



Pennsylvania Leadership Charter School Attendance Policy

Per the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE), “The school can be effective in educating a child only if the child is in school.”

State law requires Pennsylvania Leadership Charter School (PALCS) to be open 180 days a year and in operation for 990 hours. In compliance with this law, PALCS has established and published a 180-day academic calendar.

The attendance requirement is met by logging in to PALCSchool each school day listed in the academic calendar and remaining current with assignments. As a virtual school, student attendance is verified by electronically logging in to PALCSchool. If a student fails to log in to PALCSchool, he or she is absent.

Please note that, as part of your student’s curriculum, she/he may be required to attend virtual lessons/sessions one or more times per week. Absences from mandatory virtual lessons may adversely affect the student’s grade.

Attendance and participation in onsite state assessments are also mandatory. Each missed day of scheduled state assessments will be documented as one unlawful absence.

Occasionally, students are unable to log in and complete their schoolwork on a given day; this is considered an absence. Acceptable reasons for a student absence include illness or injury, medical appointments, family emergencies, observance of religious holidays, educational opportunities or family trips (see Student Educational Leave of Absence below).

In the case of a system-wide failure of PALCS that prohibits students from logging in to PALCSchool and completing their work, no absence will be charged to the student. In the event of such a school-wide outage that prohibits children from attending and completing their work, an additional school day will be added to the school calendar and families will be notified of the change.

In the case of a computer or technical issue with the student, parents are asked to immediately contact the Help Desk by:

1. Submitting a support ticket from the PALCSchool login page (underneath the fields for username and password, there is a note that reads, “*Problems logging in to PALCSchool? Please click here to submit a HelpDesk ticket!*”); or,
2. If you are able to log in to PALCSchool, click the “Help” icon on the left-side navigation bar, then click “Submit a Technology HelpDesk Ticket” in the Get Help section.

If you are unable to submit a request for service ticket because of your technical issues, please call toll-free 1-877-725-2785, then press Option 3 or dial extension 1616 for assistance.

In all cases aside from a system-wide failure, a written excuse, outlining the reason for an absence, must be submitted online through the parent/guardian's PALCSchool account to the Attendance Office within three days of a student's absence. If the excuse is not submitted by the end of the third day following the absence, the absence will be unexcused.

To submit an excuse, the parent/guardian should select the "Attendance" icon on the left-hand navigation bar in the PALCSchool Lobby. You will be given a menu from which to choose the reason for your child's absence.

While the school strongly prefers for parents to submit a timely excuse for each day of absence, it is possible for parents to submit one excuse for multiple consecutive days of absence. However, the Attendance Office must receive an excuse no later than three days after each absence. [Example: a student is absent Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday. An excuse for the Monday absence is due by Thursday, even though an excuse for the Wednesday absence is not due until the following Monday.]

Additionally, parents of students missing more than three consecutive school days due to illness must provide a note from a physician in addition to the written excuse from the parent. A doctor's note may be submitted to attendance@palcs.org.

Educational Leave of Absence Policy

A formal application and approval process is required for an Educational Leave of Absence. Applications must be submitted at least two weeks in advance of a planned trip. A maximum of 5 consecutive days of excused absences will be considered for approval by the division principal. A work plan must be completed with the student's teachers and principal before the educational trip commences. Students are limited to one such request per year.

To request pre-approval for an educational leave of absence, a parent/guardian should select the "Attendance" icon on the left-hand navigation bar in the PALCSchool Lobby, then select "Submit Pre-approved Absence Request."

Cumulative Lawful Absences

Per the Pennsylvania Department of Education, a maximum of ten days of cumulative lawful absences verified by the parent/guardian (excluding absences that have been pre-approved by the principal) may be permitted during a school year. All absences beyond ten **cumulative** days may require an excuse from a physician.

Additionally, upon the tenth cumulative lawful absence and/or unlawful absence (see below), the parent/guardian will be notified in writing by the school regarding the student's absentee record.

A conference may be requested by school administration when a student has cumulatively missed 15 days or more.

After 20 or more days of cumulative absences, the division principal, guidance department and school administration will undertake an informal review of the student's record, including days of absence and other factors, and a recommendation will be made regarding possible retention in the current grade for the next school year. Such a recommendation may include a failing grade and/or no course credit for impacted courses. If the principal and Director of Academics support the recommendation, the parent/guardian shall be notified in writing of the consequence. The decision of school administration is final.

Unexcused and Unlawful Absences

Act 138 of 2016 relates to truancy and habitual truancy; it requires cyber charter schools to maintain attendance policies designed to accurately determine when a child enrolled in the cyber charter school has an unexcused absence. These unexcused absences are reported to the PDE through the Pennsylvania Information Management System (PIMS).

Absences that are not recognized as acceptable under the Pennsylvania School Code, or are lacking documentation, are considered unexcused and unlawful. This includes, but is not limited to, absences where a written excuse is not submitted within three days of the student's absence.

Upon the third unexcused and unlawful absence, a letter will be sent from the Director of Academics (or designee) by certified mail to the parent/guardian. This letter is known as a **First Offense Notice**, per the Pennsylvania Department of Education.

This First Offense Notice will advise the parent(s) that the absences have been reported to the student's school district of residence, as required by the Pennsylvania Department of Education.

In addition to the above actions, upon the third unexcused and unlawful absence, PALCS shall request a conference to discuss the cause of the child's truancy and develop a written **School Attendance Improvement Plan (SAIP)** to resolve truant behavior. Issues to be reviewed at the school/family conference include the appropriateness of the child's educational environment, current academic difficulties, physical or behavioral health issues, and family/environment concerns. At the end of the conference, or in the absence of a conference, a comprehensive SAIP will be developed. All parties, including the school representative, the child, and the parents and/or family, will be given the opportunity to participate, agree to, and sign the SAIP.

Each subsequent unexcused and unlawful absence will be reported to the school district of residence.

Students who have not complied with compulsory attendance requirements (including the SAIP) and are consistently truant will be withdrawn from PALCS and the school district of residence will be notified.

Special note about students who transfer to PALCS during the school year with an excessive number of absences: Students who enroll in PALCS during the school year who bring with them an excessive number of absences, as determined by PALCS administration, will be automatically enrolled in a School Attendance Improvement Plan (SAIP). The SAIP will clearly state the number of absences permitted, the likelihood of grade level retention, and whether or not the student will be required to attend additional programs such as a Summer Bridge Program (summer school).

Academic Non-participation

The Pennsylvania Leadership Charter School designates a classification of Academic Non-participation for students who log in for attendance purposes but are not working or completing work in their courses. This designation is separate from the unexcused and unlawful absences outlined above.

All students are required to not only log in to school each day but also to remain current with school work and assignments.

“Current” is defined by actively participating and submitting work assignments on time. When students are not actively participating in their online classes and/or are not submitting assignments by the due date or progress check, they are considered academically truant.

Additionally, some students are required to participate in “live” virtual lessons/sessions. Students who do not attend these required sessions may accrue academic penalties.

Students designated as Academic Non-participating may be placed in a Bridge to Student Success Program (BtSS), at the discretion of the school’s division principal, guidance and academic team. The BtSS program offers comprehensive supports for students and families who are struggling in the cyber environment.