

## Common Assignment 2

### Mid-Assessment: On-Demand Essay

#### Table of Contents

##### 1. Teacher Materials

- a. [Teacher Instructions: Introducing Argumentation](#)

##### 2. [Scoring Guide \(LDC Argumentation Rubric\)](#)

##### 3. Student Materials

###### a. Pro and Con Articles

- i. [“Cyberbullying: Should Schools Police Students’ Social Media Accounts?”](#)
- ii. [“California School District Hires Firm to Monitor Students’ Social Media”](#)



## **Teacher Instructions: Introducing Argumentation**

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### **Ninety-minute on-demand writing**

#### **Prompt:**

Should schools monitor students' social media accounts? After reading "Cyberbullying: Should schools police students' social media accounts?" and "California School District Hires Firm to Monitor Students' Social Media" write an essay in which you address the question and argue your position on the topic. Support your position with evidence from the text. Be sure to acknowledge competing views. Include a works cited page and text citations using MLA format.

**Children Have the Right to ...**  
*Common Assignment 2*

**Argumentation Teaching Task Rubric for Template Task Collection 2**

Scoring Elements	1	2	3	4
Focus	Attempts to address prompt, but lacks focus or is off-task. D1: Be sure to acknowledge competing views... doesn't make any attempts.	Addresses prompt appropriately and establishes a position, but focus is uneven. D1: Be sure to acknowledge competing views... tries to make an attempt.	Addresses prompt appropriately and maintains a clear, steady focus. Provides a generally convincing position. D1: Be sure to acknowledge competing views... does this sufficiently.	Addresses all aspects of prompt appropriately with a consistently strong focus and convincing position. D1: Be sure to acknowledge competing views... with thoroughness and making connections to the prompt.
Development	Attempts to provide details in response to the prompt, but lacks sufficient development or relevance to the purpose of the prompt.	Presents appropriate details to support and develop the focus, controlling idea, or claim, with minor lapses in the reasoning, examples, or explanations.	Presents appropriate and sufficient details to support and develop the focus, controlling idea, or claim.	Presents thorough and detailed information to effectively support and develop the focus, controlling idea, or claim.
Organization	Attempts to organize ideas, but lacks control of structure.	Uses an appropriate organizational structure for development of reasoning and logic, with minor lapses in structure and/or coherence.	Maintains an appropriate organizational structure to address specific requirements of the prompt. Structure reveals the reasoning and logic of the argument.	Maintains an organizational structure that intentionally and effectively enhances the presentation of information as required by the specific prompt. Structure enhances development of the reasoning and logic of the argument.
Conventions	Attempts to demonstrate standard English conventions, but lacks cohesion and control of grammar, usage, and mechanics. Sources are used without citation.	Demonstrates an uneven command of standard English conventions and cohesion. Uses language and tone with some inaccurate, inappropriate, or uneven features. Inconsistently cites sources.	Demonstrates a command of standard English conventions and cohesion, with few errors. Response includes language and tone appropriate to the audience, purpose, and specific requirements of the prompt. Cites sources using appropriate format with only minor errors.	Demonstrates and maintains a well-developed command of standard English conventions and cohesion, with few errors. Response includes language and tone consistently appropriate to the audience, purpose, and specific requirements of the prompt. Consistently cites sources using appropriate format.

Template Task Collection 2 | © Literacy Design Collaborative, June 2013, Edited Version 7



## Cyberbullying: Should schools police students' social media accounts?

Daniel B. Wood, *The Christian Science Monitor*  
September 17, 2013

The Glendale Unified School District in Glendale, Calif., finds itself under a national spotlight over its hiring of a firm to monitor its 14,000 students' social media accounts.

In the wake of the suicide of 12-year-old Rebecca Sedwick in Florida last Tuesday—reportedly after receiving taunting text messages from at least 15 girls—many cyberbullying experts are applauding the Glendale decision. But others say the Glendale Unified School District (GUSD), though well-meaning, is entering dangerous moral and legal ground. At least one online petition is out to stop it.

“We think it’s been working very well,” Superintendent Dick Sheehan told CNN of the policy. After two teens in the area committed suicide last year, including one in the Glendale district, the GUSD started a pilot program for 9,000 students in its three high schools. It went so well that they formally introduced it this year as school opened Sept. 12. “It’s designed around student safety and making sure kids are protected,” Mr. Sheehan said.

The GUSD is paying the Hermosa Beach-based firm, Geo Listening, \$40,500 to track public postings, searching for such topics as possible truancy, drug use, suicide threats, bullying, and other violence. Only the postings of students aged 13 and older are monitored, because that is the legal age at which parental permission isn’t required.

But in hosts of local broadcasts and newspaper articles, parents and students are being interviewed who don’t think it is right.

“It’s students’ expression of their own thoughts and feelings to their friends,” said Young Cho, a 16-year-old junior at Herbert Hoover High School, to the Los Angeles Times. “For the school to intrude in that area—I understand they can do it, but I don’t think it’s right.”

And some cyberbullying experts also feel it is not wise.

“Should a school take on the responsibility of overseeing social media or their students? No. The liability is far greater than the school, or their attorneys, understand,” said Robert Fitzgerald, a cybersecurity expert. “They run the risk of policing the Internet for these kids—a 16-year-old student dating an 18-year-old student, for example—throw in sexual activity and risqué posts—could lead to charges of statutory rape. And if the school does not report it, does the youngsters family have a claim against the school?”

Some experts say they would applaud the idea only if it is tweaked slightly.

“This is a great idea but only if it’s paired with an educational component; otherwise, it’s just being police, which is a bad idea,” says Katie LeClerk Greer, former director of Internet safety for the Massachusetts Attorney General’s Office and intelligence analyst for the Massachusetts State Police.

She says the educational component would involve explaining to students how putting too much personal information online—personal pictures, travel intentions, party plans, dating

## Children Have the Right to ...

### Common Assignment 2



details—is a bad idea. She and others say the task for this company to sort out what is worth reporting and what is not is gargantuan and runs into a huge gray area.

“I hope they have hired and consulted a very able legal team, because even though their hearts are in the right place, they are possibly biting off more than they can chew,” says Ms. Greer.

According to a recent poll from 1World Online, 59 percent of people believe that schools should not be allowed to monitor students’ social media accounts to ensure safety. And research from the Cyberbullying Research Center found that about half of young people have experienced some form of cyberbullying, and 10 to 20 percent experience it regularly.

“We know this is on the increase because the devices and apps that kids use is growing exponentially,” says Tom Jacobs, author of “Teen Cyberbullying Investigated.”

“These kids live with these devices and they are their lifelines to everything,” he adds. Because of this, a lot of the behavior goes unreported, because young people don’t want to risk their parents taking away their lifelines, shutting off their cellphones or shutting their Facebook and Twitter accounts, he adds.

But while some parents have complained that this practice amounts to government spying into private lives, legal analysts say the district is well within its rights to pursue the idea.

“The US Supreme Court has ruled that there are very distinct protections of privacy under the Constitution, but it has also ruled that privacy rights have to be balanced with the school’s responsibility to maintain a safe campus,” says Areva Martin, founding and managing partner of Martin & Martin, LLP, a Los Angeles-based law firm. “So they are trying to address the kinds of violent speech that can lead students to suicide.”

But just knowing that monitoring is taking place will change the very nature of the communications, some critics say.

“The response is understandable, but students will feel their speech chilled knowing that the school district is watching,” says Anupam Chander, director of the California International Law Center, at the University of California, Davis.

Others say a growing number of cyberbullying incidents point to the need for greater involvement by both parents and schools and that perhaps a multipronged strategy might be better.

“Most parents don’t have a clue about how these social media sites and apps work, so some training there would be in order,” says Suzanne Bogdan, education chair for Fisher & Phillips, one of the nation’s largest labor and employment firms, who advises teachers, administrators and parents how to deal with cyberbullying.

There are a growing number of apps that are not public, she notes. After Tricia Norman, Rebecca Sedwick’s mother moved her daughter out of school, and changed her cell phone, Rebecca signed on to new applications—ask.fm, Kik and Voxel—which restarted the messaging and bullying she had experienced at her first school. Ms. Norman had complained to school authorities about the cyberbullying and said that the school hadn’t done enough to help.

**Children Have the Right to ...**  
*Common Assignment 2*



At a Sept. 12 press conference, Sheriff Grady Judd of Polk County, Fla., read a list of the taunts to Sedwick: “Why are you still alive?” “You’re ugly” “Can u die please?”

<http://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Education/2013/0917/Cyberbullying-Should-schools-police-students-social-media-accounts-video> ↗



## California School District Hires Firm to Monitor Students' Social Media

Michael Martinez, CNN

Updated 10:40 AM EDT, Wed September 18, 2013

**Los Angeles (CNN)**—A suburban Los Angeles school district is now looking at the public postings on social media by middle and high school students, searching for possible violence, drug use, bullying, truancy and suicidal threats.

The district in Glendale, California, is paying \$40,500 to a firm to monitor and report on 14,000 middle and high school students' posts on Twitter, Facebook and other social media for one year.

Though critics liken the monitoring to government stalking, school officials and their contractor say the purpose is student safety.

As classes began this fall, the district awarded the contract after it earlier paid the firm, Geo Listening, \$5,000 last spring to conduct a pilot project monitoring 9,000 students at three high schools and a middle school. Among the results was a successful intervention with a student "who was speaking of ending his life" on his social media, said Chris Frydrych, CEO of the firm.

That intervention was significant because two students in the district committed suicide the past two years, said Superintendent Richard Sheehan. The suicides occurred at a time when California has reduced mental health services in schools, Sheehan said.

"We were able to save a life," Sheehan said, adding the two recent suicides weren't outside the norm for school districts. "It's just another avenue to open up a dialogue with parents about safety."

In another recent incident, a student posted a photo of what appeared to be a gun, and a subsequent inquiry determined the gun was fake, Sheehan said.

Still, school administrators spoke with the parents of the student, who wasn't disciplined, the superintendent said.

"We had to educate the student on the dangers" of posting such photos, Sheehan said. "He was a good kid. ... It had a good ending."

In fact, no student has yet to be disciplined under the monitoring, but it's not out of the question if analysts find a message warranting action, such as a threat of a campus shooting, Sheehan said this week.

"I can see turning it over to police. That would be a situation in which discipline would follow," he said.

Frydrych's firm scours the social media postings of Glendale students aged 13 and older—the age at which parental permission isn't required for the school's contracted monitoring—and sends a daily report to principals on which students' comments could be causes for concern, Frydrych said.

## Children Have the Right to ...

### Common Assignment 2



The company won't disclose its methods and practices in gathering the students' messages, but it does use key words in its searches. The firm also didn't disclose how it confirms the youths are indeed students of the district.

To do the work, Frydrych employs no more than 10 full-time staffers—as well as "a larger portion" of contract workers across the globe who labor a maximum of four hours a day because "the content they read is so dark and heavy," Frydrych said.

"It's mostly kids hanging onto a thread of life," Frydrych said, "and they're posting to people also hanging on to a thread."

He declined to disclose how many school campuses have retained his firm, founded this past January in Hermosa Beach, California. Frydrych has been providing technology services to school districts the past 10 years.

Geo Listening also monitors whether students are talking about drug use, cutting class or violence. The firm even ascertains whether pupils are using their smartphone during class time, Frydrych said.

While critics say the Glendale schools' contract is an invasion of privacy, Frydrych said his firm helps schools bridge a digital-age communications "chasm."

"Parents and school district personnel—they are not able to effectively listen to the conversation where it's happening now," Frydrych said. "The notion about talking in class is about as old-fashioned as a Studebaker, no offense to the makers of the car."

"When was the last time you sent a kid to the principal's office for talking in class too much? I just don't think it happens too much. So what we kept seeing is the chasm keeps building between how students communicate and the ability to tell adults about what's going on in their lives," he said. "I thought we could bridge that gap."

Some experts in digital media and privacy, however, take exception.

"This is the government essentially hiring a contractor to stalk the social media of the kids," said Lee Tien, senior staff attorney for the Electronic Frontier Foundation, a nonprofit that defends privacy, free speech and consumer rights.

"When the government—and public schools are part of the government—engages in any kind of line-crossing and to actually go and gather information about people away from school, that crosses a line," Tien said.

He disagreed with school officials who say they are monitoring only public postings.

"People say that's not private: It's public on Facebook. I say that's just semantics. The question is what is the school doing? It's not stumbling into students—like a teacher running across a student on the street. This is the school sending someone to watch them," Tien said.

Sandy Russell, president of the school district's PTA, said parents have many questions about the monitoring, a topic that will be addressed later this month when the superintendent makes his regular appearance at a PTA meeting.

Parents want to know how and why this is being done, Russell said.

"If it supports a child in a difficult situation—whether it's bullying or stress level—and if it helps, any parent would be thrilled to have the help. But how is that happening?" Russell said.

## Children Have the Right to ...

### Common Assignment 2



"When you find something you're concerned about, what are you doing? Do you approach the child, with or without the parents? What does this mean? When people don't have information, they make up scenarios," Russell said. "Some of the concerns I've heard is when kids say something nasty about a teacher, will they get in trouble? I understand that's not even remotely possible."

Superintendent Sheehan said students won't be disciplined for commonplace criticism.

"As far as anything said about teachers, as long as it's appropriate, it will be ignored," he said.

Frydrych's firm doesn't hack into private postings by students, nor their e-mail or text messages.

"I find it interesting that people keep asking if we're doing something illegal or snooping or eavesdropping, but what we're actually doing is looking at public posts," Frydrych said. "We don't see any private posts."

Students can adjust their privacy settings if they don't want the world to see their tweets or Facebook updates.

Frydrych's analysts stay abreast of the symbols, phonetic spellings, abbreviations, initials and other code-speak that youths type on social media.

Hate, for example, could be spelled "h8," and teens may refer to drugs with such words as "red," "rolling," and "blunt," Frydrych said.

In another example, Frydrych's firm learned how youths use drugs such as liquid hashish through vaporizers, or "vapes," which are devices like electronic cigarettes that allow for inhalation without creating smoke, Frydrych said.

Teachers may not be aware that students are dipping their mouths into their jacket in order to take a hit off their "vapor pen," Frydrych said.

Frydrych's team will be able to spot whether the student or a classmate posts a public message about that activity—with a message stating, for example, "can't believe a kid is getting high in geography right now, sucking on their vape," Frydrych said.

What school officials do with the daily findings of Geo Listening is up the district, Frydrych said.

"This isn't about our company questioning parents," he said. "We fully respect the challenges of being parents."

"We enforce the code of student conduct for every school we serve" by compiling a day-by-day report, he said. "It's up to the district to handle it."

His firm is about to expand schools' monitoring capacity with a new smartphone app that allows students and parents to anonymously report to and correspond with school officials about conduct violations.

"Honestly, we're not spying on kids. Can we focus back on the problem: The problem is we're not listening effectively," Frydrych said. "And we're shifting that."

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<http://www.cnn.com/2013/09/14/us/california-schools-monitor-social-media> 