

TRAINED TO CENSOR? A STUDY OF STUDENT EXPRESSION ISSUES
IN MISSOURI PRINCIPAL PREPARATION PROGRAMS

Brian Schraum

Dr. Charles Davis, Thesis Supervisor

ABSTRACT

This study analyzed the training school principals receive in student speech and press law. The study has three components. First, the researcher collected school law course syllabi from 13 of Missouri's 17 principal preparation programs. These were analyzed to determine the amount of time devoted to student expression issues and the instruments used to measure pupil performance.

Second, in-depth interviews were conducted with a sample of six school law instructors to explore their attitudes about student expression and how those issues are presented in their courses.

Finally, a statewide survey of public high school principals measured administrator knowledge of and attitudes toward both student expression and their leadership training.

The results indicate a very shallow presentation of the relevant legal standards, particularly in the area of student press law. Personal stories often overshadowed important principles from case law. The study concludes with specific suggestions for improvement.