

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF
TENNESSEE

I.P. v. Tullahoma City Schools

No. 4:23-CV-26-KAC-MJD (E.D. Tenn. Dec. 23, 2025) · No. No. 4:23-CV-26-KAC-MJD · Decided December 23, 2025

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Eastern District of Tennessee denied cross-motions for summary judgment in a First Amendment action arising from a public school student’s suspension for posting images of the school principal on Instagram. The court held that genuine disputes of material fact remained regarding the meaning of the images and whether the school reasonably forecast a substantial disruption under the applicable student-speech standard. The court also removed the plaintiff’s mother, B.P., from the caption after the plaintiff reached the age of majority.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Eastern District of Tennessee
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Katherine A. Crytzer
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Eastern District of Tennessee
DECIDED	December 23, 2025
DOCKET	No. 4:23-CV-26-KAC-MJD
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Cross-motions for summary judgment concerning liability on Plaintiff's remaining Monell claim alleging that Tullahoma City Schools violated the First Amendment by suspending Plaintiff for three off-campus Instagram posts.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	Under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 56, summary judgment is proper only when there is no genuine dispute as to any material fact and the movant is entitled to judgment as a matter of law. Cross-motions are evaluated separately, with all reasonable inferences drawn against the party whose motion is under consideration; the court does not weigh evidence or determine credibility.

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

- Whether the School District was entitled to qualified immunity or otherwise entitled to summary judgment because the individual defendants had received qualified immunity.

2. Whether the School District could rely on the KKK and Hitler images in defending the suspension after representing that the suspension was based on the three Instagram images I.P. admitted posting.
3. Whether the three off-campus Instagram images constituted unprotected obscenity or incitement as a matter of law.
4. Whether genuine disputes of material fact existed regarding whether the School District could reasonably forecast a material and substantial disruption to schoolwork or school discipline from the three images.
5. Whether either party was entitled to summary judgment on the remaining Monell First Amendment claim.

HOLDINGS

1. The School District was not entitled to qualified immunity merely because the Court previously granted qualified immunity to Quick and Crutchfield; the prior ruling concerning whether the individual defendants violated a clearly established right did not determine the School District's Monell liability.
2. The School District was bound by its prior representations that the suspension was based on the Vegetable, Neko Quick, and Among Us images and that the KKK and Hitler images were only additional information about the events leading to the suspension.
3. The Court could not conclude as a matter of law that the three images constituted obscenity or incitement; viewed in the light most favorable to I.P., the images were satirical or unflattering depictions that did not necessarily rise to the level of obscenity or incitement.
4. Neither party was entitled to summary judgment because genuine disputes of material fact existed regarding how students and administrators would understand and respond to the three images and whether the School District could reasonably forecast a material and substantial disruption to schoolwork or school discipline.

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

I.P., a former Tullahoma High School student, posted three images of the school's principal, Jason Quick, on Instagram while off campus: an image involving a vegetable box, an image portraying Quick with cat features and feminine clothing, and an image depicting Quick as an Among Us character being held by a cartoon bird. I.P. admitted posting those three images, and the School District suspended him initially for five days, later reduced to three, under a policy concerning images that embarrassed, demeaned, discredited, or disrupted the educational process. The images did not cause an actual substantial disruption, but school administrators believed at least two could attract attention, distract students, or portray Quick in a sexualized or otherwise unfavorable manner. The parties disputed the images' meaning and whether administrators could reasonably forecast substantial disruption.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Plaintiff filed an amended complaint against Tullahoma City Schools, Jason Quick, and Derrick Crutchfield. The Court previously dismissed the First Amendment claims against Quick and Crutchfield on qualified-immunity grounds, leaving only the Monell claim against the School District. Plaintiff moved for summary judgment on

liability, and the School District filed a corrected cross-motion for summary judgment. The Court denied both motions because genuine disputes of material fact remained regarding the meaning of the Instagram images and whether the School District could reasonably forecast a material and substantial disruption.

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