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PINEWOOD AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

## Parental Divorce Protocol

*Updated May 20, 2025*

This protocol supports teachers and parents at Pinewood to report effectively when there is a possibility or a fact of Parental Divorce. It clarifies which steps can be taken, both from parents and educators in response to a potential or existing Parental Divorce, as well as the support that the child will receive. Importance is given to establishing clear communication between home and school so children and their families are supported as necessary.

### **For teachers**

#### **Stage 1: Potential Parental Divorce**

Classroom should be a place where children will feel comfortable to talk about potential Parental Divorce and feel accepted and supported.

When a student shares feelings or facts about the family situation, respond in an accepting and acknowledging way. There is no need to offer advice or give solutions, but you can provide options of support, within the school setting.

Encourage the student to consult the School Psychologist.

Be alert to behavior changes, such as drop in grades, misbehaving, inattentiveness or sadness. Notify the School Psychologist in this case of unusual behavior.

#### **Stage 2: Existing Parental Divorce**

When a discussion on the history and present condition of families is initiated, teachers can demonstrate active listening and provide an empathic response, and should inform the School Psychologist on any information revealed by the child. The shared information must stay confidential among the school staff.

Be available in case there is a need for further communication. The student might exhibit emotional difficulties at any time, regarding this incident, since this is an ongoing process.

We recommend that during Parent/ Teacher Conferences, both parents attend together, if possible. In a different case, the school should offer the option of separate meetings for parents to receive information and support.

### **For parents**

The child needs to be informed by both parents regarding a potential divorce, and seek consultation to enhance the emotional support for the child. Honest and clear explanations on the reasons and procedures of a divorce are beneficial for the child.

The parent/guardian of each child has full responsibility for informing the school in writing of any change in circumstances at home e.g. separation, divorce, custody arrangement.

Minimize changes in the daily routine of the child and reassure a smooth adjustment to the new situation. The child should continue having responsibilities in the family, feel useful and an essential member of the family.



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Take care of your emotional well-being and balance, to cope with the changes and difficulties.

### **Stage 3: Support**

Both parents are supported to inform the child, in a collaborative discussion, in order to reduce the emotional distress of the child, if this is needed.

Honest explanations, using vocabulary and reasons that the child will understand, facilitate the healing process and alleviate the stress.

It is important that children are continually reassured that:

- Their parents both love them.
- They are not responsible for their parents' break-up.
- Everyone will work together to make the situation as painless and comfortable as possible.
- Their needs will be taken care of.
- It is normal to feel bad and upset about the situation, but there are people who will be there to help them through the difficult times.
- Their parents will be there to talk and listen to them about concerns and fears.

Minimize change within the child's life. It is helpful for parents to live relatively close together (preferably within the same community), not to change schools, and the custodial parent to maximize access that the children have with the other parent.

### Practical Recommendations and Interventions:

- Keep your commitments and promises. Do not make promises you cannot keep.
- Give children appropriate responsibilities and chores to help them feel an essential part of the family. Everyone in the family should have responsibilities. Assign chores that are developmentally appropriate and expect children to accept responsibility and follow through.
- Talk with your children about their future. Include them in plans for the family.
- As much as possible, limit the financial loss to the custodial parent and don't concern the child with financial difficulties.
- Take care of your own emotional well-being. Children adjust better to divorce when their parents cope well.
- Permit children to remain children and not become miniature adults. Resist the temptation of having them become "the man of the family" or "the big sister" for everyone else.
- Parents can arrange post-divorce circumstances in such a way as to greatly enhance children's long-term adjustment by implementing the following:
  - maintaining consistency between parents with respect to child-rearing practices.
  - frequent and reliable visitation with the non-custodial parent and parent's family.
  - an emotional climate that permits child and family discussion of divorce-related issues and concerns.
  - avoid comparing households.
  - minimize hostility and conflict between the parents.
- Avoid using children as messengers between partners or as "investigators" into the life of the other spouse.
- Avoid conflicts and put-downs with your ex-spouse in view of the children.



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Below are some suggestions that middle-school students made to their parents about handling divorce:

- Don't have arguments with your ex and then take it out on your kid.
- Do more things with me.
- Spend more time with me.
- When you get remarried, don't forget I'm still here.
- Don't put bad ideas into my head about dad/mom.
- Don't put me in the middle.
- Don't tell me things that you don't want my mom/dad to know.
- Don't leave me alone.
- Don't play favorites.
- Don't influence my decision about who to live with.
- Don't put me on a guilt trip: "If you leave you can't come back!"