



Parental Divorce Protocol

Supporting Every Learner.
Empowering Every Potential.



SUPPORT



EQUITY



GROWTH



WELL-BEING



Middle States
Association



PINEWOOD AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

Parental Divorce Protocol

This protocol supports teachers and parents at Pinewood to communicate and collaborate 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.

Family separation or divorce may temporarily affect a student's academic performance, concentration, motivation, attendance, organization, or peer relationships. Some students may appear distracted, tired, withdrawn, irritable, or less engaged in learning.

Teachers are encouraged to monitor changes with sensitivity and avoid making assumptions. When concerns persist, staff should consult with the School Psychologist and relevant school leadership so that appropriate support can be considered.

For teachers

Stage 1: Potential Parental Divorce

The classroom should be a place where children 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. Consult with the School Psychologist in case unusual behavior is noticed, since additional support may be beneficial.

In regards to psychological support, school-based support can be offered on a need-based frequency; however, when family therapy is required, external referral will be made.

Stage 2: Existing Parental Divorce

When a discussion on the history and present condition of families is initiated, teachers can demonstrate active listening, provide an empathic response, and should inform the School Psychologist on any information revealed by the child. Information should be handled sensitively and shared only with relevant staff members on a need-to-know basis.



Middle States
Association



PINEWOOD AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

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.

In this case, when communication is sent home, emails should include both parents, unless guided otherwise by administration. We recommend that during Parent/ Teacher Conferences, both parents attend together, if possible. The school should offer the option of separate meetings for parents to receive information and support.

In regards to psychological support, school-based support can be offered on a need-based frequency; however, when family therapy is required, external referral will be made.

For parents

The child needs to be informed by both parents regarding family separation concerns/family changes, 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. Children may respond differently to family separation depending on age, personality, previous experiences, family dynamics, and cultural background.

Both parents/ guardians of each child have full responsibility to inform 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.

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.

Age-appropriate, honest and reassuring communication facilitates the healing process and alleviates the stress.

Support at school may include:

- brief emotional check-ins;
- temporary flexibility with workload or deadlines;
- communication with parents/caregivers;
- collaboration between teachers and the School Psychologist;
- referral to external support when needed.



Middle States
Association



PINEWOOD AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

It is important that children are continually reassured from parents that:

- Both parents 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. Consistency, predictability, and ongoing access to supportive relationships can help reduce stress for children during periods of family transition.

Supporting Stability at Home

During family separation or divorce, children benefit from consistency, reassurance, and reduced exposure to adult conflict. Parents/caregivers are encouraged to maintain predictable routines where possible, communicate calmly and age-appropriately, and avoid placing the child in the middle of adult disagreements.

Helpful practices may include:

- Maintaining consistent expectations across homes where possible
- keeping school routines stable
- avoiding negative comments about the other parent/caregiver in front of the child
- not using the child as a messenger between adults
- reassuring the child that they are loved and not responsible for the separation
- encouraging open, age-appropriate conversations about feelings and concerns.

Students' Suggestions

What Children Often Need During Family Separation:

Children and adolescents often benefit from clear reassurance, emotional availability, and protection from adult conflict. They may need adults to:

- reassure them that they are loved by both parents/caregivers
- remind them that the separation is not their fault
- avoid asking them to take sides
- avoid involving them in adult disagreements or private information
- spend meaningful time with them
- listen without pressuring them to talk
- support their relationship with both parents/caregivers where safe and appropriate
- keep routines as predictable as possible.