says a 1969 Supreme Court case, *Tinker v. Des Moines*, means the school "can't touch us." Anika never suggested a walkout.

Case 12 | Opener | College educator edition

⌚ Pacing

Full chapter: 5 min.

✂ Short on time: 5 min.

💬 Say this

"There are three plans in this story. Can you name all three?" — Listen for the poster, wearing blue and the walkout. List them on the board.

👁 Watch for

Misconception: Students treat the walkout as Anika's plan.

Listen for: "Anika wants everyone to walk out." **Then:**

Reread the last paragraph. Someone in the chat suggested the walkout. Anika never did.

📖 Support

- Read What happened aloud. Pause after each plan so students can underline it.

🔥 Heat check

■ ■ □ **Medium.** Students may bring up walkouts or discipline at their own school.

Cool-down: Say: "Today we're looking at Anika's school." Keep examples to the case, and do not ask who took part in a walkout.

Key terms

On your own Read each key term and its example. Then write your first guess in the box. About 5 minutes.

Precedent A precedent is an earlier court decision that judges use as a guide in similar later cases.

En español: precedente

In this case: Tinker v. Des Moines (1969) guides Anika's case only as far as the facts match: quiet expression at a public school.

Fact pattern A fact pattern is the specific set of facts in a situation that a rule is applied to.

En español: conjunto de hechos

In this case: Anika lists each plan's action, place, timing and rule: the poster on a school board, wearing blue on Thursday and leaving class.

Substantial disruption Substantial disruption is the standard from Tinker v. Des Moines: a public school may limit speech that would seriously disrupt school activities.

En español: alteración sustancial

In this case: Wearing blue on Thursday is quiet, like the armbands. Leaving class is conduct under the attendance rule, which Tinker does not settle.

Who is involved



Anika

Made the poster

"My poster says keep the library open at lunch, and wear blue Thursday. Now the chat says we walk out. I never said walk out."



Mateo

Did the photo and layout

"I put the school sign across the top because it looked good. Now it reads like the school is announcing it. It isn't."

⌚ Pacing

Full chapter: 5 min.

✂ Short on time: 3 min. Read the key terms aloud. Skip Who is involved.

💬 Say this

"A precedent is an earlier decision. What makes it fit a new case?" — Wait for "similar facts."

👁 Watch for

Misconception: Students think a precedent decides every later case. **Listen for:** "Tinker already decided this." **Then:** Reread the definition: it guides cases with similar facts. Ask which facts match.

📖 Support

- Point out a false cognate: library means biblioteca, not librería.
- Cognates:** precedent (precedente), constitutional (constitucional), expression (expresión), protest (protesta), suspension (suspensión), decision (decisión), logo (logotipo), conduct (conducta).

🔥 Heat check

■□□ Low.

🔑 Answer key

Any first guess is fine. Students return to it on the My take page.

Before you look at the evidence, can the school do anything about the poster or the walkout?

➤ My first guess is that the poster and the walkout raise different questions, because one is a message and the other means leaving class.

[illegible]

This page continues page 234. The notes for both pages are on the sheet for page 234.

Reading passage

Analogical reasoning and student expression

On your own Read the passage. At each Stop and think box, pause and answer the question in your head or with a partner. About 5 minutes.

Words to know

- **Precedent:** A precedent is an earlier court decision that judges use as a guide in similar later cases.
- **Fact pattern:** A fact pattern is the specific set of facts in a situation that a rule is applied to.
- **Substantial disruption:** Substantial disruption is the standard from *Tinker v. Des Moines*: a public school may limit speech that would seriously disrupt school activities.
- **Claim:** A claim is a statement that something is true. You can check a claim with evidence.
- **Framing:** Framing is choosing which parts of a situation a message brings forward.

The story: A slogan outruns a poster

Anika, a public high school junior, prints a poster asking her school to keep the library open at lunch and inviting students to “Wear blue Thursday.” Mateo, 22, designed it and placed a photo of the school’s sign and logo across the top. The poster names no student or group. The next night, a group chat reframes the campaign. If the school removes the poster, students will walk out, and “Tinker says they can’t touch us.”

The case is useful precisely because the legal claim sounds informed. *Tinker v. Des Moines* is a real and important precedent, and many students have heard of it. What the chat gets wrong is scope. It treats a holding about a specific kind of expression as a guarantee covering any protest method. It also attaches a walkout to a campaign whose author never proposed one.

Both friends model professional self-correction. Anika separates her poster from the walkout and acknowledges that her poster lacks the name the handbook requires. Mateo recognizes that his design choice changed the poster’s apparent speaker and plans a new version with office approval, Anika’s name and no logo.

Your role is to compare Tinker with each action before anyone says “can’t touch us.”

Stop and think. How does analogical reasoning differ from applying a rule mechanically?

Pacing

Reading: about 5 min (701 words). Short on time: read it aloud together, pausing at each Stop and think.

Stop and think

1. **After “The story: A slogan outruns a poster”:** How does analogical reasoning differ from applying a rule mechanically?
2. **After “Precedent as analogy”:** The walkout involves both expression and conduct. Why does that distinction matter legally?
3. **After “Doctrine, practice and professional norms”:** Compare the ACLU guide with the court sources. Where does legal description end and advocacy begin?

Precedent as analogy

A **precedent** is an earlier court decision that judges use as a guide in similar later cases. In *Tinker* (1969), public-school students wore black armbands to protest the Vietnam War, were suspended and won at the Supreme Court. **Substantial disruption** is the standard from *Tinker v. Des Moines*: a public school may limit speech that would seriously disrupt school activities. The Court added that an undifferentiated fear of disruption is not enough.

Legal reasoning from precedent is analogical, and it requires disciplined description. A **fact pattern** is the specific set of facts in a situation that a rule is applied to. The skill here extends Case 11's method of comparing situations on the same terms. Three fact patterns emerge. The wear-blue plan is passive, symbolic and compatible with attending class, and it is the closest analogue to the armbands. The walkout is conduct as well as expression. Leaving class triggers an attendance rule that applies whatever the message. The poster raises a question outside *Tinker*'s core. Bearing the school's insignia and no student attribution, it risks being read as the school's own speech, over which schools have more control.

Case 1's concepts clarify the communication problem. The chat's slogan is a **claim**, a statement that can be checked with evidence, and the holding does not support it. The logo is **framing**, choosing which parts of a situation a message brings forward. It foregrounds institutional authorship, and that changes the legal question as well as the audience's reading.

 **Stop and think.** The walkout involves both expression and conduct. Why does that distinction matter legally?

Doctrine, practice and professional norms

The *Tinker* opinion's best-known line holds that students do not "shed their constitutional rights to freedom of speech or expression at the schoolhouse gate" (Legal Information Institute, 1969). The federal judiciary teaches the case alongside a walkout scenario that separates message from conduct and notes the usual attendance consequences (U.S. Courts, no date listed).

The Court's 2021 decision in *Mahanoy Area School District v. B. L.* extended the inquiry to off-campus speech. It ruled 8 to 1 for a student disciplined over a Snapchat post while preserving school authority over some off-campus speech, such as threats (Supreme Court of the United States, June 23, 2021; PBS NewsHour, June 23, 2021).

Current events test the walkout distinction. In early 2026, students in several states walked out to protest federal immigration enforcement. Indiana schools responded variously, with unexcused absences at some and one-day suspensions at one high school (Chalkbeat Indiana, February 11, 2026). Local reporting separated speech rights, attendance rules and discipline (WFYI, February 1, 2026). Advocacy groups publish their own guides.

This page continues page 236. The notes for both pages are on the sheet for page 236.

Doctrine, practice and professional norms, continued

The ACLU's is a rights group's plain-language reading, and comparing it with court sources shows where law ends and advocacy begins (ACLU, February 27, 2018).

Two professional norms bear on the poster. The PRSA code asks communicators to "reveal the sponsors for causes and interests represented" (PRSA Code of Ethics, October 2000). The AIGA standards ask designers to avoid "false, misleading and deceptive promotion" (AIGA Standards of Professional Practice, no date listed). An unattributed poster under a school logo strains both.

? **Stop and think.** Compare the ACLU guide with the court sources. Where does legal description end and advocacy begin?

Sources

Real source | Legal Information Institute, Cornell Law School | 1969

Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District, 393 U.S. 503 (1969)

Real source | U.S. Courts | No date listed

Fictional Scenario: Tinker v. Des Moines

Real source | Supreme Court of the United States | June 23, 2021

Mahanoy Area School District v. B. L. (opinion)

Real source | PBS NewsHour (Associated Press) | June 23, 2021

Supreme Court rules in favor of cheerleader who published critical social media post in First Amendment case

Real source | Chalkbeat Indiana | February 11, 2026

How schools in Marion County responded to anti-ICE student protests

Real source | WFYI Indianapolis Public Media | February 1, 2026

A guide to your rights at Indiana protests, in the streets, and at school

Real source | ACLU | February 27, 2018

Students' Rights: Speech, Walkouts, and Other Protests

Real source | Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) | 2000

PRSA Code of Ethics

Real source | AIGA, the professional association for design | No date listed

AIGA Standards of Professional Practice

This page continues page 236. The notes for both pages are on the sheet for page 236.

Look at the evidence

On your own Read each document. For each one, fill in both boxes. About 8 minutes.

Evidence A | Poster

Anika's poster, first version

Printed Tuesday, 3:15 p.m. The poster reads "KEEP OUR LIBRARY OPEN AT LUNCH. Wear blue Thursday." A photo of the school's sign and logo runs across the top. No student name or group appears anywhere on the poster.

Look closely: Cover the logo photo with your hand. Who seems to be speaking now?

What it shows

➤ A student message with the school's sign and logo on top and no student name.

What it leaves out

➤ Whether the office approved it, and whether the school has objected.

Evidence B | Handbook policy

Student handbook, page 14

Students may post materials on the student bulletin boards outside the cafeteria and the library. Materials must be approved by the main office and must show the name of the student or group responsible.

Look closely: Underline the two requirements for every poster.

What it shows

➤ Posting needs one of two boards, office approval and a named student or group.

What it leaves out

➤ The penalty for breaking the rule, and anything about leaving class.

⌚ Pacing

Full chapter: 8 min.

✂ Short on time: 8 min.

💬 Say this

"The handbook names two requirements for every poster. Which one is missing from Anika's poster?" — Wait for "the name of the student or group responsible."

👁 Watch for

Misconception: Students say the handbook bans the poster's message. **Listen for:** "The school can't allow a poster about the library." **Then:** Point to Evidence B. The rule covers where posters go, approval and a name. It says nothing about topics.

📄 Support

- Give each document on its own half-page.
- Read the chat messages aloud and name who is speaking in each.
- **Cognates:** precedent (precedente), constitutional (constitucional), expression (expresión), protest (protesta), suspension (suspensión), decision (decisión), logo (logotipo), conduct (conducta).

🔗 Stretch

- Ask what the walkout message assumes about Tinker, and which document would test that assumption.

🔥 Heat check

■□□ Low.

Look at the evidence, continued

Evidence C | Group chat

The walkout message

Wednesday, 9:02 p.m.

First message: “If they take the poster down we walk out Thursday. Tinker says they can’t touch us.

Reply: “Wait, wear blue AND walk out??

Look closely: Which part is a message, and which part is leaving class?

What it shows

➤ A claim that Tinker bars any response, and a reply confused about the plan.

What it leaves out

➤ The attendance policy, and whether anyone at school has acted on the poster.

What is still missing from the evidence?

➤ We don’t know what the attendance policy says about leaving class, or whether the office approved the first poster. We also don’t know whether the school has objected, or what process comes before discipline.

Notes

⌚ Pacing

Full chapter: 4 min.

✂ Short on time: 4 min.

💬 Say this

“The handbook names two requirements for every poster. Which one is missing from Anika’s poster?” — Wait for “the name of the student or group responsible.”

👁 Watch for

Misconception: Students say the handbook bans the poster’s message. **Listen for:** “The school can’t allow a poster about the library.” **Then:** Point to Evidence B. The rule covers where posters go, approval and a name. It says nothing about topics.

📄 Support

- Give each document on its own half-page.
- Read the chat messages aloud and name who is speaking in each.
- **Cognates:** precedent (precedente), constitutional (constitucional), expression (expresión), protest (protesta), suspension (suspensión), decision (decisión), logo (logotipo), conduct (conducta).

🔗 Stretch

- Ask what the walkout message assumes about Tinker, and which document would test that assumption.

🔥 Heat check

■□□ Low.

Key idea: precedent

On your own Read the key idea and the Professional standards card. Then answer the question in the box. About 12 minutes.

A **precedent** is an earlier court decision that judges use as a guide in similar later cases. In *Tinker v. Des Moines* (1969), public-school students wore black armbands to protest the Vietnam War. The school suspended them, and the Supreme Court ruled for the students. The Court wrote that students do not “shed their constitutional rights to freedom of speech or expression at the schoolhouse gate.” It also said a mere fear of disruption was not enough to limit their expression.

A precedent guides a new case only as far as the facts match. **Substantial disruption** is the standard from *Tinker v. Des Moines*: a public school may limit speech that would seriously disrupt school activities. Wearing blue on Thursday is quiet, like the armbands. A walkout is different, because students leave class. The school’s attendance rule covers that conduct, and *Tinker* does not settle it.

The poster raises another question. It shows the school’s sign and logo but no student name, so it may look like the school is speaking. Schools have more control over speech that looks like it comes from the school. A **fact pattern** is the specific set of facts in a situation that a rule is applied to. Write a fact pattern for each action before you decide whether *Tinker* fits it.

Professional standards

Adapted from a real source | American Bar Association (ABA), Center for Professional Responsibility

ABA Model Rules of Professional Conduct: Rule 2.1 Advisor

Summary: Summary, not a quotation: in representing a client, a lawyer must use independent professional judgment and give candid advice. A lawyer may refer to moral, economic, social and political factors as well as the law.

In plain words: Lawyers must give their clients honest, independent advice, even when the client would rather hear something else.

Question: The chat says “*Tinker* says they can’t touch us.” What would candid advice say about the walkout and attendance policy?

Pacing

Full chapter: 12 min.

 Short on time: 10 min. Skip the code of ethics.

Say this

“*Tinker* protected quiet armbands. Which of the three plans looks most like that?” — Wait for the wear-blue plan.

“Rule 2.1 asks lawyers for candid advice. What would candid advice tell the group chat?” — Accept “*Tinker* doesn’t cover leaving class.”

Watch for

Misconception: Students read “schoolhouse gate” as meaning schools can never limit speech. **Listen for:** “Students can say anything at school.” **Then:** Read the next idea aloud: a school may limit speech that would substantially disrupt school.

Support

- Read the two In the news cards aloud. Both are about Mahanoy, a 2021 case about a student’s off-campus post.

Stretch

- Use the PRSA card: who would a reader think is behind the first poster?

Heat check

 **Medium.** The In the news cards cover a cheerleader punished for an off-campus Snapchat post. Students may bring up their own posts.

Cool-down: Keep to what the Court decided. Nobody needs to describe their own posts or discipline.

Professional standards, continued**Your answer**

Candid advice would say ____, even if ____.

👉 Candid advice would say Tinker fits the quiet wear-blue plan but not leaving class, even if the chat wants to hear “can’t touch us.”

In the news

Real source | PBS NewsHour | April 28, 2021

Student free speech makes it to the Supreme Court in former high school cheerleader's case

Explains the Snapchat case the Court used to ask when a school can punish off-campus student speech.



Real source | PBS NewsHour (Associated Press) | June 23, 2021

Supreme Court rules in favor of cheerleader who published critical social media post in First Amendment case

The 8-1 ruling protected the student but said schools may still act on some off-campus speech, like threats.

Notes

This page continues page 241. The notes for both pages are on the sheet for page 241.

Sort the evidence

On your own Link each piece of evidence to the claim it supports or challenges. Then name one missing view. About 6 minutes.

Test the slogan against the facts. Which evidence supports each claim, which challenges it, and which fact would you still need?

Evidence	Claim 1 Tinker means nobody can face consequences for walking out.	Claim 2 The wear-blue plan closely matches Tinker's facts.	Claim 3 The poster should carry a student byline instead of the school logo.
1 Tinker's facts: silent armbands, no substantial disruption, a public school	Narrows	Supports	Neither
2 A walkout means leaving class, which falls under the attendance rule	Challenges	Neither	Neither
3 The logo photo makes the poster look like school-sponsored speech	Neither	Neither	Supports

Still open

- What does the attendance policy say, and what process follows?

Whose perspective is missing?

Whose view is missing from these documents? What would you ask them?

The view that is missing is _____. I would ask _____.

The school's view on attendance is missing. I would ask what the attendance policy says about leaving class and what happens before any discipline.

Pacing

Full chapter: 6 min.

 Short on time: skip this page.

Say this

“Test the slogan. Which evidence narrows “Tinker means nobody can face consequences”?” — Model the first link together: Tinker's facts narrow the claim.

Watch for

Misconception: Students say the logo does not matter.

Listen for: “It's just a picture.” **Then:** Ask who a stranger would think made the poster. That question is about who is speaking.

Support

- Let students write S, C or N (supports, challenges, narrows) before writing sentences.

Heat check

 Low.

Practice: choose a response

On your own Choose the best reply to the group chat and explain why. Then fix the two marked lines.
About 5 minutes.

Someone in Anika's group chat says, "Tinker means nobody can get in trouble for walking out of class." How should you respond?

- ☐ A Agree, because Tinker protected students who protested at school.
- ☐ B Disagree, because schools can make any rule they want about student speech.
- ☒ C Say that the message and leaving class are separate questions, then check the attendance rule.

Why I chose it

➤ C. A and B each claim more than Tinker says. C separates the message from the act of leaving class and checks the rule that covers it.

Improve a draft

A student's first draft

No, the school can't take it down because of Tinker v. Des Moines. In that case ① the Supreme Court said students have free speech at school. The poster is just saying the library should stay open at lunch which is not hurting anybody. We even used a nice photo of the school sign so it looks professional. The principal would be breaking the law if he took it down. This is America and students have rights. Everyone should wear blue Thursday and ② walk out if they try.

Rewrite each marked phrase so it says only what the evidence supports.

Rewrite phrase 1

➤ Tinker protects student speech unless it would substantially disrupt school.

Rewrite phrase 2

➤ Wear blue Thursday. Leaving class falls under the attendance rule, not Tinker.

⌚ Pacing

Full chapter: 5 min.

✂ Short on time: skip this page.

💬 Say this

"Someone says Tinker means nobody gets in trouble. What do you reply?" — Vote first, then discuss.

👁 Watch for

Misconception: Students pick B: schools set the rules.

Listen for: "Schools can do whatever they want." **Then:** Point to the schoolhouse-gate sentence.

📄 Support

- Read the options aloud.

🔥 Heat check

■ ■ □ **Medium.** Talk may turn to real protests at school.

Cool-down: Ask which fact in Anika's case decides it.

Keep real students' names out.

➤ Answer key

A revised version: Tinker v. Des Moines (1969) says public-school students keep free-speech rights at school, unless their expression would substantially disrupt school or invade others' rights. Anika's message, keep the library open at lunch, and the plan to wear blue Thursday are quiet and look a lot like the armbands in Tinker. But two facts matter. The poster uses a school-logo photo, so it may look like an official announcement, which schools can regulate more. And walking out of class is conduct under an attendance rule, a different question. I'd remove the logo and ask the office which posting policy applies.

College

Your task

On your own Read the steps. Fill in the planner boxes before you start your draft. About 15 minutes.

Write a plain-language explainer on posters and walkouts at public schools for a library teen night or a youth program. Separate the speech question, the attendance rule and possible discipline, and use Anika's case as the example.

Use: Case documents: Anika's poster, the posting policy and the walkout chat. Real sources: the Tinker summary and opinion (1969), the Mahanoy opinion (2021), WFYI's rights guide and Chalkbeat's report (February 2026) and the ACLU guide (2018).

You'll make: Explainer, 400—500 words, with a labeled source list

Time: 90 minutes

- 1 Sort the case facts into three columns: speech, attendance and discipline.
- 2 Label each source as a court opinion, a news report or an advocacy guide.
- 3 Write one plain sentence that states the Tinker ruling.
- 4 Draft your explainer on the Your draft page, using Anika's case as the example.
- 5 Finish your 400- to 500-word explainer on lined paper, with a labeled source list.
- 6 End with a line that says the explainer gives general information, not legal advice.



Prefer typing? Scan to open the online workspace.

Speech

🔗 The poster's message and wearing blue on Thursday.

Attendance

🔗 Leaving class for a walkout, under the attendance policy.

Case 12 | Your task | College educator edition

⌚ Pacing

Full chapter: 15 min.

✂ Short on time: 15 min.

💬 Say this

"Your readers are younger than you. Which word in the Tinker ruling needs the plainest explanation?" — Hear answers. Listen for "disruption" and "precedent."

👁 Watch for

Misconception: Explainers treat the ACLU guide as law.

Listen for: "The ACLU says it, so it's the rule." **Then:** Point to the source labels. An advocacy guide explains a group's view. Court opinions set the precedent.

📄 Support

- Three-column organizer: speech, attendance, discipline
- Source-type chart: court opinion, news report, advocacy guide
- Model line: "This explainer gives general information, not legal advice."
- The case does not cover speech rules on a college campus. Keep the explainer to public schools.

🔗 Stretch

- Label each statement as coming from a court, a news report or an advocacy group, and explain why a reader should weigh them differently.

Your task, continued

Discipline

✶ In 2026, some schools counted walkouts as unexcused absences; one gave one-day suspensions.

Source labels

👉 Court: Tinker, Mahanoy. News: Chalkbeat, WFYI. Advocacy: the ACLU guide.

Notes

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue lines, resembling notebook paper. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

This page continues page 245.

Heat check

Medium. The walkouts protested federal immigration enforcement and grew after two people were fatally shot. Readers may have personal ties.

Cool-down: Report how schools responded. Do not ask for views on immigration. Let anyone pass.

Standards

AAC&U VALUE rubric: Information Literacy VALUE Rubric;
Civic Engagement VALUE Rubric.

ACRL Framework: Authority Is Constructed and Contextual; Scholarship as Conversation.

The Case plan sheet gives each code in plain words.

Key Answer key

A strong response:

- States the Tinker ruling accurately and says it concerns public schools
- Separates the message from the act of leaving class
- Reports that schools responded to the 2026 walkouts in different ways, without taking a side on the protests
- Labels court, news and advocacy sources
- Gives general information and sends readers to a trusted adult or a school contact for their own situation

Your draft

On your own Write your draft in the boxes. Use your planner from the page before. About 35 minutes.

Your explainer, first part, about 150 words

Can a school stop a poster or a walkout? The answer depends on which part you mean. In 1969, the Supreme Court decided *Tinker v. Des Moines*. Students at a public school wore black armbands to protest the Vietnam War, and the Court ruled for them. A school could not limit their expression because of a mere fear of disruption. *Tinker* applies to public schools. Consider Anika, a student in a made-up example. Her poster asks the school to keep the library open at lunch and tells students to wear blue on Thursday. That is expression, much like the armbands. A walkout is different, because students leave class, and attendance rules cover that. When students walked out in early 2026, schools responded in different ways. Some counted it as an unexcused absence, and one high school near Indianapolis gave one-day suspensions.

Labeled source list

Court: *Tinker v. Des Moines* (1969). Court: *Mahanoy Area School District v. B. L.* (2021). News: Chalkbeat Indiana, February 11, 2026. Advocacy: ACLU, February 27, 2018.

Pacing

Full chapter: 35 min.

 Short on time: 35 min.

Say this

“Read your explainer as a middle schooler at teen night. Where would you get lost?” — Partners mark one confusing sentence each.

Watch for

Misconception: Drafts give personal legal advice. **Listen for:** “You won’t get in trouble if you walk out.” **Then:** Replace it with general information and a pointer to a trusted adult or a school contact.

Support

- The overprinted sample holds the first part of the explainer. Full explainers run 400 to 500 words.

Answer key

What to notice in the sample:

- Signals the split between speech and attendance in plain words.
- States the setting the ruling covers.
- Separates the message from the act of leaving class.
- Reports the 2026 responses without taking a side.

Check your work

On your own Answer the Check your work questions and mark your level in each rubric row. Then write one change you made. About 8 minutes.

Do you state the Tinker ruling accurately and say it concerns public schools?	☒ Yes	☐ No
Do you separate the message from the act of leaving class?	☒ Yes	☐ No
Do you report the 2026 school responses without taking a side on the protests?	☒ Yes	☐ No
Is every source labeled as court, news or advocacy?	☒ Yes	☐ No

How your work is scored

Mark one box in each row.

Skill	Beginning	Developing	Proficient	Advanced
Evidence	☐ No case facts.	☐ Names Tinker without its rule.	☐ States Tinker's facts and substantial -disruption test.	☐ Adds a second precedent or the walkout exercise accurately.
Reasoning	☐ Treats a slogan as the answer.	☐ Applies Tinker to everything.	☐ Compares facts and separates speech from conduct.	☐ Varies facts to show where the precedent stops fitting.
Audience & purpose	☐ Tells others to break rules.	☐ Argues for one side only.	☐ Recommends a clear next question for the school.	☐ Balances effective expression with respect for process.
Revision	☐ No change.	☐ Softens tone only.	☐ Adds the rule's limit and removes a legal conclusion.	☐ Explains how each edit makes the argument more precise.

Pacing

Full chapter: 8 min.

 Short on time: 5 min. Students answer the Check your work questions only.

Say this

“Find the sentence where you separate the message from leaving class.” — If it is missing, that is the revision.

Watch for

Misconception: Students soften the tone and call it revision. **Listen for:** “I made it sound nicer.” **Then:** Point to the Revision row: add the rule’s limit or remove a legal conclusion.

Heat check

 Low.

Answer key

How to assess: Score with the case rubric. Add checks for an accurate Tinker ruling, labeled source types and a clear line between general information and advice.

Proficient looks like:

- **Evidence:** States Tinker’s facts and substantial-disruption test.
- **Reasoning:** Compares facts and separates speech from conduct.
- **Audience & purpose:** Recommends a clear next question for the school.
- **Revision:** Adds the rule’s limit and removes a legal conclusion.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

Questions to discuss

On your own Write a short answer to each question. Then complete each sentence frame below the questions. About 10 minutes.

- 1 Which changed fact would make Tinker a weaker comparison for the wear-blue plan?

➤ Evidence that wearing blue would substantially disrupt school, or a plan that adds leaving class. Either change moves the facts away from the quiet armbands.

- 2 Why might it matter whether a poster looks like it comes from the school?

➤ Speech that looks school-sponsored gives the school more control, as in Hazelwood (1988). Readers may also assume the office approved the message.

- 3 If the poster had Anika's name and no school logo, what would change?

➤ The poster would meet the name rule and read as Anika's own speech, closer to Tinker. It would still need office approval, and the walkout question would stay the same.

My take

My claim: ____.

➤ Tinker fits the wear-blue plan, the poster needs a name and approval, and the walkout falls under the attendance rule.

The best evidence is ____, because ____.

➤ The Tinker facts, because the armbands were quiet and nobody left class.

⌚ Pacing

Full chapter: 10 min.

✂ Short on time: 5 min. Use question 3 only.

💬 Say this

“Change one fact at a time. Say which fact you changed before you answer.” — Hear one answer per question.

🔗 Stretch

- Rewrite the walkout message so it says only what the chat knows for sure.
- Going further: Read the U.S. Courts summary of Tinker. List two facts from Tinker and two facts from Anika's situation. Which difference matters most, and why?
- Going further: Write two headlines about the same walkout, one using the words “a protest” and one using “leaving class” instead. What does each headline make readers think the dispute is about?
- Going further: Write a short dialogue in which Anika explains to a friend why Tinker fits the wear-blue plan better than the walkout. Ask a reader to explain the difference back to you.
- Going further: Find the section of your student handbook on posting, dress or expression. Write down which spaces allow student posters and whether you need approval. Bring questions to a student council advisor before you plan any action.
- Read about Bethel v. Fraser (1986) and Morse v. Frederick (2007) and add them to the comparison
- Find your district's student expression or posting policy and compare it with Tinker

My take, continued

Someone who disagrees might say ____.

Any student protest is protected speech, so the school cannot respond to a walkout.

The limit of the evidence is ____.

☛ We have not seen the attendance policy, and we don't know whether the school has objected.

I would change my mind if ____.

✶ The school removed the poster because of its message instead of the posting rule.

Notes

[illegible]

This page continues page 250.

Heat check

Question 1: Low.

Talk about this case at home

Case 12: When can a school limit what students say?

In this case, a student's poster asks her school to keep the library open at lunch, and someone in a group chat suggests a walkout. Your student compared a 1969 Supreme Court case with each plan and wrote a short analysis.

Questions to talk about

- 1 What rules do schools often have about posters or flyers?
- 2 Why might a school treat wearing a color differently from leaving class?
- 3 How can a reader tell who made a poster?

Nobody needs to share personal stories or private information to talk about this case.



See the case online.

Case 12 | Talk about this case at home | College educator edition

🕒 Pacing

At home: this page takes no class time.

💬 Say this

“Bring this page home or read it with someone you trust.”
— Nobody needs to share their own views about protests or school discipline.