

Walden Academy Policy and Procedure Manual

Chapter 3000, Business and Non-Instructional Operations

Section 351 – Student Safety, Professional Boundaries, Child Abuse Prevention, and Employee Conduct Policy (SB 848 Compliant)

Responsible Department: Administration and Human Resources

Date Adopted: 6/30/2026

Amended:

Purpose

Walden Academy is committed to maintaining a safe, supportive, and respectful educational environment in which students are protected from abuse, neglect, exploitation, grooming, harassment, discrimination, and other misconduct. This policy establishes standards regarding professional boundaries, electronic communications, supervision practices, child abuse prevention and reporting, and annual training requirements consistent with California law, including Senate Bill 848, the Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Act (CANRA), applicable Education Code provisions, and best practices for student safety.

Definitions

Child Abuse

Includes physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, emotional abuse, exploitation, human trafficking, and any conduct defined as abuse under California law.

Grooming

A pattern of behavior used by an individual to establish trust, emotional connection, dependency, secrecy, or inappropriate access to a student for the purpose of abuse, exploitation, or misconduct.

Professional Boundaries

Limits that protect the student-adult relationship and ensure interactions remain educational, appropriate, and free from favoritism, exploitation, abuse, or the appearance of impropriety.

Electronic Communication

Email, text messages, social media interactions, messaging applications, learning management systems, video conferencing, and any other digital communication method.

School Personnel

Employees, volunteers, board members, contractors, consultants, interns, student teachers, coaches, and any individual acting on behalf of Walden Academy.

Professional Boundaries and Appropriate Relationships

All school personnel shall maintain professional relationships with students at all times.

Personnel shall:

- Serve as positive role models.
- Treat students equitably and fairly.
- Maintain appropriate emotional and physical boundaries.
- Avoid situations that create actual or perceived favoritism.
- Maintain relationships that are educational and school-related in nature.
- Promote student safety and well-being.

Personnel shall not:

- Engage in romantic, sexual, or flirtatious conduct with students.
- Develop exclusive or secretive relationships with students.
- Request students keep information from parents or school staff.
- Share personal, intimate, or adult matters with students.
- Give gifts, money, or special privileges to individual students without administrative approval.
- Use students to meet personal emotional needs.
- Meet students off-campus without authorization.
- Engage in conduct that may reasonably be interpreted as grooming.
- Communicate with students through unauthorized communication methods.
- Provide transportation to students in personal vehicles without prior approval.

Electronic Communications with Students

Electronic communications shall support educational purposes while maintaining transparency and professional boundaries.

Approved methods include:

- School email accounts.
- School-approved messaging systems.
- School-approved learning management platforms.

- School-approved communication applications.

Communications shall:

- Be educational or school-related.
- Maintain a professional tone.
- Occur during reasonable hours whenever possible.
- Be accessible to parents and administrators when appropriate.
- Comply with student privacy laws.

Personnel shall not:

- Use personal social media accounts to communicate with currently enrolled students.
- Use disappearing-message applications.
- Exchange personal photographs unrelated to school activities.
- Engage in private communications unrelated to educational purposes.
- Encourage students to conceal communications from parents or school staff.

Walden Academy reserves the right to monitor communications conducted through school-owned systems.

Student Safety, Facilities, and Supervision Plan

Walden Academy shall maintain facilities and supervision procedures designed to minimize opportunities for abuse, misconduct, neglect, and inappropriate adult-student interactions.

Visibility Standards

Whenever possible:

- Classroom doors shall remain unlocked during instructional periods.
- Classroom windows shall remain unobstructed.
- Meetings with students shall occur in visible locations.
- Offices used for student meetings shall maintain visibility from common areas.

One-on-One Interactions

When one-on-one interactions are necessary:

- Interactions shall occur in observable locations.
- Another adult should be nearby whenever practicable.

- The purpose shall be educational, behavioral, counseling-related, or safety-related.

Student Supervision

Personnel shall actively supervise:

- Classrooms
- Hallways
- Playgrounds
- Arrival and dismissal areas
- Cafeteria areas
- School-sponsored activities
- Field trips

Restrooms and Changing Areas

Personnel shall respect student privacy while maintaining reasonable supervision of common areas.

Staff shall enter student restrooms or changing areas only when necessary for safety, health, emergency, or supervision concerns.

Transportation

Employees shall not transport students in personal vehicles unless specifically authorized by administration and parent permission has been obtained.

Annual Facilities Review

The Superintendent or designee shall annually review:

- Visibility of instructional spaces
- Supervision practices
- Incident reports
- Safety concerns
- Areas of potential risk

Child Abuse Prevention and Reporting

Walden Academy shall maintain procedures designed to prevent child abuse and ensure compliance with all mandated reporter requirements.

Mandated Reporters

Employees designated as mandated reporters shall:

- Complete required training.
- Immediately report suspected abuse.
- Follow all statutory reporting timelines.
- Cooperate with investigations conducted by authorized agencies.

Reportable Conduct

Includes suspected:

- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Neglect
- Exploitation
- Human trafficking
- Grooming behaviors
- Any other form of child abuse defined by law

Reporting Procedures

Employees shall immediately contact the appropriate child protective agency or law enforcement agency whenever abuse is suspected.

Employees shall not:

- Conduct independent investigations.
- Delay reporting.
- Seek administrative approval before making a report.
- Notify parents before making a report.

Following a mandated report, employees should notify the Superintendent or designee unless doing so could compromise student safety.

Non-Retaliation

No employee shall be retaliated against for making a good-faith report of suspected abuse.

Annual Training Requirements

Walden Academy shall provide annual training regarding:

- Child abuse prevention
- Child abuse reporting obligations
- Professional boundaries
- Grooming awareness
- Student supervision expectations
- Electronic communications with students
- Sexual harassment prevention
- Student safety procedures

New employees shall complete required training within six weeks of employment.

Volunteers who regularly interact with students shall receive training appropriate to their role.

Annual Training Verification Procedure

The Superintendent or designee shall maintain documentation demonstrating compliance with all training requirements.

Documentation shall include:

Employee Records

- Vector/SafeSchools completion certificates
- Mandated reporter certificates
- Professional boundaries training records
- Sexual harassment training records

School Records

- Training agendas
- Presentation materials
- Staff sign-in sheets
- Employee acknowledgements
- Board-approved policies

Record Retention

Training documentation shall be retained in personnel files and maintained in accordance with applicable record retention requirements.

Responsibilities

Board of Directors

The Board shall:

- Adopt and periodically review this policy.
- Support implementation of student safety measures.
- Ensure resources are available for compliance.

Superintendent or Designee

The Superintendent or designee shall:

- Implement this policy.
- Coordinate annual training.
- Investigate policy violations.
- Maintain compliance records.
- Conduct annual safety reviews.

Employees

Employees shall:

- Maintain professional boundaries.
- Complete required training.
- Report suspected abuse.
- Follow supervision requirements.
- Comply with all provisions of this policy.
- Sign an SB 848 Compliance Agreement