

Amending School Rules: The Power of Interpretation

Interpretation is perhaps the largest issue concerning written rules and laws. Words can have different meanings to different people. This activity allows you to become an interpreter of rules and gives you an opportunity to persuade others to adopt your interpretation. You also see how national rules and laws connect to your school's rules and laws.

Project Tasks

For this assignment, you will look at U.S. Constitutional amendments and how they affect your freedom as a student in this school.

1. Browse the U.S. Constitution. In your group, select an amendment that affects the freedom you have while in school.
 - ♦ Paraphrase the amendment in your own words.
 - ♦ What rights does the amendment give to U.S. citizens and in particular to you?
 - ♦ What limitations does the amendment place on your freedom at schools?
2. Record other people's interpretations of that amendment. Walk around the classroom and interview at least five of your classmates. Consider, "What rights do your classmates think that the amendment gives to students?"
3. Debate the U.S. amendments with your classmates. As a group, argue your case of which amendment is most limited at school.
4. After thinking about your classmates' interpretations of the amendment, decide what *your own* interpretation is of *one* amendment. Record your answers to the following on your paper.
 - ♦ What freedoms does the amendment give to you as a high school student, and what are the limits on those freedoms?
 - ♦ How does the amendment affect teens in your school?
 - ♦ What is your take on the amendment?
5. Once you decide on your position, act as a lawyer searching for court cases online or in the library that support your interpretation.
6. Propose a positive revision to a school rule to align with the amendment. Brainstorm several good options and then evaluate which option is the best. Explain the following in your paper.
 - ♦ How will this revision connect to the amendment, and how will it make students in this school better off?
 - ♦ How does this rule revision align with your interpretation of the U.S. amendment?
7. Form another group with classmates and review their revisions and chart out the positive and negative aspects of each revision. Come to an agreement on the best revision proposed.
8. After deciding on your interpretation and revision, initiate a campaign in your school to gather support for your interpretation and revision.

- ♦ Record and justify your interpretation of the amendment. The purpose of this is to persuade others to adopt your viewpoint.
 - ♦ Create a presentation using an online-presentation tool of your choice to convince the student body and school administrators to adopt your viewpoint and to agree with your revision. Presentations will be posted online for classmates to review. Possible presentation platform options include PhotoPeach (www.photopeach.com), iMovie, Animoto (www.animoto.com), or PechaKucha (www.pechakucha.org).
 - ♦ Focus on how your interpretation or revision improves student lives within the school and the school atmosphere in general.
9. Finally, our school will have a schoolwide vote to decide on which revision to the rules should be presented to the administration.

Scoring Rubric

	1 SIGNIFICANT REVISION NEEDED	2 SOME REVISION NEEDED	3 PROFICIENT	4 EXCEEDS EXPECTATIONS
Objective 1: Students will evaluate the freedoms and limits of a constitutional amendment.	Online presentation shows little to no evaluation of the U.S. amendment and no clear connection to a school rule.	Online presentation lacks in the evaluation of a U.S. amendment but shows its connection to school rules.	Online presentation shows some evaluation of the U.S. amendment and its connection to school rules.	Online presentation shows complete evaluation of the U.S. amendment and its connection to school rules.
Objective 2: Students will argue for a revision of a school rule by creating persuasion materials.	A revision to a school rule is proposed, but the benefits the revision will have on students in the school are not explained.	A revision to a school rule is proposed, but it is not clearly explained as to how the revision will benefit students in the school.	A revision to a school rule is proposed, and the presentation somewhat explains how the revision benefits students in the school.	A revision to a school rule is proposed, and the presentation clearly explains how the revision will benefit students in the school.