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**MEMORANDUM**

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 The following is a description of the policies in the 1000 series regarding policy overview and the ESU’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; Accreditation and Evaluation.** 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. It also addresses the distribution of policies, and the maintenance of an official district policy manual. This policy also outlines the board’s duty under state law to conduct reviews and seek accreditation from NDE.

 **Policy 1003. Mission Statement.** Most ESUs have adopted their own 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. 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 ESU 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.

The two mission statements below are examples of workable school mission statements:

ESU 4 is a student-focused community that develops responsible, life-long learners through a progressive, quality education.

This ESU, in cooperation with member districts, family, and community will work to support school districts as they provide a flexible and varied educational program committed to excellence. Our goal is to help educate students so they are 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.