



## **P.A.S.S. Student & Family Handbook**

**2021/2022**  
(Revised 10-14-21)

**PODER Academy Secondary School**  
1101 Richardson Court  
Cheyenne, WY 82001

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## **The Mission**

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PODER Academy Secondary School (**P.A.S.S.**) is a public charter school with one mission: To prepare students for college and beyond, through rigorous academic and athletic programs. We go above and beyond the traditional secondary school model to give students what they need to gain acceptance to, and to graduate from, a competitive four-year college.

Students will learn how to maintain good study habits, manage their time, and recognize the appropriate time and place for certain behavior. Accordingly, each party involved, from the parents, to the school, to the students, will be held accountable for some aspect of the overall mission.

## **The Philosophy**

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We believe the road to college begins well before graduation when students develop the work ethic and discipline needed to achieve academic success. High expectations are set from day one and we dismiss the notion that “college isn’t for everyone.” We adhere to an unwavering belief that all students regardless of their incoming academic performance, socio-economic status, or native language, are capable of being excellent scholars and athletes, and have the potential to succeed in college...and beyond.

Our educational philosophy consists of five primary components:

- A focus on Literacy
- A rigorous Curriculum in core subjects (Math, English, Science, & Social Studies)
- Preparing for Collegiate Success by Developing Tools for Advanced Work
- Improving Academic Performance by Providing a Structured Learning Environment
- Implementing a Culture of Success by Instilling a Foundation of Strong Values

## **Attendance**

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Attendance is the most basic requirement for academic success. Parents will be held accountable to adhere to the P.A.S.S. attendance policy in order to ensure that students are getting the classroom hours they need to succeed. Regular attendance is required and poor attendance will not be tolerated.

Parents are expected to ensure that students are at school every day, on time, and in school-issued uniform. Every effort should be made to schedule appointments after-school hours or on days when school is not in session.<sup>1</sup> Any student with five (5) or more unexcused absences in one school year will be considered “habitually truant” as defined by Wyoming Statutory Law.

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<sup>1</sup> In this handbook, all references to “parents” include non-parent guardians and custodians. At P.A.S.S., guardians and custodians carry the same rights and responsibilities as parents.

- 10 consecutive unexcused absences will lead to automatic disenrollment

Absences *will only* be excused for medical emergencies related to the student and/or immediate family members, (i.e. parents or siblings) or for extenuating circumstances beyond the control of the student/parent. *Any illness after 3 consecutive days will require a doctor's note.* All absences must be excused by the Principal. Any absences that are not excused by the Principal will be considered unexcused.

The Principal reserves the right to request a doctor's note and/or any other documentation for verification purposes.

### **Absences due to Suspension**

Suspensions should be extremely rare at P.A.S.S. Absences due to suspension or expulsion shall be considered excused absences and will not be included in the count for habitual truancy per Wyoming statute.

### **Appointments and Early Pick-up**

Students are expected to stay in school until the end of the school day (4:10pm for regular dismissal). It is very disruptive to the learning environment when students leave school early. Therefore, students who leave early on multiple occasions without prior approval from the Principal will receive a call home to see if the issue can be resolved. If the issue persists, then the Principal reserves the right to mark any or all such early departures as an unexcused absence.

### **Attendance Policy Procedure**

P.A.S.S. maintains attendance records for all students. If a student misses school, the staff will contact the parent by telephone, writing, or in person to inquire as to the reason. After the *third* unexcused absence, the Principle will schedule a conference with the parents to discuss attendance issues. After the *fifth* unexcused absence, the Principal will notify the District Attorney who shall then initiate proceedings in the interest of the child under the Juvenile Court Act.

### **Mandatory Tutoring**

If a student receives a notice of recommendation for tutoring, parents **will be** obligated to ensure that their student is in attendance. Most tutoring is held directly after school so parents are expected to arrange for pickup at 5:10pm. However, some tutoring is *mandatory* for select students over winter break, summer break, and weekends. Students who do not comply with mandatory tutoring schedules may be held back in grade at the discretion of the Principal.

### **Tardiness**

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Getting to school on time is another key to academic success. Students who arrive late will likely miss academic instruction, disrupt the classroom, and distract other students. Statistically speaking, tardiness is one of the most common reasons why people lose their jobs

in the workforce. Accordingly, we seek to promote professionalism as part of our overall mission to prepare students for the road to college.

### **Definition of Tardiness**

Students must arrive between **7:50am and 8:10am** every morning. Students arriving after 8:10am will be considered tardy. If a student is late to school, the parents **must** come in the front office and sign him/her in. Otherwise the student may be marked as absent.

### **Consequences for Tardiness**

Every **three (3) unexcused tardies** will equal one unexcused absence and will be recorded as such in the student's file. The Principal will call the student's parent to discuss the problem and develop a corrective plan. Excessive tardies coupled with unsatisfactory academic performance may lead to mandatory tutoring at the discretion of the Principal.

### **Homework**

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Homework is an essential part of the school's educational program. It is designed to reinforce the skills that students learn in the classroom and to promote good study habits. Students should expect to spend **an hour** on homework every night. Students will be held accountable to ensure that homework is complete, clean, and thorough.

Students will be asked to use their free time (i.e. lunch recess) to complete any homework and/or weekly assessments that are late, missing, incomplete, or lacking in effort. Moreover, students may also lose in-school privileges if they do not come prepared with all the necessary books and supplies. **Excuses made on behalf of the parent will not excuse students from this obligation.**

### **Independent Reading**

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Research has shown that the #1 way to improve on reading skills is to READ, READ, READ. The students who read frequently outside of the school will perform higher on reading tests, and will generally score higher in non-reading classes as well. Supporting your student's independent reading at home is the #1 way to help him/her improve speed, accuracy, vocabulary, and comprehension.

### **Make-Up Work**

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After returning from an absence, students are expected to promptly complete any missed assignments. The time allowed to complete this work will be the number of days the student was absent, except in the case of an extended illness. For example, if a student was absent for one day, then he or she will have one day to make up any missed work.

In the event of a planned absence, parents should notify the front office / Principal several days in advance so that they can prepare a packet of work for the student to complete during

the absence. Again, absences from school directly hurt a student's academic progress so a student should only be absent in the case of a serious illness, family emergencies, and other unavoidable conflicts.

## **Cell Phones**

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Students are not allowed to use cell phones in school or on school field trips or excursions, unless otherwise approved by school personnel. All student cell phones are required to be surrendered and placed in the class lockbox upon arrival, and must remain there until dismissal, unless otherwise authorized by school personnel.

If a cell phone is found on the premises during school hours, it will be confiscated and held by the Principal or Office Manager until the parent comes to the school to pick it up. Students will be able to make phone calls when necessary using the front office phone.

The school is not responsible for any incidents that arise due to social media usage outside of school hours. Parents frequently report cyber-bullying between students that occurs outside of school and then request that the school issue a punishment. The school is not obligated to honor any such request.

## **Communication: A School and Family Partnership**

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Academic success for each student will require an effective partnership between the school and the parents. Accordingly, every parent must commit themselves to becoming partners in the education of their student. The first step of this commitment is to understand, and sign-off on, the *P.A.S.S. Family contract*. The contract will outline the commitment that will be required and expected of the parents and students in order for the school to fulfill its mission. If you have any questions or concerns about this commitment, it is important that you address those questions or concerns with the Principal before your student begins their time at the school. A copy of the contract is included at the end of this handbook.

Communication is an integral element for an effective partnership. There are several ways that the school will communicate with parents throughout the year:

- **Thursday Folder:** The Thursday Folder will be emailed and posted on the Remind app every Thursday. Parents may receive a paper copy from the office manager on request. This will contain important information about the schedule/calendar, events, announcements, field trips, and other important reminders.
- **Teacher Phone Calls:** When necessary and appropriate, teachers will speak with each of their students' parents over the phone to describe how the student is progressing.
- **Parent/Teacher Conferences:** At the end of each quarter, parents will be *required* to come to the school for conferences with their student's teachers. Parents will receive a written Report Card at the conference. These are important opportunities for parents to learn about

their student's progress and needs. Participation by parents at Report Card conferences is required.

- **Behavior Alert / Academic Alert:** If your student is experiencing a behavior or academic problem, P.A.S.S. may send home a written notice. Parents should make sure to review the concerns outlined in the letter with their student. P.A.S.S. asks parents to acknowledge their receipt of the notice by signing and returning to the school an acknowledgement form. Parents should contact the school if they have any questions or wish to discuss the issue.
- **Meetings:** Please keep in mind that if the school requests a meeting with you and your student, it is because we need to discuss something important with you. If you would like to schedule a meeting with a teacher or administrator, please contact them directly.
- **Visits:** If you wish to visit the school, please see the School Visitor Policy discussed below.
- **Parent Concerns:** The school has an open door policy and it welcomes comments and questions from parents or anyone else in the community. If you have a question, concern, or suggestion relating to school policy, academic grades, discipline decisions, or anything else, we invite you to schedule a meeting with your student's teacher, the Principal, or any member of the Administrative team, as appropriate.

### **Grievance Policy**

The school has adopted a **Grievance Policy** by which all parents and/or members of the community should adhere to. (The Grievance Policy is discussed further below.) It is understood that parents will have strong opinions about issues concerning the students. However, it is an expectation that parents will express these opinions in a professional and respectful manner. If a parent is disrespectful to a teacher or administrator, the conversation will be cut short and continued at a later time.

### **Promotion to the Next Grade**

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P.A.S.S. maintains high standards for academic promotion. Neither parents nor students should assume that a student will pass from one grade to the next. The student must earn promotion by demonstrating mastery over the required academic content. Promotion decisions are based on student grades, standardized test scores, attendance, and homework completion records among other indicators.

Generally speaking, in order to be promoted to the next grade, students must demonstrate proficiency and have a final grade of 70% or higher in each of the core skill classes. A student may not be promoted if he/she is performing significantly below grade-level standards. The Administrative team will look thoughtfully at student test scores, examples of student work, teacher observations, and other measures, including attendance and behavior, to make these decisions. Special Education students who have an Individual Education Plan (IEP) will be held to the same standards as the rest of the students, but will be promoted to the next grade based on successful completion of the goals outlined in their IEP, in conjunction with P.A.S.S.

standards. Students with IEPs who have significant attendance or behavioral problems unrelated to their IEPs may be retained for these reasons.

## **Student Discipline**

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High expectations are set from day one and reinforced through an intricate system of rewards and penalties. Every aspect of the day is well-structured in order to maximize efficiency. Teachers are trained to ‘sweat the small stuff’ and to rectify any disruptive behavior at its root.

Students are prohibited from talking and/or wandering in the hallways, and bathrooms breaks are monitored closely. This serves to minimize the excessive ‘horse play’ that can often lead to bullying. Students may lose various privileges such as recess, La Junta, field trips, or other social events for violations to the Code of Conduct (discussed below). Students who exemplify model behavior are given a variety of privileges, and are recognized at an assembly held each week. A strong and demanding school culture lies at the heart of our method and is a central ingredient to our success.

The staff at P.A.S.S. is trained to use a problem solving approach with regard to discipline. Suspension is not a preferred method of handling behavior issues and the school will only do so after other options have been exhausted. However, the Principal will have the final authority on all disciplinary issues including suspension/expulsion.

- The policy with regard to **seclusion and restraint** shall follow LCSD #1 Board policy.
- Students do not have an expectation of privacy with regard to their desks, lockers, and/or backpacks. Therefore, school officials reserve the right to search these areas should a safety concerns arise, or suspicion of possession of prohibited items and/or substances. Whenever possible, the student may be present during the inspection of backpacks or lockers.

## **Suspension / Expulsion**

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When the Principal receives information or allegations of misconduct that is determined to be grounds for suspension, the student involved will be notified along with the parent/guardian of the student via telephone. The Principal will specify the nature of the information and why it is considered grounds for suspension. The student will then have an opportunity to be heard if he/she so opts for one before the suspension is finalized. Within twenty-four hours, the Principal will give a written notice of suspension to the parent/guardian of the student involved.

The Principal may suspend a student for a period exceeding ten school days or expel a student for a period not to exceed one year, provided the student is afforded an opportunity for a hearing in accordance with the procedures of the Wyoming Administrative Procedure Act.

The procedure for suspension and/or expulsion will follow 21-4-305 and 306 of the Wyoming Statutory Law.



## **Suspension/expulsion of Students with a Disability**

Students with a disability according to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 enrolled in District programs may be suspended or expelled in the same manner and for the same reasons as other students provided all District, state, and federal requirements are met prior to imposing the suspension or expulsion. The school will defer to LCSD 1 Board policy with regard to the procedure and specific provisions relevant to this policy.

## **Code of Conduct**

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The following *Code of Conduct* will set forth, in explicit terms, the bounds of acceptable behavior at P.A.S.S. Students shall adhere to all expectations and exhibit a sense of pride and professionalism that will carry forward to college and beyond.

The *Code of Conduct* was designed to ensure student safety at all times, and to limit distractions so teachers and students can focus on what is important, and that is preparing for college. Parents will be advised and held responsible for knowing the school's *Code of Conduct*, and it should be understood that parental reinforcement of school policies and values are a necessary part of the overall mission.

The following rules will outline the basic expectation for student behavior both in and out of the classroom but is by no means all encompassing.

### **Rules:**

- 1. Disrespectful and/or disruptive behavior will not be tolerated.**
- 2. Students shall not disrespect or damage school property.**
- 3. Students must arrive at school in school-issued uniform every day.**
- 4. Students shall not arrive late to school.**
- 5. Chewing gum is not permitted on school grounds.**
- 6. Students may not eat or drink anything other than water during class, unless otherwise approved by school personnel.**
- 7. Students must surrender all cell phones, gaming devices, or any other electronic devices to the class lockbox, unless otherwise approved by school personnel.**
- 8. Students must come prepared for class.**
- 9. Excessive horseplay, play-fighting, or inappropriate touching of other students is not permitted.**

- 10. The use of profane or otherwise inappropriate language will not be permitted.**
- 11. Stealing will not be permitted.**
- 12. Students are prohibited from leaving school grounds for any reason without adult supervision.**
- 13. Possession of weapons on school grounds will not be permitted.**
- 14. Fighting, violence, or threats of violence will not be permitted.**
- 15. Possession, use, or sale of any drugs, alcohol, tobacco, or illegal substance will not be permitted.**
- 16. Harassment of any form will not be permitted, including that of a racial or sexual nature.**
- 17. Students must attend any mandatory detention or make up for any time missed.**

Depending on the nature and circumstances of each infraction, a student will be subjected to a range of disciplinary action including a loss of in-school privileges (i.e. recess), required after-school detention, weekend detention, and/or immediate out-of-school suspension and possible expulsion.

Parents of students who are repeatedly disruptive may be requested to sit in on the student's class, meet with the administrative team, and/or take the student home early. Any student declared to be "Habitually Disruptive" due to three (3) or more suspensions from school, may face an expulsion hearing

## **Hours of Operation**

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Hours of operation are from 8:10 A.M. until 4:10 P.M., Monday through Friday. Students are required to arrive at school on time and to remain in school until dismissal at 4:10 P.M. Mandatory tutoring sessions will be held on various days after-school, on weekends, or during breaks if necessary. All parents or visitors of the school must adhere to the visitor policy described below. Any member of the Administrative team reserves the right to restrict entry for safety reasons.

## **Lost and Found**

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The school will keep a small lost and found box near the main office. Parents may come in any day between 8:10 A.M. and 4:10 P.M. to search the Lost and Found. At the end of every quarter, items left in the box will be donated to a local charity.

## **Messages / Voicemail**

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Messages and calls to teachers and students during the school day are discouraged except in cases of emergencies. If you have an emergency, and need to get a message to your student or his/her teacher, please call the front office. The front office will then relay the message to the intended teacher(s) as soon as reasonably possible.

## **Nursing Services & Medication**

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P.A.S.S. will have a nurse on hand to provide nursing services for students and will defer various low urgency issues to the front office secretary or parents. Parents will be notified of any cause for concern, as determined by school personnel, and are expected to promptly communicate with the school about any medical conditions the student may have.

In the event of an emergency, the school will first contact the paramedics before contacting the parents.

School personnel will not be permitted to administer medication of any kind without approval from the parent who must first complete an “Administration of Medication” form as required by the State Health Department. This policy applies to all medicine, including aspirin, Tylenol, and other over-the-counter medicines. All student medicines will be kept in a locked cabinet. The school will keep a detailed log of all medicines that are administered by the school’s staff.

All policies not covered in this section with regard to health and safety of students will align with the LCSD 1 Board policy, including provisions with regard to *mandatory immunizations*.

## **Parent Custody**

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Schools across the country have increasingly found themselves in the middle of custody disputes. However, schools are not in the legal position, nor are they the appropriate place, to decide what parent should have custody, and when. Accordingly, P.A.S.S. will assume that both parents have a legal right to pick up a student unless the school has received a court order that stipulates otherwise. The school will not assume any duty to comply with parent demands to the contrary without a court order.

## **School Calendar / School Closings**

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Please see the P.A.S.S. Academic Calendar for the scheduled school days for the academic year. A calendar will be provided during registration and is also available on the school’s website ([www.poderacademy.com](http://www.poderacademy.com)). Please note that we do not follow a district calendar. Be sure to review the school’s calendar carefully and contact the office if you have any questions.

P.A.S.S. will generally defer to the Laramie County School District 1 with regard to school delays and closings although P.A.S.S. reserves final authority in this regard. If the school

determines it necessary to close, announcements will be sent out via text, Remind and Facebook. Parents may also call the school's main telephone number: (307) 241-6084.

## **School Lunch Program**

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Both breakfast and lunch will be available at P.A.S.S. The federal government will provide funding so that students who qualify for assistance can enjoy breakfast and lunch for free, or at a reduced price. To participate in this program, you will need to complete a form online that the school will provide to you. If your student does not qualify for the program, the school will contact you to arrange for payment of school meals.

Parents may also send a lunch to school with their student. If you are sending lunch to school with your student, we ask that you send nutritious foods. Please do not let your student bring unhealthy drinks (e.g., colas or juices heavy in sugar) or unhealthy snacks to school. The school lunch menu can be found on the school's website.

## **School Visitor Policy**

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Visitors and parents are a vital part of the school community and all volunteers, observers, and partners are welcome. However, unannounced visits can be disruptive to the educational program and also pose **safety risks** so they are generally not permitted. Parents who would like to visit should call at least one day in advance to schedule a class-visit. The school Administrative team reserves the right to deny and/or limit visitor requests, and it reserves the right to schedule visits for certain dates and times as appropriate.

Upon arriving, all visitors must sign in at the Main Office and given visitor badges. Any disruptive visitors may be asked to leave. If a visitor is coming to school to drop something off for a student or to leave a message, the visitor must first check in at the main office.

P.A.S.S. is a closed campus for the sake of student safety. Accordingly, unannounced, unscheduled, and unauthorized visitors are simply not permitted to enter the facility. Parents or other members of the community will not be allowed to enter the building until 8:10am during the week unless otherwise permitted by the Principal.

## **Student Records**

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The school Administrative team is in charge of student record keeping and will manage access in accordance with the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act ("FERPA"), and all relevant Wyoming public records statutes. FERPA is a federal law that protects the privacy of student education records and provides certain rights to parents of students who are under the age of 18.

Pursuant to FERPA, the Administrative team may discuss, explain, and/or make available to the student or his/her parents any "education record" on file. If a parent would like to examine a student's record, the parent should email a request in writing to the Principal. Within a

reasonable time, the parent will be allowed to inspect the file and request a copy of some or all of the information contained in the record. There are two different types of student education records and each type is treated differently:

Directory Information: Directory Information is basic information about students such as name, address, telephone number, and date of birth. This information may be made available to non-parents for certain, specific uses without the consent of the student or parent. For example, teachers may distribute class lists to everyone in the class so that students may communicate between themselves outside the school. If a parent wants to prevent such information from being disclosed, he or she should email a request in writing to the Principal.

Confidential Records: Confidential Records include grades, evaluations, disciplinary actions, and health records. Confidential records will not be made available to any person outside of the school without the written consent of the parent

## **Student Uniforms**

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All students must arrive in school-issued uniform every day. If a student arrives at school and is out of uniform, parents will be called and asked to bring in a uniform before the student is sent to class. There is a required school uniform for the following key reasons:

1. **Uniforms unite P.A.S.S. as a community.** The school uniform is a visual representation of the school community, and the virtues and expectations that students are expected to live up to.
2. **Uniforms reduce distractions and clothing competition.** In schools that do not require uniforms, students often focus more on what others are wearing, or not wearing, and this can become a major distraction. Uniforms eliminate this distraction.
3. **Uniforms instill equality.** Students come to school dressed in the same manner, so no one is made to feel different or bad about the clothes they have, or don't have.
4. **Uniforms look professional.** The uniforms are neat and professional, so students come "dressed for work" and are mentally prepared for the day ahead.

Students may not change out of uniform at any point during the school day. Students must wear the school-issued uniform on all school field trips and excursions.

A complete listing of all approved uniform items can be found in the front office. The school will add various items every year from which parents and students can choose from. Prices for each item are set merely to recover the cost of purchase, shipping and handling.

Tennis shoes are required. Students are also required to wear socks or leggings at all times. Every effort should be made to eliminate unnecessary accessories such as bracelets, earrings, necklaces, because they get lost easily and create distraction.

Parents may purchase all uniform items at the school office between the hours of 8:10 A.M. and 4:10 P.M daily. Uniforms must be paid for by cash, check, or money order. The school does not accept credit cards. There is a No Return policy.

## **Grievance Policy**

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The school is committed to addressing all issues of concern in the most judicious and efficient manner possible. Accordingly, parents and community members are asked to follow the grievance process outlined below:

- Step 1: If you have a concern that relates specifically to someone else in the school community, we ask that you attempt to resolve the issue by communicating directly with the person who is the subject of that concern.
- Step 2: If Step 1 is unsuccessful, or if you have an issue of concern related to curriculum, grades, or teacher conduct, we ask that you schedule a meeting with the Principal to address the concern.
- Step 3: If Step 2 is unsuccessful, or if you have an issue of concern other than curriculum, grades or teacher conduct, we ask that you schedule a meeting with the Chief Operations Officer and Chief Executive Officer, who will address the concern jointly.
- Step 4: If Step 3 is unsuccessful, you may address the Board of Directors. The Board of Directors requests that you submit your concern in writing to the Main Office at least 7 days prior to the next Board of Directors meeting. This will ensure that your concern will be placed on the agenda for the upcoming meeting. The Chairperson of the Board of Directors will determine the manner by which issues of concern will be addressed during the Board meeting. Any decision rendered by the Board of Directors will be final and binding.

## **Board of Directors**

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Members of the Board of Directors are nominated by the CEO and approved by other sitting board members. The Board of Directors will maintain oversight over the school's budget and governance policies, and will ensure that the school is aligned with the Mission Statement. Furthermore, the Board will ensure that the school operates in compliance with all applicable state and district policies. The specific role and responsibilities of the Board of Directors are described in the By-Laws. The Board of Directors meets every two months usually after school hours. The school community and general public are invited to attend the board meetings. Notices and agendas for each Board Meeting are posted at the school and on its website.

## **Parent Advisory Committee**

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The Parent Advisory Committee will provide support to the school in a variety of ways, including the coordination of fundraising activities, community outreach and social events. This committee will provide a parent perspective, and will seek out ways to enrich the overall school community. They will meet once a month, and everyone is invited to attend.

## **P.E.**

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Students will be using rackets and other items that can lead to injury if not used properly. Therefore, every student is required to follow all instructions and abide by all court rules set by the instructor. Students who do not comply after a warning has been given may be sent back inside the school until the student is fit to return.

**Tennis shoes will be required at all times.** Students without tennis shoes may be barred from participation at the discretion of the instructor.

## **Chess**

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Chess players are masters of strategic thinking, and are trained to think several moves ahead. It requires intense focus, discipline, critical thinking and determination. We believe these qualities go hand-in-hand with academic success, and serve to give students the mental edge needed to compete in high school and college.

Students will be required to remain alert at all times and behave appropriately. Any students who cause disruption or misuse any of the chess pieces will be given a warning, and then sent to meet with the Principal if the problem persists.

Some students will participate in chess tournaments outside of Cheyenne. Each student must be accompanied by a parent or designated guardian who must remain at the site for the duration of the tournament. Parents are not allowed to leave their students at the site. This rule is in place for liability reasons.

## **Transportation**

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Transportation will be provided for students in need via school bus through the Laramie 1 School District. Student riders must abide by all district rules of conduct while on the bus. The LCSD #1 assumes authority over all behavior issues while on the bus and reserves the right to remove any student from the bus for a specified amount of time or indefinitely. Bus drivers and/or school bus supervisors will notify parents of any issues and will also notify the Principal.

The school will do its best to ensure that bus stops are placed in locations that are convenient for as many parents as possible. However, there are no guarantees as to the proximity of each stop to individual homes and parents will be held responsible to make

arrangements to get students to and from the bus stop safely. The school does not assume liability for students who walk to and from the bus stop independently.

The school does **not** assume liability for students prior to their arrival inside of the school. Nor does the school assume liability for students after they leave school grounds upon dismissal. Bus drivers will make every reasonable effort to ensure that all students who exit the busses are accounted for. Students who are not accounted for will remain on the bus and brought back to the school until arrangements are made for pick-up.

## **School Supplies**

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Students will be given a list of required school supplies to buy at the beginning of the school year. Please keep in mind that a designated portion of these supplies are dealt with as donations and are integrated into the school's general inventory. **Therefore, we are unable to return designated supplies should a student withdraw after the start of the school year.**

## **Sexual Harassment / Discrimination Reporting (Title IX)**

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PODER Academy will promote respect and civility for all students, staff, volunteers, and visitors. The school does not tolerate any form of unlawful discrimination or harassment. Consistent with our mission, vision and values, the schools will respond to all reports of sexual misconduct, civil rights discrimination, and workplace misconduct in the most judicious, prompt, and equitable manner.

### **Who may file a complaint?**

Any person can report misconduct regardless of whether the person is the alleged victim. However, only the Complainant (or parent/guardian) may file a formal complaint. Complaints may be submitted in writing or verbally to the school's Title IX coordinator.

### **What is considered sexual harassment?**

Conduct is considered sexual harassment if it's unwelcome, based on a person's sex, sexual orientation, or gender identity, and interferes with that person's ability to do his or her job, or with a student's ability to participate in or benefit from a school's educational program.

Sexual harassment as defined by Title IX includes any of three types of misconduct:

- 1) **Quid pro quo harassment** - Asking for sexual favors of some kind in exchange for special treatment on the job, in the classroom, etc or ill-treatment if the victim will not consent to sexual favors.
- 2) **Hostile Work Environment** - Unwelcome conduct that a reasonable person would find so severe, pervasive, and objectively offensive that it denies a person equal educational access.



3) Any instance of sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence, or stalking as defined in the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA).

### **What happens when a complaint is filed?**

After receiving an incident report, the Title IX coordinator will contact the complainant to offer supportive measures and will then conduct an assessment within 72 hours to determine if an investigation should proceed. Investigations must be prompt, fair, and impartial.

Once an investigation is initiated, the following steps will occur...

- The Title IX Coordinator will appoint an Investigator. The Investigator will then send a Notice of Investigation to both parties.
- The Investigator will have an initial meeting with the complainant to:
  - Review the incident report
  - Collect or request all relevant evidence and documents
  - Review rights and options with respect to the incident reported
  - Review relevant interim supportive measures
- The Investigator will then schedule an initial meeting with the person(s) accused to review the same four points outlined above.
- The Investigator will meet with witness(es) who have direct knowledge of events and review any relevant documentation.
- The Investigator will draft a written report to summarize the allegations, relevant evidence, findings, and outcomes. External resources may be used to assist in preparation of the written report including anyone trained in Title IX or sexual harassment/discrimination proceedings. The Investigator will then meet with the Title IX coordinator to review the report. The Investigator may in certain cases seek to resolve the matter informally if both parties agree.
- The Investigator will provide the report to both parties for review with 10 calendar days for response.
- After both parties have an opportunity to respond, the Investigator will make any revisions and then send the final report to **a separate decision-maker** who will issue a written final determination at the end of 10 calendar days.
- The final determination shall include the following:
  - Description of alleged violations (including relevant policies violated)
  - Summary of findings of fact and rationale supporting the determination
  - Description of sanctions imposed on the respondent

- Remedies to be provided to the complainant designed to restore or preserve access to the education program or activity
- Procedures/timelines for any appeal
- At the conclusion of the investigation, the Investigator will provide all documentation, records, notes, evidence, and reports to the Title IX Coordinator to retain for 7 years.

\* The preponderance of the evidence standard will be used for all formal complaints of sexual harassment.

### **Confidentiality**

Interviews, allegations, statements, and identities will be kept confidential to the greatest extent possible as allowed by law. However, PODER Academy will not allow the goal of confidentiality to be a deterrent to an effective investigation.

### **Corrective Action**

A timely resolution of each complaint will be reached and communicated to the employee/parent. Appropriate corrective action (including potential suspension, expulsion, or termination) will be taken promptly against any party found to be engaging in discrimination and/or harassment. The corrective action issued will be proportional to the severity of the conduct. The respondent's student or employment history, and any similar complaints of prior unlawful discrimination and/or harassment will be taken into consideration.

### **Retaliation**

PODER Academy prohibits retaliation of any kind against employees or students, who, in good faith, report harassment and/or discrimination or assist in investigating such complaints. If a complainant feels he/she has been subjected to any form of retaliation, the complainant should report that conduct to a Title IX Coordinator and/or Investigator.

### **To file an Appeal:**

Any party can request an appeal of the final determination on the following bases:

- Procedural integrity that affected the outcome of the matter
- Newly discovered evidence that could affect the outcome of the matter
- Conflict of interest or bias, which affected the outcome of the matter

An appeals officer shall be separate from the Title IX Coordinator, Investigator, and Decision-maker. Parties will have 10 days to file a written appeal. If an appeal is filed, the determination will be final after the decision is made in the appeals process. If an appeal is not filed, the original determination will be final after 10 days.

## **Responsible Employees:**

All employees have a duty to report sexual misconduct and are required by law to notify the school's designated Title IX Coordinator. The Title IX Coordinator will direct victims to appropriate resources for emotional support and or provide information on available options for resolution. Reports from PODER Academy or PODER Secondary can be routed to either designated Title IX Coordinator listed below:

- **Title IX Coordinators:** Nicholas Vaughn or Colton St. Peter
- **Designated Investigators:** Jessica Rader or Derek Schaneman
- **Decision-Maker** - Independent mediator to be assigned by the Title IX Coordinator
- **Appeals Officer** - Separate independent mediator assigned by the Title IX Coordinator

## **Formal Complaint Form**

If you believe you have been a victim of misconduct related to sexual harassment and/or discrimination, please complete the Incident Report Form found on the website ([www.poderacademy.com](http://www.poderacademy.com)) and submit it to a Title IX Coordinator via email or in person.

A Title IX claim does not preclude a complainant from filing under Title VI or with the Office of Civil Rights. Staff & students are encouraged to report possible crimes to law enforcement. Please be advised that criminal processes are independent of the schools. Even when a report has been made to law enforcement, employees are required to make a report to the Title IX Coordinator.

## **OUTSIDE CONTRACTORS**

PODER Academy will take similar measures through the actual employer of contractors whose employees have been reported for sexual harassment. If the contractor is not responsive in investigating and resolving the matter, PODER Academy will prohibit the offending employee(s) from any involvement with the school or may choose to terminate the contract.

## **Student / Family Contract**

PODER Academy Secondary School (P.A.S.S.) is a high performing college prep academy. It is also a school-of-choice with expectations that may differ from LCSD #1 schools. The following items are not subject to negotiation. Therefore, it is important that parents and students understand these expectations, and voice any concerns or questions prior to their first day at school.

The following contract is not a legal document, but rather a fair notice as to what the school requires in order to meet its commitment to prepare each student for college and beyond.

### **Parent Commitment**

- **Emergency contact** – Parents must keep an updated and working cell phone number with the front office.
- **Absences** – The school can not honor its commitment if the students are not in school. Therefore, parents will be held accountable for excessive unexcused absences.
- **Disruptive Behavior** – Academic success is a two way street and does not rest solely on the school. Therefore, parents may be required to sit with their student at school if they are repeatedly disruptive.
- **Saturday / After-school detention** – Parents are required to sit with their student should they earn after-school and/or Saturday detention. If they are unable to attend, a designated guardian must attend in their place.
- **Custody disputes** – The school is not in a legal position to decide what parent should have custody. Accordingly, the school will not assume any duty to comply with parent demands without a court order that says otherwise.
- **Late student pick-up** – If a parent or designated guardian has not arrived for pickup by 4:30pm (12:30pm on early dismissal days), the school reserves the right to arrange for transport to a waiting facility at the Sheriff's office.
- **Cell phones** – Student cell phones are strictly prohibited at P.A.S.S. Phones must be checked into the class lockbox at arrival. Any phones that are confiscated will be held at the front office for parent pick-up at dismissal.

- **Social media** – The school can not regulate student social media usage outside of school nor will the school issue a punishment for bullying or inappropriate activity that occurs outside of the school.
- **Thursday Folder** – Parents often express frustration that they do not get information from the school that was actually sent home in the Thursday folder. Therefore, parents must read the Thursday folder which is sent home with each student and posted on the school's website.
- **Homework** – Students should expect roughly 1 hour of homework per night. Parents are expected to monitor and ensure that students are completing their homework.
- **Visitor Policy** – Unfortunately, schools have been forced to increase building security due to an increase in violence. Accordingly, parents are welcome to sit with their child but must get prior approval from the Principal. All visitors must sign at the front desk.
- **Student lunch** – Students are not permitted to leave the campus for lunch at this time.
- **Unruly parents** – P.A.S.S. is a closed campus. Therefore, any parent who becomes aggressive, fails to follow the building rules, and/or poses any perceived danger as determined by the school's staff, shall have their rights to enter the building and/or property revoked. The school has developed a relationship with local law enforcement that can arrive at the school on moment's notice.
- **Communication** – The parents, teachers, and staff, are on the same team. There is no need to verbally attack and/or yell at a teacher or staff member. Conversations must remain civil at all times, especially in front of students.

### **Student commitment**

- **Classroom** – Students should not talk over teachers, have conversations while the teacher is speaking, or create disruptions. If a teacher or staff member says "no"...that means no.
- **Self-Responsibility** – Students should not blame others or make the excuse that "everyone else was doing it too." Take responsibility for your own actions and own up.
- **Dishonesty** – Lying, fabricating, exaggerating will not be tolerated and dishonesty will only make the consequences worse.
- **Bathroom Breaks** – Abuse of bathroom privileges will not be tolerated. This means taking an excessive amount of time and/or engaging in activity that is against the rules.
- **Student Property** – Students must keep their hands out of others belongings.

- **Respect for Teachers** – Students will not always ‘gel’ with every teacher. This is also true at the college level. So tension with a teacher will not excuse bad behavior.
- **Public Display of Affection** – There is a time and place for dating activities. During school hours is not one of them. Students will be held to the same professional standard of conduct that employees are.
- **Uniforms** – Students must arrive in school-issued uniform with no exceptions.
- **Facility rules** – Gum is not allowed anywhere on campus. Students are not permitted to eat or drink anything other than water, unless authorized by a teacher or a staff member.
- **Computer usage** – Internet and computer usage can be revoked at any time for misuse.
- **Code of Conduct** – All students must read and understand the P.A.S.S. Code of Conduct.
- **Homework** – Student should expect at least an hour of homework every night along with reading. It is the student’s responsibility to get this done.
- **Eye witness** – Students must report any bullying, self-harm, or harassment to a school staff member as soon as possible

### **P.A.S.S. Commitment**

- Teachers / staff will arrive on time & prepared to conduct classes in a professional manner.
- The school will notify parents when exit tickets and assessments are not complete.
- The school will make every effort to ensure that students are engaged and progressing.
- The school will enforce all classroom rules and school policies consistently and fairly.
- The school will communicate with parents/guardians of students with reasonable frequency and provide both positive and negative feedback.
- The school will maintain the highest standards of academic performance and student behavior.
- The school will do its part to ensure that P.A.S.S. is a safe environment for all students and other community members.
- The school will notify the appropriate party (i.e. parents, DFS, police) if there is a belief that a student is in physical danger or is being subject to neglect or abuse of any kind.



1100 Richardson Court  
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[www.poderacademy.com](http://www.poderacademy.com)

### **ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

THIS IS AN ACKNOWLEDGEMENT THAT BOTH STUDENT AND PARENT HAVE READ THE STUDENT / FAMILY CONTRACT, HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO DISCUSS IT, AND UNDERSTAND IT.

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Parent / Guardian Signature**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Student Signature**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**