

**Pataula Charter Academy and  
Spring Creek Charter Academy  
Student Attendance Policy**

**Purpose:** Pataula Charter Academy (PCA) and Spring Creek Charter Academy (SCCA) believe that regular school attendance is directly related to success in academic work, provides opportunities for important communication between teachers and students, and establishes regular habits of dependability important to the future of the student. The purpose of this policy is to encourage regular school attendance for the benefit of the student.

**Policy Statement:** It is the policy of PCA/SCCA to expect students to be punctual and present for the entire school day. As such PCA/SCCA, Parents, Guardians, and Students shall operate under the following:

**The School Day**

The official PCA and SCCA school day shall begin at 7:55 a.m. and end at 3:10 p.m.

\*Students must be in their assigned classroom by the beginning of the official school day to be considered on time.

**Students ARE NOT allowed to enter or be left at school before 7:30 a.m.**

**Tardies**

A student is considered tardy when he/she fails to arrive to their assigned classroom by the start of the official school day. In the event that a student is tardy he/she:

- MUST be signed in by a parent or legal guardian at the front office, or
- If the student has driven to school he/she MUST sign themselves in at the front office.

**Excused Tardies**

For a tardy to be classified as Excused the reason for late arrival must be the result of any reason listed herein as an accepted excuse for absence. In the event of a doctor or dental appointment or court ordered appearance an appointment card or other form of verification should be presented to the office to be kept in your child's file. Excuses for tardies must be submitted at the time of arrival or within 3 days of the tardy.

**Unexcused Tardies**

Tardies due to oversleeping, missing the bus, car trouble, or any other reason not classified as an Excused Tardy shall be Unexcused.

**Early Dismissals**

In the event that a student leaves the school after 11:30a.m. but prior to regular dismissal time it shall be classified as an Early Dismissal. Any student leaving the campus early must sign out with the front office otherwise the student will be considered truant. Any student who leaves campus without properly checking out will receive disciplinary action.

**Absences**

A student shall be marked absent as follows:

1. If the student does not come to school for the day,
2. If the student is checked out of school before 11:30 a.m.,
3. If the student is checked in to school after 11:30a.m., or
4. If the student accumulates 5 unexcused tardies and/or early dismissals the time out of school due to unexcused tardies and early dismissals will be calculated and every 4 hours accumulated will be counted as one (1) unexcused absence.

Absences will be designated as Excused or Unexcused. In the event of each absence, the student must return with a written note within 3 days of the absence that is signed and dated by a parent, guardian, or doctor. **Notes will not be accepted after the 3<sup>rd</sup> day the student has returned to school.**

### **Excused Absences**

State law governs Excused Absences from school therefore; absences shall be considered Excused as defined by law and in the rules of the Georgia Board of Education. A student may be excused from attending school in the following circumstances:

1. Personal Illness of the student (**A parent/guardian note will be accepted for illness for up to 3 separate periods of absence, however if your child has more than 3 periods of absence for illness a doctor excuse will then be required for further “sick” absences to count as an excused absence; all notes are required within 3 days of returning to school**);
2. Instances where attendance by the student would endanger the health of the student or others
3. Serious Illness or Death in the immediate family;
4. Recognized Religious Holidays observed by the faith of the student;
5. Court Order or an order by a government agency, including Pre-induction Physical Examinations for service in the Armed Forces, mandating the absence from school;
6. Voter Registration or Voting, which shall not exceed 1 day, for students eligible to vote in a public election;
7. A student whose parent or legal guardian is serving in military service in the armed forces or the United States or the National Guard, and such parent or legal guardian has been called to duty for or is on leave from overseas deployment to a combat zone or combat support posting, shall be granted excused absences, up to 5 days per school year to visit with the parent or legal guardian prior to the parent or legal guardian’s deployment or during such parent’s or legal guardian’s leave.
8. Conditions rendering attendance impossible or hazardous to student health or safety.
9. Any other absence not explicitly defined herein but deemed by the School Administration to have merit based on circumstances.

Additionally, students shall be marked present and not counted as absent in the following circumstances:

1. Students serving as pages of the Georgia General Assembly shall be counted as present for days missed from school for such service;
2. Foster Care students shall be credited as present and shall not be counted as absent for any day, portion of a day, or days missed when attending court proceedings related to the students foster care.
3. Students who successfully participate in the Student Teen Election Participant (STEP) program shall be counted as present and given full credit for the school day during which he/she served in the STEP program. No student shall be permitted to be absent from school to participate in the STEP program for more than 2 school days per year.

### **Unexcused Absences**

Absences shall be considered Unexcused any time a student is out of school for any reason that does not qualify as an Excused Absence as defined above.

### **Truancy**

State law requires compulsory school attendance for all students between the ages of 6 and 16 years with penalties including fines and/or prison for non-compliance. Truancy is defined as more than 5 unexcused absences in a school calendar year for a student subject to compulsory school attendance. (pursuant to SBOE 160-5-1-.10) **More than 5 Unexcused Absences during the school calendar year will result in the student being classified as Truant.**

\*School days missed as the result of an out of school suspension shall not count as unexcused absences for the purposes of determining truancy.

### **Extended Excused Absences**

When a student misses 10 or more days of school due to illness the absences may be classified as Extended Excused Absences. In such instances the student may qualify for Hospital/Homebound (HHB) services. For a complete description of eligibility and how to apply for HHB services, see the PCA/SCCA Hospital/Homebound Services Policy.

**\*Students who are absent for 10 consecutive days without a parent/guardian initiating the HHB services application process will be withdrawn from the school. A certified letter, with return receipt requested, will be sent informing the parent of the withdrawal. (pursuant to SBOE 160-5-1-.28) Students withdrawn for lack of attendance are eligible for re-enrollment in accordance with the Pataula Charter Academy and Spring Creek Charter Academy Enrollment Policy.**

### **Notification and Actions for Truancy**

In the event of excessive tardies, early dismissals, and absences the following notifications and actions shall occur:

#### **Unexcused Tardies and Early Dismissals**

**5** Total of any combination of unexcused Tardies and/or Early Dismissals – Letter of Notification to the student’s Parent/Guardian(s). Once a student accumulates 5 unexcused tardies and/or early dismissals the total time out of school due to tardies and early dismissals will be calculated and every 4 hours accumulated will be counted as one (1) absence.

#### **Unexcused Absences**

\*All Letters of Notification shall be sent to the Parent/Guardian via Certified Mail with Return Receipt Requested.

- **5** Unexcused Absences - Letter of Notification to the student’s Parent/Guardian(s) and parent conference to discuss further action of unexcused absences.
- **7** Unexcused Absences - Letter of Notification to the student’s Parent/Guardian(s) that 3 more unexcused absences will result in withdrawal.
- **10** Unexcused Absences – Withdrawal from the school; a certified letter of notification will be sent to the parent/guardian.

\*If a student is withdrawn for lack of attendance and all attempts to secure proof of transfer to another school or to receive a homeschool declaration fail within 45 days of the withdrawal, then the student/parent will be referred to the Department of Family and Children Services and local law enforcement/juvenile court system (based on state truancy laws). Students withdrawn for lack of attendance are eligible for re-enrollment in accordance with the *Pataula Charter Academy and Spring Creek Charter Academy Enrollment Policy*.

### **Grievance Process**

Any grievance related to this policy may be addressed through the process outlined in the *Pataula Charter Academy and Spring Creek Charter Academy Parent and Student Complaints and Grievances Policy*, which can be found on the school website, Parent/Student Handbook, or requested from the front office.

**Approved:** 1/27/2014

**Amended:** 6/21/2021

**Amended:** 7/17/2023