# M1: District Policy

## Course

Special Education

## Location

Module 1

## Alignments

### Course Outcomes

CLO I: Describe the professional practices of special education teachers.

### Module Outcomes

MLO 1.2: Apply ethical and legal principles to special education service scenarios.

MLO 1.3: Evaluate personal understanding and professional development needs related to the field of special education.

### Specific InTASC Standards

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| **InTASC** | **Type** | **Specific Standard** |
| 9o | Disposition | The teacher understands the expectations of the profession including codes of ethics, professional standards of practice, and relevant law and policy. |
| 10p | Disposition | The teacher actively shares responsibility for shaping and supporting the mission of his/her school as one of advocacy for learners and accountability for their success. |

## Activity Instructions

### Purpose

District policy is not the same as education law. It is often informed by the legal and ethical standards to which the district is beholden, but sometimes, it simply reflects current local priorities, or district leadership’s beliefs about how educators should conduct themselves. Nevertheless, educators are obligated to abide by district policies for their employees, just as employees at any place of work must abide by their workplace’s rules.

In this exercise, you will explore the policies of a district in which you can envision yourself working. Being aware of what’s expected of you, beyond the federal or state requirements, is a key component of ensuring your professional future is one where you’re willing and able to comply with the policies and practices expected of you from day to day.

### Task

#### Instructor Preparation for Activity

* Locate several (3-5) local district personnel handbooks. Here are links to three examples from various regions across the United States:
  + [Excelsior Springs, MO, School District](https://simbli.eboardsolutions.com/Policy/PolicyListing.aspx?S=107&Sch=107)
  + [White Bear Lake Area Schools](https://www.isd624.org/about/district-policies)
  + [Worcester Public Schools](https://worcesterschools.org/about/school-committee/policies-and-procedures/)
* Create a shared space for groups to post their work. Examples include
  + Jamboard or Microsoft Whiteboard
  + Word or Google Doc
  + Slide deck (Google Slides, PowerPoint)
  + Posters on the wall, with Post-It notes

#### Student Directions

For this activity, you will work as a group.

1. Identify 2-3 policies related to teacher behavior. List them in the shared space provided by your instructor. As you review policies, think about what you notice or wonder about why they are in place.
2. Discuss the following with your peers:
   1. Why do you think this policy is in place? Consider how laws/ethical codes, location, district size, or other factors might inform this policy.
   2. Do you agree or disagree with this policy and why?
   3. If you disagree with the policy, how would you ensure that you would remain in compliance?

### Example

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **What Is the Policy?** | **What Does the Policy Influence?** | **How Is the Policy Stated in the District Personnel Handbook?** | **How Do You Feel About Supporting This Policy?** |
| Any political discussion had between staff, with parents, or with students should be neutral in nature and should promote civics education. | Relationship between teachers and families/students | The handbook states: “the District recognizes that politics can be emotional for many people. Staff is encouraged to refrain from political discussion in the workplace unless it serves a clear educational purpose.” | This would be difficult for me, as I have strong feelings about the effect of political choices on equity. However, I could find ways to ensure it always links back to civics education, I think. |
| When teaching sexual education, teachers should present abstinence as the preferred choice. | Instructional | The handbook states: “Present abstinence from sexual activity as the preferred choice of behavior in relation to all sexual activity for unmarried students . . .” | This would be challenging for me since so many students will still choose to be sexually active. I would want to make sure they have the tools that are needed to keep them safe. |