

Directions:

1. Scan text and break into reasonable/logical chunks

For each chunk:

1. Identify and solve unknown words using "roadblock strategies"
2. Read and T2T: Write comments/questions/connections on the article
3. Highlight important ideas
4. Write one-sentence summaries on the **LEFT** page

Teen suspended for "trying to incite violence" with anti-bullying video

By Associated Press, adapted by Newsela staff

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LEBANON, Tennessee — An anti-bullying video on YouTube has had nearly 600,000 views, but the video's creator, a Tennessee high school student, has been suspended for it.

Lebanon High School student Emily Gipson said school administrators accused her of "trying to incite violence." They gave her a two-day in-school suspension for the video entitled "Welcome to Lebanon High School," posted January 22.

A Critique Of The School's Response To Bullying

In the video, a response to a classmate's October suicide, she asks students to treat each other better. It is a critique of campus culture, but it does not contain inappropriate language nor does it call for direct action.

"Welcome to Lebanon High School, where smiles are fake and suicide prevention is something to laugh at," she said in the video. She was criticizing her peers' reaction to Stop It, the phone app the Wilson County school had put out in response to the death. The app is supposed to help students report inappropriate behavior like bullying anonymously.

Her anger was not restricted to students, however. Perhaps the harshest words in Gipson's free-verse speech were reserved for school administration.

"Posters say 'Smile' and 'Be happy,' but how am I supposed to be happy in a world — no, in a community — where creativity is put down, where the people who make fun of others never get punished because 'There's no proof,' or 'There's nothing we can do about it,' or, my favorite, 'Kids will be kids,'" she says in the video.

"So let's summarize: We're expected to come to this emotional prison every day, and we're expected to forgive the bullies because the authorities are sure they didn't mean it. Sometimes I wonder how many kids it takes dying to make a difference."

The Video Hurt Teachers' Feelings

Principal Scott Walters told a local newspaper he cannot discuss the 16-year-old's punishment but said he took issue with the fact that the free-verse speech was recorded in a classroom without a teacher's permission. Gipson disputed that, saying she had two coaches' permission.

Walters also said the video hurt his feelings, and those of teachers, too.

He said he has received feedback from parents and students who did not agree with the video, including a gift from a student who told him he was doing a good job. Still, he said people could learn from Gipson's viewpoint.

"I can appreciate the perspective of the video," Walters said. "Of course, she's 16, and her perspective is going to be different from mine."

Gipson's Grandfather Is Proud Of Her

Kenneth Gipson, her grandfather and guardian, said the principal told him the only reason the teen was punished was because she did not have permission to take the video on school grounds. "I don't have a problem with that. She violated their policies," he told reporters.

Gipson, however, says he is proud of his granddaughter for expressing herself.

"I applaud her for taking a stance. She's speaking against something that is obviously an issue in today's society — today's schools especially. I don't have a problem with the videos at all. I wish she hadn't of done the first one the way she did it inside the classroom, but as far as the message goes, I'm all for the message. I think she's done a great job in bringing to light a very sensitive and needed subject."

The Punishment Is Worth It, Gipson Says

Gipson said her punishment is worth the good she feels the video has produced.

She posted another spoken-word poem on YouTube after the first one, called "Have I Made a Difference Yet?" urging teenagers like her to speak up.

"I never knew that it would get this big, and through it getting this big I've learned a lesson: This is not my school, this is everyone's school, this is a national problem," she said.