

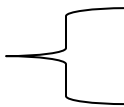
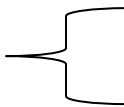

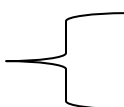
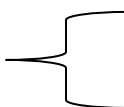
EDUC 500 – School Law

Case Study #3 - Equal Access

Discussion Questions

This case addresses the issue of equal access rights of students in schools. The case portrays the organizational leadership challenges that emerge in response to a request by a student to the principal of a senior high school for permission to initiate a gay and lesbian student organization on campus. The student request becomes a catalyst for controversial reactions by parents and the local press, and places both short and long term school leadership demands on the principal.

The Equal Access Act (EAA) makes it unlawful for any public secondary school which receives federal funding and has a limited open forum to "deny equal access or a fair opportunity to, or discriminate against, any students who wish to conduct a meeting within that limited open forum on the basis of the religious, political, philosophical, or other content of the speech at such meetings." A limited open forum exists whenever the school allows "one or more non-curriculum-related student groups to meet on school premises during non-instructional time."

-  1. In today's schools, a variety of school leadership situations may involve issues of equal access. As a school leader, how does this case challenge your notions of equal access?
-  2. It is important for school leaders to recognize and address issues of equal access in context. Reflecting on the concept of equal access, what is your understanding of this concept as it applied to this case?
-  3. As the Principal of Johnson City High School, after reflection on the request made by junior student Chris Thompson to begin a Gay and Lesbian Student Alliance, what first steps would you have taken as you pondered Chris' request?
-  4. How would you have responded to Mrs. Perrington's comment, "you aren't seriously considering letting this group of misfits, meet, are you?" Do you feel it was fair of Mrs. Perrington to refer to the group of students in this manner? Why?
-  5. When confronted by the press, as when channel 12 arrived to speak to Mr. Dodson about the gay student organization that wants to meet on campus, what strategies would you have in place to address their questions? How would you respond when no formal action had yet taken place relative to Chris Thompson's request?