

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.

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.