



Karen Haase  
Steve Williams  
Bobby Truhe  
Shari Russell, Paralegal

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MEMORANDUM

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TO: Superintendent Ken Schroeder  
FROM: Karen Haase, Steve Williams and Bobby Truhe  
DATE: October 13, 2016  
RE: 1000 Series Policies

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The following is a description of the policies in the 1000 series regarding policy overview and the school district's mission statement. Many of the policies will apply without modification, but please review each one carefully to make sure that it conforms to your district's practices.

**Policy 1001. General Policy Statements.** Policy 1001 contains general statements that explain the purpose of board policies.

**Policy 1002. Creation, Amendment and Distribution of Policies.** Policy 1002 describes the method of adopting and amending policies. It permits the board to adopt and amend policies at a single meeting if the proposed policy or amendment has been distributed to the board members in writing prior to the meeting at which it is to be considered. In an emergency, the board may waive the requirement of prior distribution. This is in contrast to the policies of many Nebraska school districts which require boards to consider the adoption or amendment of policies at two board meetings, a requirement which boards frequently find cumbersome. It also addresses the Department of Education's requirement that boards review policies at least once every three years, the distribution of policies, and the maintenance of an official district policy manual.

**Policy 1003. Mission Statement.** Most school districts have adopted their own school mission statements. We have not drafted a

mission statement, because this is a highly individualized process. We do, however, want to offer specific guidelines for adopting a mission statement. Rule 10 requires school districts to review and update their mission statement at least every five years.

A mission statement should be a brief paragraph that is free of education jargon and “terms of art.” Mission statements that articulate an idealized vision for what the school will accomplish can lead to litigation, and we recommend against using them. The following mission statement from a California school district illustrates this danger:

**The mission of the School District, simply stated, is to meet the needs of all students.**

Specifically, the District must:

Recognize children's differences, their potential and infinite value; offer appropriate educational opportunities for all students; provide students an opportunity to develop character and integrity and achieve excellence; provide a safe, supportive, trusting environment of mutual support and respect and promote self-esteem, self-respect and respect for others which will carry over into appropriate social skills, values and morals.

This mission statement articulates lofty ideals, but it also creates potential legal problems for the district. Unhappy parents could claim that the district failed to comply with its mission statement because it failed to meet the needs of their children. This is a particularly troublesome issue in the field of special education litigation.

We think the two mission statements below are much better examples of workable school mission statements:

This school district is a student-focused community that develops responsible, life-long learners through a progressive, quality education.

This school district, in cooperation with family and community, will provide a flexible and varied educational program committed to excellence. Students will be empowered to become productive and contributing members of a global community.

We will be pleased to review your school's mission statement, if you would like us to examine it for possible legal difficulties.