Forest Ranch Charter School

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Board Policy – Whistleblowers

1. **Purpose**
    a. Forest Ranch Charter School is committed to lawful and ethical behavior in all of its activities and requires board members, executives, directors and employees to act in accordance with all applicable laws, regulations, and policies. High standards of business and personal ethics should be observed and modeled for students in the conduct of all duties and responsibilities.
2. **Objective**
    a. The objectives of the Forest Ranch Charter School Whistleblower Policy are to establish policies and procedures to:
        i. Prevent or detect and correct improper activities;
        ii. Encourage each board member, executive, director and employee (reporting individual) to report what he or she in good faith believes to be a material violation of law or policy or questionable accounting or auditing matter by Forest Ranch Charter School;
        iii. Ensure the receipt, documentation, retention of records, and resolution of reports received under this policy protecting reporting individuals from retaliatory action.
3. **Reporting Responsibility**
    a. Each individual has an obligation to report what he or she believes is a material violation of law or policy or any questionable accounting or auditing matter by the school, its officers, directors, executives, employees or other representatives. Reporters must also notify the school if an action needs to be taken in order for the school to be in compliance with laws or policies or with generally accepted accounting practices. The types of concerns that should be reported include, but are not limited to, the following:
        i. Providing false or misleading information on school financial documents, grant reports, tax returns, or other public documents;
        ii. Providing false information to or withholding material information from the school auditors, accountants, lawyers, directors, or other representatives responsible for ensuring compliance with fiscal and legal responsibilities;
        iii. Embezzlement, private benefit, or misappropriation of funds;
        iv. Material violation of school policy, including among others, confidentiality, conflict of interest, whistleblower, ethics and document retention;
        v. Discrimination based on race, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity or disability;
        vi. Facilitation or concealing any of the above or similar actions.

4. Reporting Concerns

a. Whenever possible, school employees should seek to resolve concerns by reporting issues directly to their supervisor or to the next level of supervisor as needed until matters are satisfactorily resolved. However, if for any reason an employee is not comfortable speaking to a supervisor or does not believe the issue is being properly addressed, the employee may contact the Human Resources Manager or the Executive Director. If an employee does not believe these channels of communication can or should be used then the employee should contact the Board Chair of Forest Ranch Charter School. If this is not a possibility we highly encourage the reporting individual to contact the third party administered "Fraud Hotline."

b. The Fraud Hotline specializes in forensic auditing, fraud examination and asset misappropriation when and if these matters are in question. We encourage any school employee with serious concerns of violation of law or policies to follow the steps below:

   i. Contact the Fraud Hotline by email at www.report-fraud.com. The website will walk you through the reporting process as well as allow you to upload or attach any documents, pictures or other evidence you may have.

   ii. Contact the Fraud Hotline by phone at 1-877-637-2830. The toll free hotline number will connect you directly to a private voicemail where you will be asked to provide as much information as you can. This number is monitored by an external fraud examiner who is not employed by the school.

c. Please be aware that the website and telephone call are 100% confidential. At no time will any information that personally identifies you be released to anyone, without your authorized approval. We encourage you to feel confident that you may use either or both reporting methods depending on your comfort level.

5. Handling of Reporting Violations

a. Forest Ranch Charter School will investigate all reports filed in accordance with this policy with due care and promptness. Matters reported internally without initial resolution will be investigated by the Executive Director or the HR Manager to determine if the allegations are true, whether the issue is material and what actions, if any, are necessary to correct the problem. The school staff will issue a full report of all matters raised under this policy to the Governing Board. The Governing Board may conduct a further investigation upon receiving the report from the Executive Director.

b. For matters reported directly to the Board Chair, the Governing Board shall promptly (generally within five business days) acknowledge receipt of the complaint to the complainant if the identity of the complainant is known and conduct an investigation to determine if the allegations are true and whether the issue is material and what, if any, corrective action is necessary. Upon the conclusion of this investigation, the Governing Board shall promptly report its findings to all pertinent parties. For those matters reported to the Fraud Hotline, an independent examiner will evaluate the information given and contact the school's designated person where a course of action will be determined.

6. Authority of Investigative Parties

a. The Investigative Parties (Executive Officer, Human Resources Manager or Governing Board) shall have full authority to investigate concerns raised in accordance with this policy and may retain outside legal counsel, accountants, private investigators, or any other resource that is necessary to conduct a full and complete investigation of the allegations.

7. No Retaliation

a. This Whistleblower Policy is intended to encourage and enable executives, directors, and employees to raise serious concerns within the organization for investigation and appropriate action. With this goal in mind, no executive, director, or employee who, in good faith, reports a concern shall be threatened, discriminated against or otherwise subject to retaliation or, in the case of an employee, adverse employment consequences as a result of such report. Moreover, an employee who retaliates against someone who has reported a concern in good faith is subject to discipline up to and including termination of employment.

8. Acting in Good Faith

a. Anyone reporting a concern must act in good faith and have reasonable grounds for believing the matter raised is a serious violation of law or policy or a material accounting or auditing matter. The act of making allegations that prove to be unsubstantiated, and that prove to have been made maliciously, recklessly, with gross negligence, or with the foreknowledge that the allegations are false, will be viewed as a serious disciplinary offense and may result in discipline, up to and including termination of employment. Depending on the circumstances, such conduct may also give rise to other actions, including civil or criminal lawsuits.

9. Confidentiality

a. Reports of concerns, and investigations pertaining thereto, shall be kept confidential to the extent possible. However, consistent with the need to conduct an adequate investigation, the school cannot guarantee complete confidentiality. Disclosure of information relating to an investigation under this policy by staff, directors, or others involved with the investigation of the school to individuals not involved in the investigation will be viewed as a serious disciplinary offense and, with respect to school employees, may result in discipline, up to and including termination of employment. Depending on the circumstances, such conduct may also give rise to other actions, including civil or criminal lawsuits.

10. Adoption

a. This board policy was originally adopted by the Forest Ranch Charter School governing board on May 19, 2009.

b. This board policy was recently reviewed by the Forest Ranch Charter School governing board on November 17, 2020.

c. The next annual review will occur on or before November 17, 2021.