

Writing a Legal Brief on a Press Law Case

Directions: In your groups split up the following sections and write a legal brief that follows the following guidelines.

- Heading:** The names of the people in your group
Name the case (i.e. “The Hazelwood Case”)
Give the date of the case
- Part I:** 1-2 paragraphs – Write a case summary. This should include a presentation of what happened – a chronology of events – complete with the reactions of authorities to student actions. Do not include opinions (quotes) from the involved parties unless they are part of the facts.
- Part II:** 1-2 paragraphs – Present the opinions of involved parties. What are the views of each side of the controversy? These are not *your* opinions but instead what the people in the case are saying (quotes go here).
- Part III:** 1-3 paragraphs – Discuss all legal issues in the case. Is this a case of prior review and Hazelwood? Are there accusations of libel? Is there a possibility of invasion of privacy? Are there any other laws or legal policies that are important to know (many school districts have publication policies and a few states have anti-Hazelwood laws)?
- Part IV:** 1-2 paragraphs – Forecast the probable outcome. Drawing on your new knowledge of press law, what do you think will happen in the case? This is not necessarily what you want to happen but rather your guess of what will happen and why you think so.
- Part V:** 1 paragraph – Give your opinion. Tells us your gut feeling on the case. This is your chance to air your personal views on what happened. Do you think the people involved acted fairly and wisely? What should they have done?
- Part VI:** 1 paragraph – Bring the case up to date. Check out the Student Press Law Center web page at www.splc.org. Click on the “News Flashes” link and browse through recent articles looking for any updates on your case. If there are any, briefly present them. You may need to use the “News Flash Archive” links on the left side of the site. If there is no new information, write a brief sentence explaining that.