

# TIMELY TIPS

## Staff Management

### Handling Sensitive Topics

#### OBJECTIVE

Students understand how policies and staff manuals guide coverage of sensitive topics and draft clear, school-appropriate language using vetted examples.

#### MATERIALS NEEDED

- Access to the [Walsworth Staff Manual Resources](#) page
- Excerpts from the [Building a Policy](#) slideshow
- Shared Google Doc
- Optional: District/school handbook

#### PART 1

### INTRODUCTION (10 MINUTES)

#### Ask Students:

- What happens if a controversial or emotional issue comes up and the staff disagrees on how to handle it?
- Who should decide what is published, and how do we know?
- Briefly explain that strong publications plan for these situations before they happen.

#### Clarify the roles of three tools students already use:

- **Policy:** Sets guiding principles and decision-making authority
- **Staff manual:** Explains procedures and expectations for staff behavior
- **Style guide:** Covers writing and design consistency

#### PART 2

### GUIDED PRACTICE (25 MINUTES)

Divide students into small groups. Assign each group one sensitive topic from the list below.

- Covering student, staff and/or faculty deaths
- Political coverage, including student activism
- Social media use by staff members
- Copyright and image ownership

#### Each group reviews:

- Relevant examples from the [Walsworth Staff Manual Resources](#) page
- Any applicable school or district guidelines

#### Groups discuss and take notes using these prompts:

- What guidance already exists in sample staff manuals?
- Does this topic require a policy or a staff manual procedure?
- What risks or conflicts could arise if this is unclear?

#### PART 3

### INDEPENDENT PRACTICE (15 MINUTES)

Each group drafts one clear section for their assigned topic using this structure:

- **Purpose:** Why this guideline exists
- **Scope:** What situations it applies to
- **Decision-making:** Who is responsible for final decisions
- **Procedure:** How the staff should handle the situation step by step

#### PART 4

### WRAP UP (10 MINUTES)

#### Discuss the group drafts as a class:

- Is this clear enough to follow during a stressful situation?
- Does it protect both student voice and the publication's credibility?
- Is it placed somewhere accessible for all staff members to find?