

## Decision Memorandum Instructions

The *Decision Memorandum* assignment, due at the beginning of class on **November 9**, is a major component of the final course grade and will demonstrate your ability to find, understand and apply scientific research in addressing practical issues in educational leadership, school policy, teaching and learning, and student development.

This will take the form of a professional memorandum written from you to a real or hypothetical supervisor to address a practical decision problem or policy issue in a school building or district setting. It should provide a brief discussion of an important problem or policy issue and summarize the findings of relevant empirical research that would inform decisions about ways to address that problem or policy issue.

In preparation for developing your Decision Memorandum, I ask that you develop a *Proposed Issue and Annotated Bibliography* for my approval prior to submitting your *Decision Memorandum*. That preparatory assignment is due at the beginning of class on **October 12**. The detailed instructions for that preparatory assignment are available at <http://edleader.net/issueannbiblio/issueannbiblio.pdf>.

**This assignment is to develop a professional memorandum, *not* an academic term paper!**

The *Decision Memorandum* should be written as a formal, professional memorandum (not as an academic paper), in any standard memo format, from you to a hypothetical supervisor (e.g., department chair or assistant principal to principal; director, principal or assistant superintendent to superintendent; or superintendent to School Board or Board President). It should be written in clear, practical language and should be at least five but not more than eight pages long (excluding "References" and any appendices). Many excellent decision memoranda from previous classes have averaged about 6-7 pages plus references and appendices.

Please use a standard 12-point font (such as Times New Roman or Arial), format the memorandum with standard double-spacing and standard one-inch margins, and include page numbers. Do not use fancy covers or folders; and please staple the pages of the memo. (No paper clips, please!)

Please organize the text of your memo according to the following general outline (modified as appropriate to the issue you are addressing):

- A. Background and Decision Issue
- B. Evidence from Empirical Research
- C. Recommended Action or Policy
- D. References

In presenting empirical research evidence from the scholarly or professional research literature in your *Decision Memorandum*, you may not just cut and paste your bibliographic annotations from Proposed Issue and Annotated Bibliography into the memorandum. Also, please do

not just include a string of one-paragraph summaries of the research articles you are offering as evidence. Instead, you should integrate and synthesize the evidence from the research literature into a thoughtful, analytic, thematically-focused and well-organized presentation that provides a clearly-reasoned, logical and evidence-based rationale in support of your recommended decision or policy choice.

Attach a list of "References" used in the text at the end of the memorandum. You must use at least five appropriate research studies directly related to your issue, and all of those references must be available via the Long Island University online library resources (see <http://library.edleader.net>). At least four of those references must be primary reports of the findings of empirical studies published in peer-reviewed scholarly or professional journals, and at least three of them must report the results of statistical analyses offering *p*-values or other indicators of statistical significance. (Note: Meta-analyses that statistically analyze the findings of prior empirical studies are acceptable as primary reports of empirical studies.)

Because academic conference papers and reports from non-profit and governmental agencies (as well as reports written by private, proprietary organizations) are generally not fully peer-reviewed, you may not include more than one academic conference paper or agency report within your minimum of five references. Articles, reviews, chapters and essays from non-peer-reviewed, popular or professional magazines, newsletters, newspapers or other non-peer-reviewed sources, including books, and unpublished Internet documents are not acceptable for the purposes of this assignment.

The citations in the body of the memorandum and the "References" list must strictly follow APA citation style. You can find guidelines and examples of APA citation formats at <http://apa.edleader.net>. You may also refer directly to the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (2009), 6th ed., for the authoritative source on APA citation style. For all reference citations, you must include a Digital Object Identifier (DOI) code if one is available. If no DOI is available, then you must include the url (i.e., web address) from which you retrieved the document. Do not include any references that are not available online.

Do not include any citations in the "References" which are not mentioned directly in the text of the memorandum but do include citations in the "References" for every publication you mention in the text. You should not mention references you have not read yourself, so please do not include a citation such as Smith (1994) that you have not read but which was referenced in an article you did read. If you want to use a reference you read about, then please find that reference, read it yourself and include it in the "References."

Please attach to your *Decision Memorandum* a copy of your previously submitted *Proposed Issue and Annotated Bibliography* assignment along with my written comments on that assignment. If you have changed your references since the original submission of your issue and annotated bibliography, please also attach a copy of any subsequent written (or email) comments from me approving the changes unless you have only added new references beyond those I have previously approved.

## Decision Memorandum Example

An example of an excellent decision memorandum submitted in this course by an outstanding former student can be viewed at <http://edleader.net/lectures/decisionmemo/exampledm.pdf>. I have received many outstanding memoranda reflecting varying formats and styles, so please do not feel constrained to emulate this example exactly.

You are only required to make sure that the basic outline elements presented above are all present in your memo, that it meets the minimum requirements in terms of length and research references, and that it is your own, original work and contains appropriate citations and credit for the ideas and words of others. I am grateful to the anonymous former student who graciously gave me permission to share this example with you.

Please note that none of the references in this example used a Digital Object Identifier (DOI) code in the References citation. Whenever a DOI is available, however, it should be used instead of the "Retrieved from . . ." convention in the citation. Also, please note that while this example from a previous class was not double-spaced, you should double space your memorandum and the citations in your "References."

## Due Date for Decision Memorandum

Your *Decision Memorandum* is due at the beginning of class on **November 9**. If you must be absent from that class session for any reason, you may email the assignment to me by 5:00 pm that day to avoid incurring a late penalty. If accepted, all late submissions will incur grade penalties, and I reserve the right to refuse to accept late assignments based on my assessment of the circumstances and patterns of attendance and prior performance.

*The master's degree and advanced certificate programs in our department require a portfolio. Most students include a copy of the Decision Memorandum from EDL 631 in their portfolios.*