

# Southern Utah University Educational Leadership Program

## Applied Administrative Assignment Template

Revised November, 2018

**Name of Educational Leadership Candidate:** Joseph Wright  
**Course Number:** EDUC 6740  
**Course Name:** School Law  
**Name:** EDUC 6740-AAA #2: **School Policy and Procedures Handbook Assessment**

### **Purpose:**

This AAA Assignment is designed to have you as an Educational Leadership Candidate review, research, and analyze your school's Policy and Procedures Handbook. To accomplish this you will have to review a variety of resources including an interview with a current administrator. The value of this AAA is to help you clarify how your school's Policy and Procedures Handbook addresses a variety of legal issues and situations.

As you complete this AAA, please be sure to follow and complete each of the prompts that are included. It is important that in each of your responses that your writing includes specific details and pertinent information yet is done in a concise and succinct manner. This is not a creative writing assignment. It is designed to have you respond, summarize, and report in a professional and focused manner.

**Complete this document using this AAA template. Include the template with your response. When completed, save and upload your document in Microsoft Word, PDF, or compatible format by the due date that is listed.**

### **Alignment to ISLLC Standards and Praxis Exam Categories:**

It is very important that you have a good understanding of the new (2014) ISLLC Standards as well as the Praxis Educational Leadership Exam categories. As you begin this AAA Assignment, please respond briefly as to how you are addressing the ISLLC Standard and Praxis Exam category as it relates to your school's policy and procedures handbook in the spaces that are provided. (2-3 paragraphs each)

### **ISLLC Standard/Objectives:**

**Standard 8 – Operations and Management:** An educational leader promotes the success and well-being of every student by ensuring effective and efficient management of the school or district to promote student social and academic learning.

- Develops and demonstrates well-honed interpersonal skills
- Manages student behavior with a focus on learning
- Ensures effective leadership throughout the school or district
- Crafts and connects management operations, policies, and resources to the vision / values of the school
- Monitors and evaluates all aspects of school or district operations for effect and impact
- Ensures the implementation of data systems that provide actionable information
- Manages organizational politics with an eye on school or district values and mission
- Enables others to understand and support relevant laws and policies

## **Response**

Our administrators make an honest effort to meet these standards. They work hard to have superior interpersonal skills, and manage student behavior while redirecting them towards education and self-betterment. I feel like we might do a better job here at Merit with increasing leadership roles for more of our teachers. I just completed a school-wide survey as part of my work in another class, and I noted that many teachers seem to feel disenfranchised in that regard.

Our admins are truly working hard to create better management protocols, and they do connect these to our vision / values here at the school. We will be going over the results of my survey, but they do look promising in many ways. I feel like most of the staff would agree that our admins are meeting most if not all of these standards, but of course we have room for improvement as well.

## **Praxis Exam Category:**

### **III – Managing Organizational Systems and Safety**

#### **A. Managing operational systems**

An education leader

1. Develops short-term and long-range strategic plans and processes to improve the operational system
2. Develops a process to ensure compliance with local, state, and federal physical plant safety regulations
3. Facilitates communication and provides for data systems that ensure the timely exchange of information
4. Acquires equipment and technology and monitors its maintenance and appropriate use
  - a. develops a plan for acquisition and maintenance of equipment and technology
  - b. creates an appropriate use policy and monitors compliance

#### **B. Aligning and obtaining fiscal and human resources**

An education leader

1. Allocates funds based on student needs within the framework of local, state, and federal regulations
  - a. develops and monitors a budget process that involves appropriate stakeholders
2. Implements effective strategies to recruit and retain highly qualified personnel
3. Assigns personnel to address student needs, legal requirements, and equity goals
4. Conducts personnel evaluations that enhance professional practice in accordance with local, state, and federal policies
5. Seeks additional resources needed to accomplish the vision

## Response

Throughout this experience, I saw numerous examples of my admins meeting these standards, or at least working towards them. I saw them actively involved in developing and furthering long-term strategic planning for the school (A1). I also found myself recruited to do what I might to help out (B5). I met with my admin, and she dropped by my class before we met, so that she could also give me feedback on my teaching, when we chatted later (B4). I have seen our admins working hard to increase communication between the staff and other stakeholders, so that everyone is on the same page (A3), though there is always room for improvement. Overall though I am impressed with the efforts of all at my school, including our hard-working leaders.

**Please submit your response following the prompt heading that is listed. (The Heading should be italicized but your response should be in plain text, double spaced, and no larger than 12pt. type.)**

You will need to conduct a needs assessment of your school's Policy and Procedures Handbook. (In the event your school does not have one, engage in the process of working with school & district administrators, faculty, and stakeholders in developing a prototype. You may also review the Jordan School District Policy Manual that is located in Module 15 of the Canvas Course.) Analyze the following areas. You will **select 4** policies or procedures to report on. The AAA #2 Prompts are listed below.

List of potential policies to review:

### **I. Student Policies**

- a. Freedom of Expression Policies
  - Student Dress Code
  - Protest and Demonstrations
  - School Sponsored Newspapers and Publications
  - Controversial Slogans
- b. Procedural and Substantive Due Process Policies
  - Punishment
  - Suspension
  - Expulsion
- c. Search and Seizure Policies
- d. Student Records Policies
  - Rights of Parents
  - Rights of Students
  - Rights of School Personnel
  - Confidentiality
- e. Student Health Policies
  - Medication of Students
  - Notification in Case of Injury
  - Body Fluids - Training and Cleanup
  - Health Accommodations

### **II. Faculty, Staff, and Administration Policies**

- a. Dress and Appearance
- b. Employment Procedures

- c. Tenure, Dismissal and Due Process
- d. Personnel Evaluations -
  - Faculty
  - Staff
  - Administration
- e. Use of Substitutes and Paraprofessionals

### III. Curriculum and School Program Policies

- a. Program Evaluations -
  - School
  - Curriculum
  - Standards
  - Safety
- b. Textbook Adoption Policy
- c. Use of Technology / Internet Policies / Acceptable Use
- d. Library Acquisition, Review, and Censure Policies
- e. Fair Use / Copyright Policies (Books, Journals, Music, Videos, Software)
- f. Assembly Policies
- g. Holiday Policies
- h. Athletic Policies
- i. Extracurricular Policies -
  - School Clubs
  - Travel
  - Admission, Involvement, and Dismissal

### IV. School Site and General School Policies

- a. Supervision Policies
  - Before School
  - During School
  - After School
  - Field Trips and Special Activities
- b. Safe School Policies
  - School Environment Safety Reporting
  - School Site (School and Grounds)
  - Drugs, Weapons, Contraband
  - Intimidation, Harassment
  - Reporting of Abuse
  - Crisis Management Policy (severe weather, hazard, bomb threat, etc.)
  - Pickup / Release of Students
- c. Use of School Facilities Policies -
  - Parents
  - Community
  - Religious Groups
  - Others
  - ADA Compliance
- d. School Fees
  - Fee Waivers
  - Acquisition of Supplies and Equipment

#### 1. AAA #2 Prompts:

A. *Does your school/district have a Policies and Procedures Handbook? When was it last reviewed and updated? By whom? How often is the Handbook reviewed? How are faculty, students, and school patrons informed or educated about school/district policies?*

#### A. Policies & Procedure Handbook:

At Merit Academy, we do in fact have many different published policies, but they are not all found in one place physically together (i.e. a Policies / Procedure Handbook). Instead, they have an

online home together (see: <http://meritacademy.org/about-us/policies/>). We have been reassessing many of our policies this past year. I have even assisted in that process, and we have found that due to the tumultuous administrative situation, much remains to be done. You see, before I came to the school three years ago, no single admin had stayed or been allowed to stay in the director position here for longer than two years. While change is sometimes needed, continuity is also useful, especially with all of the responsibility that a charter school director has.

Thus, many things that probably should have been reviewed more often never were. Part of the issue was that we only had a director, and no other main administrators until last year. This made the director position even harder and more stressful. Now that Dr. Meeks has been here for 3 years and counting now however, changes and review processes are beginning. The admins, along with teams of board members, teachers, admins, etc., have been reviewing and looking at many of our different policies in an effort to get back to speed in this regard. So yes, we do have our work cut out for us, since many of these policies haven't been looked at / changed much in about 10 years, since the school opened.

- B. *Select four (4) policies from the above categories. Describe where they are found in the School/District Handbook (Ex. Policy 6.2.34). Briefly describe and document the following for each policy:*
- a. **Policy.** *State what the policy says about the specific topic.*
  - b. **Justification.** *Why is this policy important at your school? What were the reasons this policy had to be created or enacted?*
  - c. **Procedures.** *In the event this policy is broken, what procedures are in place to enforce the policy? What happens? Who initiates? How are students, parents, or faculty informed?*

## **B. Selected Policies:**

### **1. Service Animal Policies & Procedures** (found here: [Link](#))

With the assistance of our newly hired special education director, we recently created this policy in October, 2018. We had not actually had such a policy beforehand, and we had a student that had been attending for a few months who had a comfort animal, but which wasn't a legal service animal. Due to the lack of training, the animal had had several accidents in various classes, and thus

it became a student safety concern. Not wanting to trample the rights of future disabled students with actual service animals, we realized we would need a policy that protected both the school and outlined the rights and privileges of our students.

- A. Policy:** We used the **Americans with Disabilities Act** as a starting point, and utilized most of the policies and procedures that they recommended. Specifically, the two main types of service animals that we determined would be usable in a school setting were service dogs and service horses (though that would be quite the sight!). The policy describes the services that such an animal would provide, thus meeting the definition of a service animal, such as pulling a wheelchair, retrieving an item for an individual, or alerting an individual to the presence of an allergen, etc. We also outlined what animals would **not** be considered service animals, including any other species besides horses or dogs, animals that serve solely as a crime deterrent, emotional support, etc.
- B. Justification:** As mentioned above, in order to protect both the rights of the school and other students, and the rights of any disabled students, we initiated this policy to make it clear what type of service animal would be acceptable and otherwise not allowed. I believe that it was a prudent decision, and hopefully will avoid future issues (such as an animal defecating in a classroom, etc.)
- C. Procedures:** There are many procedures that exist to verify that this policy is utilized and enforced in the proper way. For example, the owners or caretakers of such a service animal are required to provide annual documentation proving that proper training has and continues to occur, as well as health concerns have been met (required vaccinations, checkups, etc.), along with a specific policy for each student / staff member and their service animal, created by the Special Education Director, etc. Both the staff / student / parent may initiate these processes (as well as others not mentioned), or the school personnel may as well, depending on the nature of whatever concern may arise.

## 2. Internet Use Policy (found here: [link](#))

This policy discusses what students can and cannot access online while they are in the school. It covers what the student accounts can access, as well as the staff. It makes exceptions for academic material for classes, and also outlines what is **not** acceptable. It also outlines what to do re: unauthorized smartphone and other device usage.

- A. Policy:** This policy outlines why we provide internet access at the school, and what it automatically filters, including pornography, illegal or gambling websites, etc. It outlines that the school cannot be held accountable for what students may be looking at via their own phones / internet providers, but the same is not true for the wifi and devices the school offers. Additionally, it outlines what happens if a student *is* using a device without permission and the protocols to be followed.
- B. Justification:** I believe this policy is important because it helps make it known to parents and students exactly what our internet / technology policy is. It protects the school from frivolous litigation, and also helps the students and parents feel safe and secure in the school setting. It promotes learning and access to knowledge in a safe and responsible way.
- C. Procedures:** If the policy is broken, the consequences are clear. We have since added a step that isn't included on the official document, so I am guessing that we will be updating this one to reflect that change soon. The policy is clear, and most of the teachers follow it, but not all do, which is problematic for the teachers that are following it, as students think they are “unfair”. It might be nice to include on this document what happens if staff are caught doing something inappropriate as well so that everyone knows the expectations.

## 3. Discipline & Classroom Management Policy (found here: [link](#))

This policy addresses the overall goals of the school, and how discipline and classroom management ought to occur. It is however very vague, and while it sounds good, I'm not sure how useful a policy is, as it doesn't offer much feedback for complicated situations.

- A. Policy:** The policy discusses our vision and goals for discipline and management here at Merit Academy, but it is very general and vague. It has lots of “feel-good” language, but seems to be

lacking, especially for new teachers who may not have lots of good coping mechanisms for disruptive or disobedient students.

- B. Justification:** Obviously it is important to provide staff, as well as parents and students, with the protocols and goals that we seek to uphold at our school. If anything, the policy needs to be expanded and added to, since there are many specific questions it does **not** address.
- C. Procedures:** This is probably the **weakest** part of this policy. While a few things are mentioned, like “We support teachers in the classroom when their students are disrupting the education of themselves or other students”, this almost leaves more questions than answers. “Support them how? Allowing them to stick the offenders in the corner? Supporting their use of corporeal punishment?” To me, this “support” needs to be delineated and clarified. Other things it mentions, like the Utah Model Policy on Bullying, Cyber-bullying and Harassment ought to be identified as well.

#### 4. Work Experience Policy (found here: [link](#))

This policy addresses topic of when a student, in lieu of taking a class, may earn class credit via working in a local, verified business. Several students have approached the school, wanting to see if they might earn high school credit while gaining valuable career education.

- A. Policy:** The policy states than any Junior or Senior may earn up to .5 credits per semester, for a total of 2.0 credits, towards graduation. In order to do so, those students must verify that over the course of the semester they worked at least 20 hours every two weeks.
- B. Justification:** We have some students who are working to help provide for their families, and this allows them to also get high school credit for the real-world education that they are receiving at work.
- C. Procedures:** Students have some specific things they need to do to get the credit. They must have a **letter of verification**, proving they work at the place they claim to work at for at least 20 hours / 2 weeks; they must provide copies of their **paystubs** to show the number of hours worked; and finally, they have to write a short 1-page essay proving that they are learning valuable skills, to prove they have learned something of educational value from the experience. Otherwise... no credit for them.



2. **Internship Hour Component:** *Please spend at least 2.5 hours gathering data, information, or research, observing school conditions, and interviewing and discussing with a current school administrator the main focus of this AAA Assignment. Report on your findings and conclusions in 3-4 paragraphs. (Do not include the name of the school or administrator in your response.)*

I chatted with our Assistant Director today, besides conducting my own research and assisting with helping review several of these policies, including the aforementioned Service Animals Policy, and also another I didn't mention in my narrower focus (which isn't yet publically available) is our School-wide Emergency Operations / Preparedness Plan (EOP) I mentioned that I was doing this assignment to my administrators, and then the Assistant Director asked if I'd like to begin reviewing the EOP, which I was happy to do. It took several hours, but it was needed.

Our school has had many different administrators over its short life of just 10 years, but the most recent admins have both been here 3 and 2 years, respectively. The lack of continuity has been a problem, leading to a lack of policy maintenance that should have been occurring being left instead on the back burner as new admins took over, tried to make sense of everything, and several times gave up or were asked to leave.

That however is no longer the case, and our admins and school board now realize the predicament we are in regarding our outdated policies, and they worked hard over the last year or so to update and create any policies that need it or may need to be created from scratch. Additionally, the admins are working to delegate the responsibility for reviewing and revising these policies among the staff. We are currently working on making our policies up to date, robust, and useful. We have a long row to hoe in front of us, but we also have ready and willing staff and stakeholders prepared to do what is necessary.

3. **Personal Reflection:** *In completing this AAA, please describe any feelings, perceptions, new insights or other learning you may have gained or experienced? (1-2 paragraphs)*

Personally I'm glad that I was given this assignment. The responsibility that rests on the shoulders of my admins is immense, and it was a bit frightening to feel the weight that is brought to

bear on my school leaders. It does however give me renewed respect and admiration for them and the work they do, and more empathy when they become stressed. Being an administrator is **not** an easy job! I'm also grateful for the chance to have admins with which I know I can share my honest feelings, and get useful and candid feedback.

4. **Citations in APA format, as appropriate:**

Policies – Merit Academy. (2019). Retrieved from <http://meritacademy.org/about-us/policies/>

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**Declaration of Authenticity:** Section II C. 2 b. of the S.U.U. Student Handbook prohibits “Cheating, forgery, plagiarism or other use of work belonging to another person.” As stated in the S.U.U. Catalog, “If a student is guilty of academic dishonesty, the student may be dismissed from the class and may receive a failing grade. Other penalties may include suspension or expulsion from school.” The Department of Graduate Studies randomly uses plagiarism detection software on submitted work. Through the submission of this assignment, I declare that it is my own work.

Include any supporting documents here: