



**Public Charter  
SCHOOL DISTRICT**

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November 29, 2023

**Via Email Mail**

Mrs. Melissa Rabon  
Executive Director  
Palmetto Achievement Center for Excellence  
6015 North Main Street  
Columbia, SC 29203

**RE: Letter of Good Standing/Charter Accountability**

Dear Mrs. Rabon:

The purpose of this correspondence is to clarify charter accountability requirements, which are different than traditional public schools, and to comment on Palmetto Achievement Center for Excellence (PACE) and the status of its performance and operation under the South Carolina Charter Act (The Act), SC Code Ann. §59-40 et. seq.

Under The Act, public charter schools are relieved of numerous state requirements to allow and encourage autonomy, innovation, and flexibility while simultaneously reducing unnecessary bureaucratic requirements. Also, under The Act, certain charter schools, such as PACE, may be designated as alternative education campuses (AECs) for serving specific groups of high-needs children, including students with disabilities. This designation further relieves AECs due to the intensive needs of the students enrolled. The South Carolina Public Charter School District (PCSD) designated PACE as an AEC, given that its mission, vision, and service model are to educate students with disabilities, including learning disabilities, dyslexia, and autism.

As part of The Act, the PCSD has distinct and specified accountability requirements that each school must meet. The overarching PCSD accountability metrics include the following:

- Academics – whether the school is meeting the goals as set forth in its charter and contract,
- Finance – whether the school is meeting the financial requirements as set forth for public schools as well as generally acceptable accounting practices, and
- Operations – whether the school is meeting the requirements as a public entity/public body.

The accountability requirements and determination by the PCSD supersede state accountability requirements (i.e., the State Report Cards), given the autonomy, innovation, and flexibility charter schools are granted under state law. This stance is supported by both the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE), the regulatory and funding agency overseeing all public schools in the State, along with the South Carolina Attorney General. In fact, in a letter dated October 20, 2023 (attached), the SCDE General Counsel wrote:

*As the South Carolina Attorney General has advised, while the Education Accountability Act requires that charter schools be issued a report card, it does not require that charter schools are subject to the same provisions as other public schools under the act.*

As the State Report Cards reflect a one-size-fits-all approach, they do not take into consideration the unique nature of charter schools, such as PACE, whose enrollment includes 78 percent of students with disabilities.

In its annual review of charter schools in Summer 2023, the PCSD found that PACE:

- Was making satisfactory progress with its charter goals,
- Provided an on-time submission of its annual report,
- Met teacher certification requirements,
- Met fiscal accountability metrics (fund balance, audit, and cash-on-hand), and
- Met organizational requirements.

As a result of this review, the PCSD found that PACE complies with the PCSD Accountability System and is operating in good standing. We appreciate the hard work of your faculty in putting Kids First. If you need additional information, please do not hesitate to contact John R. Payne, Deputy Superintendent for Sponsor Performance, at [jrpayne@sccharter.org](mailto:jrpayne@sccharter.org).

Kids First,



Chris G. Neeley, MPA  
Superintendent