



## **Student & Family Handbook**

**2025/2026**  
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**PODER Academy  
2201 Morrie Drive  
Cheyenne, Wyoming, 82001**

**PODER Academy Secondary School  
1100 Richardson Court  
Cheyenne, WY 82001**

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## **The Mission**

PODER Academy and PODER Academy Secondary School (P.A.S.S.) are public charter schools with one mission: To prepare students for college and beyond, through rigorous academic and athletic programs. We go above and beyond the traditional 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**

We believe the road begins well before graduation.

From day one, students will develop the work ethic and discipline needed to meet high expectations. We dismiss the notion that “college isn’t for everyone” and 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. All students have the potential to succeed with the right tools in place.

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**

Attendance is the most basic requirement for academic success. Parents are held accountable to adhere to the attendance policy in order to ensure that students are getting the classroom hours needed to succeed. Regular attendance is required and poor attendance will not be tolerated. It is a joint responsibility of both parents and students to ensure that school work is complete and submitted in a timely manner whether it is excused or unexcused.

Parents are expected to ensure that students are at school every day, on time, and in school issued uniforms. 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 21-4-101.

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

- 10 consecutive unexcused absences will lead to automatic disenrollment.
- 10 absences in a semester (per class), excused or unexcused, will potentially result in loss of credit or retention. Administration will discuss and then notify parents. Parents will have 10 days to appeal to the principal.
- When a student has missed 3 days of school, they may receive a warning from the office manager. 7 missed days may result in a call from the Principal. 9 missed days may result in an in-person meeting with the Principal and COO.

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.

### **Absences due to Suspension**

Suspensions should be extremely rare at PODER / 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. Students will receive a failing grade on all missed assignments during their suspension but are still required to complete the work.

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

Students are expected to stay in school until the end of the school day (4:00 for PODER and 4:10 P.M. for P.A.S.S. 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 Office Administrator/Principal will receive a call home to see if the issue can be resolved. If the issue persists, then the Office Manager reserves the right to mark any or all such early departures as an unexcused absence. Three early pick-ups, regardless of the reason, will result in an unexcused absence from that class. The latest for an early pick-up is 3:40 for PODER and for P.A.S.S. is 3:50. Any parents arriving after that must wait until dismissal.

### **Attendance Policy Procedure**

PODER / 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 Principal will schedule a conference with the parents to discuss attendance issues.

### **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 (5:00 P.M. for PODER and 5:10 P.M. for P.A.S.S.). Certain 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**

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 **7:50 A.M. and 8:20 A.M. for PODER and 7:50 A.M. and 8:10 A.M. for P.A.S.S.** every morning. Students arriving after these times will be considered tardy.

### **Consequences for Tardiness**

Every **three (3) excused or 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 parents 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.

### **Pick Up Policy**

If a parent or designated guardian has not arrived for pickup by 4:30 P.M. (12:30 P.M. on early dismissal days), the school reserves the right to arrange for transport to a waiting facility at the Sheriff's office.

### **After School Activities Pick Up Policy**

Parents are allowed a 10 minute window to pick up their student from dismissal. If they are late beyond that, they will be given a strike. Three strikes will result in their student being dismissed from the after-school activity for the rest of the school year. If a student is left at the school 20 minutes after dismissal, the sheriff will be called.

### **Homework**

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.**

### **Make-Up Work**

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 for any missed work. Students will be expected to attend lunch time detention until make-up work is complete.

In the event of a planned absence, parents should notify the front office/ Principal several days in advance so that they can prepare a work packet for the student to complete during the absence. Again, absences from school directly hurt a student's academic progress and should be limited to serious illness, family emergencies, and other unavoidable conflicts.

## **Cellphone Policy**

Students are not allowed to use cellphones 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 the school to issue a punishment. The school is not obligated to honor any such request.

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

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 PODER / P.A.S.S. *Student/Family contract*. The contract will outline the commitment 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:

- **The Knightly News:** The Knightly News will be emailed and posted on the Remind app and website every Thursday. 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 able to come to the school for conferences with their student's teachers. Parents will receive a Report Card at the conference. These are important opportunities for parents to learn about their student's progress and needs.
- **Behavior Alert / Academic Alert:** If your student is experiencing a behavior or academic problem, P.A.S.S. may email, meet in person, or call home. Parents will review the concerns expressed by staff members with their student, and may contact the school if they have any questions or wish to discuss the issue further.
- **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.
- **Facebook, Website, and Remind App:** The school has an active Facebook page that can be checked weekly for updates. We also have a Remind School app that parents can join by contacting the office managers. Please also check our school website for contact information and updates as well.

### **Grievance Policy**

Any parent or student with a grievance towards a staff member or another student should reach out and attempt to resolve the conflict directly with the other party. If the issue is still not resolved, any parent or student wishing to make a formal grievance about a procedure, action, or directive of another employee or supervisor should notify the Principal in writing, as soon as possible after the event giving rise to the complaint, and not more than five days after the issue first arose. The Principal will be the investigator and final arbiter of all such grievances and respond in writing in a timely manner. If the complaint involves a procedure, action, or directive of the Principal, a parent or student may file a written complaint with the COO or Office Administrator. In such instances, the COO and Office Administrator will jointly be the investigator and final arbiter of the complaint. A request for an appeal of the COO/Office Administrator's decision must be made in writing to the CEO within 5 days of receiving the written decision. If an additional request for an appeal is needed after the CEO's decision, an appeal needs to be sent to the Board of Directors within 5 days of receiving the written decision from the CEO. All personnel matters by the Board of Directors may be conducted in a closed executive session as set forth in the Open Meetings Act.

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

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

## **Student Discipline**

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 bathroom 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 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 state and federal guidelines.
- Students do not have an expectation of privacy with regard to their desks, and/or backpacks. Therefore, school officials reserve the right to search these areas should safety concerns arise, or suspicion of possession of prohibited items and/or substances.

## **Suspension / Expulsion**

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. Suspensions can be appealed through a formal written document to the COO within 24 hours of the suspension. Expulsions can be appealed through a formal written document to the CEO within 5 days of the expulsion. The parties may appeal the CEO's decisions to the Board of Trustees.

The Admin Team may suspend a student for one to ten days at their discretion. For a suspension exceeding ten school days or an expulsion of a student for a period not to exceed one year, students are 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 state and federal requirements are met prior to imposing the suspension or expulsion. The school will defer to State and Federal guidelines

and policies with regard to the procedure and specific provisions relevant to this policy.

### **Code of Conduct**

The following *Code of Conduct* will set forth, in explicit terms, the bounds of acceptable behavior at PODER / 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:**

- **Disrespectful and/or disruptive behavior will not be tolerated.**
- **Students shall not disrespect or damage school property.**
- **Students must arrive at school in school-issued uniform everyday.**
- **Students shall not arrive late to school.**
- **Chewing gum is not permitted on school grounds.**
- **Students may not eat or drink anything other than water during class, unless otherwise approved by school personnel.**
- **Students must surrender all cell phones, gaming devices, or any other electronic devices to the class lockbox/mailbox, unless otherwise approved by school personnel.**
- **Students must come prepared for class.**
- **Excessive horseplay, play-fighting, or inappropriate touching of other students is not permitted.**
- **The use of profane or otherwise inappropriate language will not be permitted.**
- **Stealing will not be permitted.**
- **Students are prohibited from leaving school grounds for any reason without adult supervision.**
- **Possession of weapons on school grounds will not be permitted.**
- **Fighting, violence, or threats of violence will not be permitted.**
- **Possession, use, or sale of any drugs, alcohol, tobacco, or illegal substance will not be permitted.**
- **Harassment of any form will not be permitted, including that of a racial or sexual nature.**
- **Students must attend any mandatory detention or make up for any time missed.**
- **Students will be held responsible for academic misconduct. This includes cheating off of another student or using AI to generate any part of an assignment. This could result in a student having to redo an assignment for partial credit or receiving a “zero” on the assignment.**

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, have an after school detention with their child, 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**

Hours of operation are from 8:00 A.M. until 4:00 P.M. for PODER and 8:10 A.M. until 4:10 P.M. for P.A.S.S., Monday through Friday. Students are required to arrive at school on time and to remain in school until dismissal. 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**

The school will keep a small lost and found box near the main office. Parents may come in any day between 9:00 A.M. and 3:00 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**

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**

PODER / P.A.S.S. will provide nursing services for students and will defer various low urgency issues to the front office manager 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. Students are not permitted to carry medications of any kind with the exception of an inhaler with a filled out form. Medications are not allowed on the bus and parents must bring them into the office. If a student has a medication on them not approved by the nurse and Admin Team, it

will be confiscated.

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

### **Parent Custody**

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, PODER / P.A.S.S. will assume that both parents, or those listed in Infinite Campus, 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.

Individuals not listed in the legal custody agreement but designated as pick-up or drop-off contacts in Infinite Campus are not authorized to access information about their significant other's child.

### **School Calendar / School Closings**

Please see the PODER / 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.

PODER / P.A.S.S. will follow Laramie County School District #1 with regard to school delays and closings. If the school determines it necessary to close for any other reasons, announcements will be sent out via Remind and Facebook. Parents may also email the Office Manager with any questions or concerns.

### **School Lunch Program**

Both breakfast and lunch will be available at PODER / 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. Go to [laramie1.org/nutritionservices](http://laramie1.org/nutritionservices) for more information.

Parents may also send lunch to school with their students. 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 LCSD1's website, [laramie1.org](http://laramie1.org).

### **School Visitor Policy**

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**. Therefore, they are generally not permitted. Parents who wish 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 check in at the Main Office and show a valid ID. 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.

PODER / 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 8:20 A.M. for PODER and 8:10 A.M. for P.A.S.S. during the week unless otherwise permitted by the Principal.

### **Student Records**

Student records are required in order to register with the school. 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 Office Manager. 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 staff for certain, specific uses without the consent of the student or parent.

Confidential Records: Confidential Records include birth certificates, 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**

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:

- **Uniforms unite PODER / 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.
- **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.
- **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.
- **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. Tennis shoes are required. Students who wear shorts or skirts are required to wear ankle high socks or black leggings at all times. Knee-high socks are prohibited.

If a student's uniform is not in acceptable condition, the principal will notify the parents to ensure a replacement is obtained. Every effort should be made to eliminate unnecessary accessories such as bracelets, earrings, necklaces, etc. because they get lost easily and create distraction. Non-school issued long sleeve shirts or hoodies may not be worn under or over the uniform unless permitted by the Principal. 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.

Parents may purchase all uniform items at the school office between the hours of 9:00 A.M. and 3:00 P.M. daily. Uniforms must be paid for by cash, check, or credit card. There is a **No Return** policy.

### **Board of Directors**

Members of the Board of Directors are voted on and approved by the current 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 6-8 weeks, 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.

### **Transportation**

Transportation will be provided for students in need via school bus through the Laramie 1 School District. Student riders must abide by all District and PODER/P.A.S.S. 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

that includes bus riders as well as students who are dropped off and picked up by parents and/or guardians. 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 buses are accounted for. Students who are not accounted for will remain on the bus and be dropped off with local law enforcement. Parents may fill out a walking waiver to allow their student to leave the bus at their bus stop and walk home on their own. Parents may also fill out a walking waiver to allow students to leave the school on their own.

### **School Supplies**

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)**

PODER / P.A.S.S. 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 / P.A.S.S. 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 / P.A.S.S. 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 basis:

- 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 / P.A.S.S. can be routed to either designated Title IX Coordinator listed below:

- **Title IX Coordinator:** COO
- **Designated Investigator:** Office and Building Administrator
- **Decision-Maker** - Principal of opposite school
- **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 / P.A.S.S. 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 / PASS will prohibit the offending employee(s) from any involvement with the school or may choose to terminate the contract.

### **Mandatory Reporting**

Under Wyoming law, any person who knows of, or has reasonable cause to suspect child abuse or neglect, or who observes any child being subjected to conditions or circumstances that would reasonably result in abuse or neglect, is required to report that abuse to the school social worker, or to a member of the Admin team, who will then make a report to the appropriate agency. The school is not required to notify parents when such a report is made.

## **Student / Family Contract**

PODER Academy / PODER Academy Secondary School (P.A.S.S.) are high performing college prep academies. They are also schools-of-choice with expectations that may differ from LCSD #1. 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 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 students 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 4:20 P.M. for PODER and 4:30 P.M. for P.A.S.S. (12:30 P.M. 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 PODER Academy and PASS. Phones must be checked in with their homeroom teacher 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.
- **Knightly News** – Parents often express frustration that they do not get information from the school that was actually sent home in the Knightly News. Therefore, parents must read the Knightly News which is emailed 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 with the exception of 11th through 12th grade students in academic and behavioral good standing. 11th through 12th grade students that return late 3 times may have this privilege revoked for the rest of the year by the principal.
- **Unruly parents** – Any parent who becomes aggressive, fails to follow the building rules, and/or poses any perceived danger as determined by the school's staff, may 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.
- **Class Novels** – Class novels are selected as part of our school curriculum to ensure state standards are being met. Parents are **NOT** allowed to opt their student out of a class novel and an alternative assignment will not be given.
- **After School Activity Pick Up** – Parents are allowed a 10 minute window to pick up their student from dismissal. If they are late beyond that, they will be given a strike. Three strikes will result in their student being dismissed from the after school activity for the rest of the school year. If a student is left at the school 20 minutes after dismissal, the sheriff will be called.

### **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. 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** – Students 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
- **Plagiarism and AI** – The first time a student is caught plagiarizing or using AI, they will be given a 0% on the assignment. They will be given an opportunity to redo the assignment for up to a 50%. The second time and every time after, the student will receive a 0%, will have no opportunity to redo the assignment, and may be subject to suspension or expulsion.

### **PODER / 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 PODER / P.A.S.S. is a safe environment for all students and other community members.
- The school will observe the Wyoming Mandatory Reporter policy.

### **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**