Bridging Horizons Academy
Ethics in Education Policies and Procedures

1. Purpose

Bridging Horizons Academy is committed to providing a safe, respectful, ethical, and nurturing educational environment for all students. Our school expects all instructional personnel, school administrators, employees, volunteers, and contracted personnel to conduct themselves with professionalism, integrity, accountability, and respect for the dignity and well-being of every child.

These policies are established to promote ethical conduct, protect students, comply with applicable Florida laws and scholarship program requirements, and support the mission of Bridging Horizons Academy.

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2. Standards of Ethical Conduct

All employees, instructional personnel, school administrators, volunteers, and contractors of Bridging Horizons Academy are expected to:

1. Make the safety, welfare, dignity, and best interest of students the highest priority.
2. Maintain professional boundaries with students at all times.
3. Treat students, families, staff, and community members with respect, fairness, and compassion.
4. Avoid any behavior that could be considered abusive, neglectful, exploitative, discriminatory, intimidating, inappropriate, or harmful.
5. Use professional language and respectful communication with students, families, and coworkers.
6. Maintain confidentiality of student and family information, except when disclosure is required by law or necessary to protect a student.
7. Avoid conflicts of interest or the appearance of unethical conduct.
8. Report suspected child abuse, abandonment, neglect, or misconduct as required by law.
9. Cooperate fully with investigations involving student safety, employee conduct, or school compliance.
10. Model honesty, integrity, responsibility, service, inclusion, and respect in all professional interactions.

3. Professional Boundaries with Students

Employees, instructional personnel, administrators, volunteers, and contractors must maintain appropriate adult-student boundaries.

Staff may not:

1. Engage in inappropriate physical contact with students.
2. Communicate privately with students in a way that is secretive, personal, romantic, sexual, threatening, or unrelated to school purposes.
3. Give gifts, favors, money, or special privileges to individual students in a way that creates favoritism or dependency.
4. Meet with students privately outside of school activities without parent/guardian knowledge and administrative approval.
5. Transport students alone unless specifically authorized by the school and parent/guardian.
6. Use social media or personal communication platforms to develop inappropriate personal relationships with students.
7. Engage in any behavior that could affect the health, safety, or welfare of a student.

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4. Duty to Report Misconduct

All employees, instructional personnel, administrators, volunteers, and contractors have a duty to report alleged misconduct by any instructional personnel, educational support employee, school administrator, volunteer, contractor, or any other adult when the misconduct affects the health, safety, or welfare of a student.

Examples of reportable misconduct include, but are not limited to:

1. Physical abuse or inappropriate physical contact.
2. Sexual misconduct or inappropriate sexual comments.
3. Emotional abuse, humiliation, intimidation, or threats.
4. Neglect of student supervision or safety.
5. Inappropriate communication with students.
6. Discrimination, harassment, or retaliation.
7. Substance use or impairment while supervising students.
8. Any behavior that places a student at risk of harm.

5. Reporting Procedures

Any employee, volunteer, contractor, parent, student, or community member who becomes aware of suspected misconduct must report the concern immediately.

Reports may be made to:

School Administrator:
Bridging Horizons Academy
321-588-7276
info@bridginghorizonsacademy.com

If the concern involves the school administrator or leadership, the report should be made directly to the appropriate outside agency, including the Florida Department of Education, law enforcement, or the Florida Abuse Hotline when applicable.

Reports involving suspected child abuse, abandonment, or neglect must be reported immediately to the Florida Abuse Hotline:

Florida Abuse Hotline:
1-800-962-2873
Online reporting: Florida Department of Children and Families Abuse Reporting Portal

Failure to report suspected abuse, neglect, abandonment, or misconduct may result in disciplinary action, including termination.

Florida compliance materials require schools to have a duty-to-report policy and procedures for reporting alleged misconduct affecting the health, safety, or welfare of a student.

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6. Protection from Retaliation

Bridging Horizons Academy prohibits retaliation against any person who makes a good faith report of suspected misconduct, child abuse, neglect, abandonment, safety concerns, or ethical violations.

No employee, parent, student, volunteer, or contractor will be punished, threatened, intimidated, dismissed, or discriminated against for making a good faith report.

7. Liability Protections

Individuals who report suspected child abuse, abandonment, or neglect in good faith are provided protections under Florida law. Individuals who report misconduct in good faith may also be protected from civil liability when the report is made appropriately and without malicious intent.

Bridging Horizons Academy encourages immediate reporting of concerns to protect the health, safety, and welfare of students.

Florida's compliance form specifically asks schools to include an explanation of liability protections under sections 39.203 and 768.095, Florida Statutes.

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8. Employment Screening and Background Checks

Before hiring or engaging any person in a position that allows direct contact with students, Bridging Horizons Academy will conduct required employment screening, including:

1. Level 2 background screening when applicable.
2. Review of employment history.
3. Contact with previous employers when required.
4. Use of educator screening tools when applicable.
5. Documentation of screening findings.
6. Verification that the individual is eligible to work in a position with direct student contact.

The school will not knowingly employ or continue to employ any individual who is legally disqualified from employment in a position involving direct student contact.

Florida School Choice compliance materials require participating private schools to conduct employment history checks and screen employees before placing them in positions with direct student contact.

9. Prohibited Employment

Bridging Horizons Academy prohibits employment of any person who:

1. Has had an educator certificate revoked.
2. Is barred from reapplying for an educator certificate.
3. Is listed on the disqualification list maintained by the Florida Department of Education.
4. Is ineligible for employment under applicable Florida law.
5. Has been terminated or resigned in lieu of termination for sexual misconduct with a student.
6. Has engaged in misconduct that affects the health, safety, or welfare of a student.

Florida's scholarship compliance materials specifically require private schools to prohibit employment of individuals with revoked certificates, disqualification status, or certain misconduct histories.

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10. Prohibition on Confidentiality Agreements Related to Misconduct

Bridging Horizons Academy will not enter into confidentiality agreements that conceal misconduct by instructional personnel, school administrators, educational support employees, volunteers, or contractors when the misconduct affects the health, safety, or welfare of a student.

The school will not provide employment references that omit known misconduct when disclosure is required by law.

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11. Training and Acknowledgment

All employees, instructional personnel, administrators, volunteers, and contractors must review this Ethics in Education Policies and Procedures document.

Each staff member must sign an acknowledgment confirming that they:

1. Received the policy.
2. Understand the standards of ethical conduct.
3. Understand their duty to report misconduct.
4. Understand their duty to report suspected child abuse, neglect, or abandonment.
5. Agree to follow all ethics, safety, and professional conduct expectations of Bridging Horizons Academy.

12. Consequences for Violations

Violations of this policy may result in disciplinary action, including but not limited to:

1. Verbal or written warning.
2. Suspension from duties.
3. Removal from student contact.
4. Termination of employment or contract.
5. Report to the Florida Department of Education.
6. Report to law enforcement or child protective services when required.

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13. Annual Review

Bridging Horizons Academy will review this Ethics in Education Policies and Procedures document annually and update it as needed to remain aligned with Florida law, scholarship program requirements, and school safety practices.

Staff Acknowledgment

I acknowledge that I have received, read, and understand the Ethics in Education Policies and Procedures of Bridging Horizons Academy. I understand my responsibility to maintain ethical conduct, protect student safety, report suspected misconduct, and comply with all applicable school policies and legal requirements.

Employee Name: _____

Position: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____