



**University of South Florida College of Education  
Department of Leadership, Policy, and Lifelong Learning  
Educational Leadership and Policy Studies**

**School Law  
EDA 6232  
Fall 2025**

**Instructor:** Dustin Robinson, PhD

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**Office Hours:** By appointment. I am also available to meet before or after class.

**Location:** Online

[Join the meeting now](#)

Meeting ID: 224 939 677 757 1

Passcode: cW9MU6Kb

**Dates:**

| <b>Virtual: 5-7:45pm</b> | <b>In-person: 1-4pm</b> |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| August 27                | September 27            |
| September 3              | November 15             |
| September 10             |                         |
| September 17             |                         |
| September 24             |                         |
| October 1                |                         |
| October 8                |                         |
| October 15               |                         |
| October 22               |                         |
| October 29               |                         |
| November 5               |                         |
| November 12              |                         |

## 1. Course Description

Educational administration, traditionally shaped by legislatures, school boards, administrators, and teachers are also influenced greatly by decisions of state and federal courts. Information about state statutes, administrative policies, and regulations as well as court decisions are essential tools for administrators. You will engage with school law content from a practical perspective, with detail paid to core legal principles of school administration. During the duration of the course, students will engage with caselaw and critically analyze school law issues. Additionally, students will gain and understanding of general legal principles, legal research and writing skills, and judicial processes.

## 2. Learning Outcomes

- a. To gain and provide knowledge of understanding school law through in-depth relevant direct and indirect cases through constitutional, statutory, administrative, common, and contract law.
- b. To gain and provide knowledge of understanding access to legal materials within and beyond this class.
- c. To gain insights and information from practitioners about school law and provide evidence of these gains and insights.

The materials and course presentations will be directed at an increased sensitivity and awareness of the historic and contemporary legal standing of issues involving schools and understandings of the rights and responsibilities of teachers and administrators working and living in this context. Specific understanding of the essential nature of those issues and concerns addressed in the Florida Education Leadership Exam (FELE) play an integral and vital role in materials that one would assume a person graduating from our programs would have. It is also understood that primary focus is to provide educators with an essential undergirding in the law to perform better and not to make literal legal experts.

## 3. Course Policies

- a. Attendance and Participation - Class attendance and punctuality are required. As discussed in “Course Assignments and Grading,” your participation score will be affected by attendance, tardiness, and contribution to the discussions in class.
- b. Please check your USF email regularly. While students are encouraged to use laptop computers to type notes, you are expected to be engaged in class throughout each session.
- c. Written Assignments - All written assignments should be typed, double-spaced in Times New Roman, 12-point font, one-inch margins, and should follow the guidelines of the APA Publication Manual, Seventh Edition. Each assignment is **due by 11:59 pm** on the date listed with the assignment.
- d. Mobile Phones/Devices - Please turn mobile phones/devices off or on silent during class time. If you need to take a call, please turn your camera off and silence your microphone.

#### 4. Required Text

Umpstead, Thomas, Muniz, Everson, Krimbill, & Surface (Eds.), *The Principal's Legal Handbook*, 7<sup>th</sup> Edition, Education Law Association, 2024. ISBN: 9781565341975.

#### 5. Course Assignments

##### Attendance and Participation (10 Points)

Class participation includes discussions and activities with the entire class as well as small group discussions and activities. Because class and small group discussions

and activities are important to the course, it is essential for you to attend all class sessions, arrive to class on time, stay the entire period, return promptly from breaks, and actively participate in discussions when you are present. Furthermore, being present means having your camera on as if we were in person in a USF classroom, unless you are in an expected position or place where it may be dangerous or disruptive to have your camera on.

High-quality, active participation shows that you can: 1) ask questions that demonstrate your understanding of some key facts, concepts, and legal theories presented in the class readings and other materials; 2) provide constructive criticism during discussions and presentations and build on other people's ideas, while also maintaining respect for each other's views; and 3) relate some of the readings to your experiences as a citizen, teacher, and/or school administrator, as well as generate new insights and applications in your professional role.

If an emergency arises or some other occasion necessitates you missing part or all a class, please inform me as soon as possible. You are permitted one excused absence for this class, and beyond that one absence, you may lose two points for class attendance and participation for each additional absence.

##### Case Study (10 Points) – Due: Sept. 17

You will be given a case study that sets forth various legal issues. You are tasked with analyzing the case study and addressing the key points below.

Your written analysis should be a minimum of two pages in length and include the following sections:

- Identify the legal issues presented in the hypo.
- Explain the rule of law.
- Make your legal arguments.
- Provide your legal reasoning.
- Describe what you would do as an administrator if these issues arose in your schools.

### Education Governing Body Meeting Analysis (15 Points) Due: Oct. 8

Observe an education governing body meeting and provide a written analysis. The meeting can be viewed in person or virtually. Viewing a prerecorded meeting is also acceptable. The education body can be outside of Florida. Your analysis should highlight a significant legal issue. Examples of legal issues, include, but are not limited to: parent input, legislative changes, students rights, teachers rights, finance, etc.

- Education governing bodies can include, but are not limited to:
  - Local school boards
  - State board of education
  - Charter school boards
  - State legislative meetings
  - Federal legislative meetings
- Your analysis should be a minimum of two pages and include the following:
  - Overview of the issue(s) being discussed
  - Legal analysis
  - Implications

### Critical Task 1: Administrator Interview (30 Points) – Due: Oct. 29

Interview a seasoned school administrator (i.e., principal or district leader who has been in an administrative role for at least 10 years) about a school law issue that also caused an ethical or moral dilemma for the administrator (see pgs. 408-412 in the textbook explaining professional ethics). Ask the administrator how they handled the situation legally as an administrator and whether it conflicted with their ethical or moral values. In addition, ask the administrator what they learned from the experience, and what they now do or would do differently because of that situation or similar school law situation. Based on what you have learned and are learning about the school law issue that the administrator describes, please explain in your paper what the law says about the issue, and how you would handle the situation and address the ethical/moral dilemma as an administrator. You'll be graded on how you write your analysis of the administrator's responses and your explanation of the law, and legal issue involved. Furthermore, you will be graded on the questions you ask, so please include the list of questions you asked the administrator as an appendix, which goes after the reference page, if you have one). Make sure you begin your interview by asking about the administrator's professional experience and their current role, all of which should be included in the paper along with some contextual and demographic information about the school where the legal issue occurred. The paper should be 8-11 pages (not including your appendix with the questions and references).

**\*Note – The rubric for Critical Task 1 can be found on Canvas.**

### Critical Task 2: New/Future Administrator Workshop (35 Points) – Due: Nov. 15

Each student-group (3-4 members each) will develop a professional development (PD) workshop for teachers and/or current or aspiring school leaders (e.g., assistant principals, department heads, instructional coaches, and so on) that addresses pertinent issues as they relate to education law, policy, and practice in schools. As a class, we will discuss which students are in each group, the intended audience for each group's PD workshop, and the primary school law, policy, and practice issues that each group will address in the workshop.

Each student group should focus on different school law, policy, and practice issues in their workshop. Please schedule a time to meet with me once your group has identified a topic.

**\*Note – The rubric for Critical Task 2 can be found on Canvas**

Although each presentation will be about 30 minutes (with an additional 10 min. reserved for Q & A), the content for the workshop should be enough to cover two hours of PD, and it will include:

An agenda (one for participants, and one for the trainers listing times, and any necessary supplies such as handouts, notes, etc.),

A PowerPoint presentation

Activities and handouts that engage the participants and enhance their learning, and

References to appropriate federal and Florida state constitutional amendments, binding federal and state legal cases, applicable Florida statutes, Florida DOE rules, any recent 11th Circuit or Florida state court cases, and other US jurisdictions for persuasive purposes (using Legal Clips or other reputable resources), and relevant school board policies.

Use this assignment to show what you have learned and are learning about school law. Be thorough, creative, interactive, and make sure you work as a team because everyone on your team will receive the same grade for this assignment. Examples of some issues you may want to consider for your PD workshop include, but are not limited to, the following:

Student participation in interscholastic and or extracurricular student activities, including transgender students (be sure to consult the Athletic rules as well as Florida Statutes, Board policy and student handbooks),

Employee rights and responsibilities that are judicially recognized rights and responsibilities guaranteed under the Constitution (e.g., 1st, 4th, 14th amendments); student rights and responsibilities that are judicially recognized rights and responsibilities guaranteed under the Constitution (e.g., 1st, 4th, 14th amendments),

Standards and procedures of State administrative law, public disclosure, record keeping, and child welfare,

Standards for intentional and negligent tort liability applicable to employees and districts,

School's legal duty for keeping students safe and the role of school resource officers,

Federal and state requirements for specialized instruction in K-12 schools (e.g., students with disabilities, gifted students, ESL students),

Florida's general public K-12 instructional requirements,

How to develop a comprehensive employee handbook – everything you need to include,

How to develop the best student parent handbook – everything you need to include by law! (i.e., notification, due process hearings, student academic progress, school choice preference, health

examinations/immunizations, student academic improvement plan, truancy procedures, instructional materials),

Immigration and our students – everything you need to know to be in compliance with the US Citizenship and Immigration Services,

How to protect yourself from a discrimination suit when conducting faculty and staff interviews (think: AIDS, ADA, Negligence, personal law, etc.) ... to comply with the Florida statutory requirements to facilitate employee growth? (Be sure to include the performance improvement plan, notification of deficiencies, conference for the record, etc.

## **6. Evaluation of Work**

All work must be turned in by the due date in Canvas. Two (2) points will be deducted from late assignments unless you have received permission from me to submit the assignment after the due date. Papers will be graded based on adherence to the directions given, the content and quality of your writing, and adherence to APA guidelines. Unless otherwise noted, all assignments will be due by 11:59 p.m. on the due date.

Incompletes for the course will be given only in cases of emergency, illness, or circumstances out of the student's control. If you think an incomplete is appropriate in your situation, a request must be submitted to me in writing prior to the last week of class.

### Overview of Points

|                 |            |
|-----------------|------------|
| Attendance      | 10         |
| Case Study 1    | 10         |
| Governing Body  | 15         |
| Critical Task 1 | 30         |
| Critical Task 2 | 35         |
| <b>Total</b>    | <b>100</b> |

### Grade Scale

A: 100-94%

A-: 93-90%

B: 89-84%

B-: 83-80%

C: 79-74%

C-: 73-70%

D: 69-60%

F: 59% or below

Graduate students cannot receive grades lower than a C. If you think you may have a final grade that is less than a C (e.g., C-), you should discuss it with me as soon as possible.

Graded assignments will involve legal and analytical writing that should also include problem-solving. Common criteria used to evaluate the assignments include:

- Depth and complexity of analysis [not just the obvious], particularly legal analysis
- Support for claims provided (evidence, warranted assertions)
- Clarity of expression (detail, elaboration, imagery, conciseness),
- Understanding of opposing arguments and viewpoints (strengths, limitations, counter/arguments),
- Diversity of views, values, and intellectual dispositions characterized by openness to content and people including peers, professors, authors, participants, guests.
- Grammar, syntax, and APA and typographical errors.

## **7. Florida Educational Leadership Standards**

This course will address the following Florida Educational Leadership Standards.

### Standard 1

Effective educational leaders act ethically and according to professional norms to promote the academic success and well-being of all students.

### Standard 3

Effective educational leaders manage school operations and resources to cultivate a safe school environment and promote the academic success and well-being of all students.

## **8. Learning Supports**

### **Academic Accommodations**

Students with disabilities are responsible for registering with Student Accessibility Services (SAS) in order to receive academic accommodations. For additional information about academic accommodations and resources, you can visit the SAS website.

[SAS website for the Tampa and Sarasota-Manatee campuses.](#)

[SAS website for the St. Pete campus.](#)

### **Academic Support Services**

The USF Office of Student Success coordinates and promotes university-wide efforts to enhance undergraduate and graduate student success. For a comprehensive list of academic support services available to all USF students, please visit the Office of Student Success website.

[Office of Student Success website for the Tampa campus.](#)

[Office of Student Success website for the St. Pete campus.](#)

[Office of Student Success website for the Sarasota-Manatee campus.](#)

### **Canvas Technical Support**

Include information where students can find technical support.

*Example: If you have technical difficulties in Canvas, you can find access to the Canvas guides and video resources in the “Canvas Help” page on the homepage of your Canvas course. You can also contact the help desk by calling 813-974-1222 in Tampa or emailing [help@usf.edu](mailto:help@usf.edu).*

[IT website for the Tampa campus.](#)

[IT website for the St. Pete campus.](#)

[IT website for the Sarasota-Manatee campus.](#)

### **Center for Victim Advocacy**

*Example: The Center for Victim Advocacy empowers survivors of crime, violence, or abuse by promoting the restoration of decision making, by advocating for their rights, and by offering support and resources. Contact information is available online.*

[Center for Victim Advocacy website for the Tampa campus.](#)

[Center for Victim Advocacy website for the St. Pete campus.](#)

[Center for Victim Advocacy website for the Sarasota-Manatee campus.](#)

### **Counseling Center**

*Example: The Counseling Center promotes the wellbeing of the campus community by providing culturally sensitive counseling, consultation, prevention, and training that enhances student academic and personal success. Contact information is available online.*

[Counseling Center website for the Tampa campus.](#)

[Counseling Center website for the St. Pete campus.](#)

[Counseling Center website for the Sarasota-Manatee campus.](#)

### **Tutoring**

*Example: The Tutoring Hub offers free tutoring in several subjects to USF undergraduates. Appointments are recommended, but not required. For more information, email*

[asctampa@usf.edu](mailto:asctampa@usf.edu).

[Tutoring website for the Tampa campus.](#)

[Tutoring website for the St. Pete campus.](#)

[Tutoring website for the Sarasota-Manatee campus.](#)

### **Writing Studio**

*Example: The Writing Studio is a free resource for USF undergraduate and graduate students. At the Writing Studio, a trained writing consultant will work individually with you, at any point in the writing process from brainstorming to editing. Appointments are recommended, but not required. For more information or to make an appointment, email*

[writingstudio@usf.edu](mailto:writingstudio@usf.edu).

[Writing studio website for the Tampa campus.](#)

[Writing studio website for the St. Pete campus.](#)

[Writing studio website for the Sarasota-Manatee campus.](#)



## 9. Course Schedule, Readings, and Assignments

| Meeting Dates | Topic(s)                                                                                                                                                                                    | Pre-Class Activities                                                                                                                                                      | Assignments Due |
|---------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|
| August 27     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introductions, Review of Course and Assignments</li> <li>• American Legal System and Historical and Legal Perspective of Public Schools</li> </ul> | <b>Read syllabus</b><br><br><u><b>Textbook</b></u><br>Chapter(s): 1,2,3                                                                                                   |                 |
| September 3   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rights to education</li> <li>• Rights and responsibilities in student discipline</li> </ul>                                                        | <u><b>Textbook</b></u><br>Chapter(s): 4,5<br><br><u><b>Cases</b></u><br><i>Morse v. Frederick</i><br><i>Goss v. Lopez</i><br><br><u><b>Florida Statute</b></u><br>1006.09 |                 |
| September 10  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student privacy rights</li> <li>• Student records</li> </ul>                                                                                       | <u><b>Textbook</b></u><br>Chapter(s): 6, 11<br><br><u><b>Cases</b></u><br><i>Pottawatomie Cty v. Earls</i>                                                                |                 |
| September 17  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student Freedom of Expression</li> </ul>                                                                                                           | <u><b>Textbook</b></u><br>Chapter(s): 7<br><br><u><b>Cases</b></u><br><i>Tinker v. Des Moines</i>                                                                         | Case Study      |
| September 24  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Panel presentation</b></li> <li>• Disability law</li> <li>• Discrimination under section 504 and ADA</li> </ul>                                 | <u><b>Textbook</b></u><br>Chapter(s): 14,15                                                                                                                               |                 |

|                                     |                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                         |                                           |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| <b>September 27<br/>(In-person)</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Referrals, evaluations, and eligibility</li> <li>• FAPE</li> </ul>                           | <u><b>Textbook</b></u><br>Chapter(s): 16,17<br><br><u><b>Cases</b></u><br><i>AJT v. Osseo</i>           |                                           |
| <b>October 1</b>                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disciplining students with disabilities</li> <li>• Transition planning</li> </ul>            | <u><b>Textbook</b></u><br>Chapter(s): 18, 19                                                            |                                           |
| <b>October 8</b>                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parental rights</li> <li>• ADR</li> <li>• Charter Schools and SWD</li> </ul>                 | <u><b>Textbook</b></u><br>Chapter(s): 21,22,23<br><br><u><b>Florida Statute</b></u><br>1014.01          | Education Governing Body Meeting Analysis |
| <b>October 15</b>                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employee evaluations</li> <li>• Educator ethics</li> </ul>                                   | <u><b>Textbook</b></u><br>Chapter(s): 26,27                                                             |                                           |
| <b>October 22</b>                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public educator expression</li> <li>• Documentation</li> <li>• Teacher discipline</li> </ul> | <u><b>Textbook</b></u><br>Chapter(s): 28,29, 30<br><br><u><b>Cases</b></u><br><i>Pickering v. Board</i> |                                           |
| <b>October 29</b>                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Religion in public schools</li> </ul>                                                        | <u><b>Textbook</b></u><br>Chapter(s): 31<br><br><u><b>Cases</b></u><br><i>Trinity Lutheran v. Comer</i> | Critical Task 1                           |
| <b>November 5</b>                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Religion in public schools</li> </ul>                                                        | <u><b>Textbook</b></u><br>Chapter(s):<br><br><u><b>Cases</b></u><br><i>West Virginia v. Barnette</i>    |                                           |
| <b>November 12</b>                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Curriculum in schools</li> <li>• Desegregation</li> </ul>                                    | <u><b>Textbook</b></u><br>Chapter(s): 37,38                                                             |                                           |
| <b>November 15<br/>(In-person)</b>  |                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                         | Critical Task 2 Presentations             |



