



Palmetto Achievement Center for Excellence Academy

Attendance/Truancy Policy 2023-2024

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PACE does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, religion, or immigrant status in its programs and activities and provides equal access to the Boy Scouts and other designated youth groups. The following persons have been designated to handle the nondiscrimination policies. For questions pertaining to Section 504, contact Melissa, and for questions pertaining to Title IX, contact Dr. Melanie Vaughn at 803-251-9138.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this attendance policy is to formally establish guidelines regarding student attendance at PACE Academy. The PACE School Board believes that regular school attendance and participation will allow students to not only progress academically but will allow them to grow socially and emotionally in the areas of the three pillars as designated in our mission statement.

According to South Carolina State Law, [SECTION 59-65-10](#), all children between the ages of five and seventeen years of age shall be required to attend a public or private school, or be enrolled in a home school association.

The school year consists of 180 days of instruction. High school students will need to attend 170 days for a yearlong course, or 85 days out of a 90 day semester course to earn full course credit.

REFERENCES:

South Carolina State Board of Education Regulations
[R-43-274](#) - Student attendance

South Carolina Laws, Section 59

[Section 59-5-65\(4\)](#) - Powers and responsibilities of state board of education.

[Section 59-65-10](#) - Compulsory attendance age group in South Carolina includes children ages five through 17; guardians may waive compulsory kindergarten attendance requirement.

[Section 59-35-10](#) - Each district to provide a kindergarten program.

[Section 59-63-20\(3\)](#) - Entrance age for kindergarten program.

[Section 59-63-20\(4\)](#) - Entrance age for first grade.

[Section 59-63-20\(6\)](#) - Four-year-olds may attend optional child development programs.

STUDENT ABSENCES and EXCUSES

South Carolina State Board of Education Regulations

[R-43-274](#) - Student attendance

According to South Carolina State Law, students aged 5-17 are required to attend school. An Attendance Intervention Plan must be completed by a school representative for students who have missed 3 consecutive or 5 unlawful/unexcused school days. This Intervention Plan meeting is held with the student, parent/guardian, and school representatives. This is an intervention on the school level to address the issues that have prevented the student(s) from not attending school as required by law.

If a student accumulates ten (10) or more unexcused absences, then State Law allows legal action to be taken against the parent or guardian through a Family Court referral or even investigation by the SC Department of Social Services. It is important for guardians, guardians and custodians

to remember that written notes are needed to excuse an absence for reasons listed in the student handbook under excused absences. This note must be received by the school within 72 hours of the absence.

From SC State Law R-43-274:

Absences

Lawful Absences

Lawful absences include but are not limited to:

- absences caused by a student's own illness and whose attendance in school would endanger his/her health or the health of others,
- absences due to an illness or death in the student's immediate family,
- absences due to a recognized religious holiday of the student's faith, and
- absences due to activities that are approved in advance by the Executive Director.

Unlawful absences

- absences of a student without the knowledge of his or her guardians, or
- absences of a student without acceptable cause with the knowledge of his or her guardians.
- Suspension is not to be counted as an unlawful absence for truancy purposes.

TRUANCY

Truant - A child ages 6 to 17 years meets the definition of a truant when the child has three consecutive unlawful absences or a total of five unlawful absences.

Habitual Truant - A "habitual" truant is a child age 12 to 17 years who fails to comply with the intervention plan developed by the school, the child, and the parent(s) or guardian(s) and who accumulates two or more additional unlawful absences. This child may need court intervention and an initial truancy petition may be filed. The written intervention plan, and documentation of non-compliance, must be attached to the truancy petition asking for court intervention.

Chronic Truant - A "chronic" truant is a child ages 12 to 17 years who has been through the school intervention process, has reached the level of a "habitual" truant, has been referred to Family Court and placed on an order to attend school, and continues to accumulate unlawful absences. Should other community alternatives and referrals fail to remedy the attendance problem, the "chronic" truant may be referred to the Family Court for violation of a previous court order. All school intervention plans existing to this point for this child and family must accompany the Contempt of Court petition as well as a written recommendation from the school to the court on action the court should take.

INTERVENTION PLANS

After three consecutive unlawful absences or total of five unlawful absences occur, school officials will do the following.

- Immediately intervene by identifying the reasons for the student's continued absences and develop a plan in conjunction with the legal guardian to improve future attendance. Every reasonable effort will be made to meet with the legal guardian to identify the reasons for the continued absence, including phone calls, written messages, and home visits, both during and after normal business hours.

- Hold a conference with the legal guardian for the purpose of improving the student's attendance. This conference will be documented on an approved intervention plan form and will include but is not limited to the following:
 - Reasons for the unlawful absences.
 - Actions to be taken by the parent/legal guardian and student to resolve the cause of the unlawful absences.
 - Documentation of referrals to appropriate service providers and if available, alternative school and community-based programs.
 - Actions to be taken by school personnel.
 - Actions to be taken in the event unlawful absences continue.
 - Signature of the parent/legal guardian or evidence that attempts were made to involve the parent/legal guardian.
 - Signature of all school personnel that have been involved in developing the plan.
 - Results of the actions taken by the parent/legal guardian and school personnel.
 - Addendum to the plans as needed.
 - Guidelines for making revisions to the plan.

If the student continues to accrue unlawful absences after the intervention plan is completed, the student will be reported to South Carolina Department of Social Services and/or Richland County Solicitor for staffing at Family Court. PACE administration will refer guardians/legal guardians of students who are aged 5 through 16 years of age to family court only after an intervention plan has been completed and the student accumulates two additional unlawful absences. Students and/or parent/legal guardians who are already under a school attendance order will also be referred to family court only after an intervention plan is completed. Included documentation reported to DSS or the courts will include a copy of the intervention plan, attendance printout, student demographics information, contact numbers and any documentation of efforts taken by the school to involve the student and/or his/her parent/legal guardian.

A family will not be referred to family court to be placed under an order to attend school prior to the written intervention planning being completed with PACE and the legal guardian. Should the legal guardian refuse to cooperate with the intervention planning to remedy the attendance

problem, PACE has the authority to refer the student to family court in accordance with [S.C. Code 59-65-50](#).

After 10 lawful absences, unlawful absences or a combination of the two, the administration of the school will approve or disapprove each succeeding absence. A medical note will be required to assist the administration in making that decision. The Executive Director may decide to not include those absences that are medically excused as a part of the 10 total absences provided the medical excuses are not deemed excessive (less than 10).

TARDINESS

Tardiness and excessive early dismissals have a negative impact on a student's education and can be disruptive to that of the student's classmates when a student interrupts instruction. Guardians should make an effort to ensure that a student arrives on time to class and is ready to participate. Unexcused tardies will be addressed in an Attendance Intervention Plan and may result in a referral to the District Attendance Office and/or Family Court.

Lawful Tardies: In order for a tardy to be excused, written documentation must be provided.

1. Illness on part of the student with written medical excuse
2. Emergency and/or hardships at the discretion of the Executive Director
3. Doctor or Dentist appointment
4. Teacher, Guidance or Administrator Conference

Unlawful Tardies: Three written parent excuses for any reason or combination of reasons will be accepted per semester. Any additional excuses must be official written medical excuses etc. or will be considered unlawful.

1. Illness on part of the student without a written medical excuse
2. Oversleeping, traffic, carpool trouble or other "personal reasons"
3. Car trouble

To support the goal of the Compulsory School Attendance Law and decrease a possible referral to the Family Court, PACE shall implement the following actions:

- Upon 3rd unlawful Absence/Tardy/Early Dismissal: 1st Truancy Notification Letter
- Upon 5th unlawful Absence/Tardy/Early Dismissal: 2nd Truancy Notification Letter
- Upon 7th unlawful Absence/Tardy/Early Dismissal: Truancy Plan with Chief Business Officer
- Upon 10th unlawful Absence/Tardy/Early Dismissal: Final Truancy Notification Letter
- Upon 11th unlawful Absence/Tardy/Early Dismissal: Referral to SC DSS and/or Family Court

SIGNING IN/OUT:

Once on school property during normal school hours, students may not leave school grounds unless properly signed out by a parent or legal guardian.

Signing In:

Students arriving at school late must sign in at the attendance office. Only students who have a professional excuse (doctor, dentist, attorney, court, etc.) will be allowed to receive an excused permit to class. All other students who are tardy will receive a tardy pass.

Signing Out:

Students are never allowed to leave school during the school day unless personal contact is made with a parent or guardian. When the student brings a written note to the attendance office, the attendance office will contact the parent or guardian to verify the information. If a parent or guardian cannot be reached, the student cannot sign out. This includes all students, even those aged 17 and older. Students are not permitted to leave for lunch.

SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

Suspension - In-school suspensions will not count as absences. Out-of-school suspensions will count as lawful absences.

Dental/Medical/Mental Health Appointments - Students who require routine periodic visits to their health care provider should schedule their appointments at other than instructional time. If such visits are required during the school day, they will be scheduled at varying times. Lawful absences for these purposes are not to exceed five during the school year. Guardians will make every effort to submit an excuse from the provider's office if the student is seen during the school day.

Make-up work - Students will be given the opportunity to make-up any work missed during an absence as long as the student makes appropriate arrangements with the teacher. The student will have the same number of days missed due to absence to make up any missing work, unless extra time is granted by the student's teacher(s).

Chronic or extended illness - This requires certification of the illness from the physician or other healthcare provider. Guardians/Legal guardians who anticipate a student's absence of more than five consecutive days due to an extended health problem should apply immediately for homebound instruction by calling the school guidance office. A child is not counted as absent if the homebound is approved and the student receives instruction for each day approved. PACE administration will be responsible for implementing and expediting the homebound program for students experiencing a prolonged illness or injury requiring them to be absent from school.

Bereavement

Due to unfortunate circumstances, students may experience the loss of a family member or relative. The school understands the need for students to be present for the family and might need to miss school. The student will be responsible for the work missed during these absences. As a school we can approve following absences as "*bereavement*" if the student or parent submits a copy of the obituary or funeral program. PACE can approve *up to 3* Bereavement days if the funeral is local and *up to 5* Bereavement days for out of state.