

Academy of Collaborative Education

Board Meeting

Published on August 18, 2026 at 3:05 AM CDT

Date and Time

Wednesday August 19, 2026 at 3:30 PM CDT

Location

Join Zoom Meeting: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/85114287278?pwd=e1cEPf8dXRU5njacNAc8R0wcVwEz0o.1>

Meeting ID: 851 1428 7278

Passcode: 916947

Pursuant to Louisiana Open Meetings Law - La. R.S. 42:19, notice is hereby given to the members of the Board of Directors of Academy of Collaborative Education and to the general public that the Board will hold a regular, special, or re-scheduled meeting, open to the public as specified below. To ensure compliance with the Open Meeting Law, recipients of this message should not forward it to other Board members, and Board members should not reply to this message.

Agenda

	Purpose	Presenter	Time
I. Opening Items			3:30 PM
A.	Record Attendance	Anna Grimmett	3 m
B.	Call the Meeting to Order	Anna Grimmett	1 m

	Purpose	Presenter	Time
C. Approve Minutes from previous meeting	Approve Minutes	Anna Grimmatt	3 m

Motion: Move to approve minutes from the previous meeting of the governing ACE Board of Directors as presented in the board packet.

Approve minutes for Annual Meeting + Board Retreat on June 27, 2026

D. Approval of Agenda	Vote	Anna Grimmatt	3 m
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Motion Option #1: Move to approve the agenda as presented.

Motion Option #2: Move to approve the agenda as amended by board discussion to include .

Request for amendment to the agenda, or approval of the agenda as presented.

II. Committee Reports 3:40 PM

A. Executive Director Report	FYI	Joellen Freeman	10 m
B. Governance Report	FYI	Curtis Eberts	10 m
C. Finance Report	FYI	Hannah Nguyen	10 m

- Financials (updated P&L, balance sheet)

D. Academic Excellence Report	FYI	Matthew Fowlkes	10 m
E. Facilities Report	FYI	Davy Mize	10 m
F. SY2026-27 Academic Report	FYI	Joellen Freeman	10 m

Executive Director, Joellen Freeman, will provide the board with an overview of SY26-27 academic goals and progress to those goals as well as a full briefing on the assessments taken by ACE students and how students performed on those assessments both this school year and overtime.

III. Executive Session 4:40 PM

A. Legal Advice	Discuss	Joellen Freeman	15 m
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Pursuant to La. R.S. 42:17(A)(2) and (A)(11), the Board will convene in executive session to receive privileged legal advice from counsel regarding pending Due

	Purpose	Presenter	Time
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Process Matters (Docket #2026-17330-DOE-IDEA) and related issues requiring legal advice.

IV. Discussion of New Business 4:55 PM

A.	Financial Discussion	Discuss	Hannah Nguyen	5 m
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- Line of credit needs
- 13th check for teachers

B.	ACE Educator Residency Program	Discuss	Joellen Freeman	5 m
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C.	CEO PTO policy	Discuss	Anna Grimmett	5 m
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Documentation of Executive Director's Paid Time Off or other leave

V. Action Items 5:10 PM

A.	Vote on ACE Educator Residency Program	Vote	Anna Grimmett	2 m
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This item needs board approval

B.	Vote on CEO PTO policy	Vote	Anna Grimmett	2 m
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The board will vote whether to approve the addition to the policy as discussed.

VI. Closing Items 5:14 PM

A.	Adjourn Meeting	Vote	Anna Grimmett	1 m
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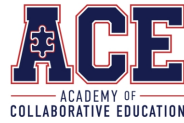
In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, if you need special assistance at a public meeting of Academy of Collaborative Education, please contact Joellen Freeman at jcfreeman@aceforasd.org describing the assistance that is necessary.

Coversheet

Approve Minutes from previous meeting

Section:	I. Opening Items
Item:	C. Approve Minutes from previous meeting
Purpose:	Approve Minutes
Submitted by:	
Related Material:	Minutes for Annual Meeting + Board Retreat on June 27, 2026

APPROVED



Academy of Collaborative Education

Minutes

Annual Meeting + Board Retreat

Date and Time

Saturday June 27, 2026 at 8:00 AM

Location

The Center for Children and Families
622 Riverside Drive
Monroe, LA 71201

Pursuant to Louisiana Open Meetings Law - La. R.S. 42:19, notice is hereby given to the members of the Board of Directors of Academy of Collaborative Education and to the general public that the Board will hold a regular, special, or re-scheduled meeting, open to the public as specified below. To ensure compliance with the Open Meeting Law, recipients of this message should not forward it to other Board members, and Board members should not reply to this message.

Directors Present

Anna Grimmatt, Curtis Eberts, Davy Mize, Holly Allen, Latner McDonald, Richard Cannon, Seth Hall

Directors Absent

Matthew Fowlkes

Ex Officio Members Present

Joellen Freeman

Non Voting Members Present

Joellen Freeman

Guests Present

Hannah Nguyen

I. Opening Items

A. Record Attendance

Holly Allen made a motion to Amend Agenda and Approve Minutes from Special Board Meeting - Virtual on 06-17-26.

Davy Mize seconded the motion.

Voting Board members were:

Davy Mize, Hannah Nguyen, Latner McDonald, Anna Grimmatt and Holly Allen

The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

B. Call the Meeting to Order

Anna Grimmatt called a meeting of the board of directors of Academy of Collaborative Education to order on Saturday Jun 27, 2026 at 8:00 AM.

II. Breakfast + Gathering

A. Breakfast + Document Upkeep

Holly Allen made a motion to Amend Agenda to Include Discussion/Vote of Cell Phone Policy.

Latner McDonald seconded the motion.

The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

Davy Mize made a motion to Approve Agenda as Amended.

Richard Cannon seconded the motion.

The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

III. Annual Reports

A. Annual Executive Director Report

Joellen Freeman:

Staffing:

- 97% Retention Rate
- Mentoring: In house and on-going

- Several current paraprofessionals continue training for certification and plan to stay at ACE
- Added 16 new staff members to address increased grades, tiered reporting/mentoring structure, etc.
- Joellen Freeman will step in as interim principal and new principal search will begin when new SY begins

2026/2027 Goals:

- Literacy Campaign
- Functional Skills
- Field Trips
- Community Visitors
- Student Activities
- Service Projects
- Family Engagement

Enrollment:

- 141 enrolled with maximum enrollment of 160 (and 20% more if great need), anticipate meeting max
- 47 waiting, Kindergarten largest waiting list
- 47 interested

B. SY2026-27 Academic Report

Joellen Freeman:

5 Assessments/Grades K-6

- iReady ELA
- iReady Math
- DI BEL S
 - AP Students, K-3 only. Auditory/Visual test.
 - 1st time for Grade K.
- LAAR
 - Taken by students more impacted by diagnosis.
 - ACE scores represented primarily by Grade K.
- LEAP Connect
 - Measures ELA achievement. Grades 3-6 only. Individual testing.
 - Not benchmarked based on diagnosis or severity of diagnosis.

***Working to break down scores to show individual students' year-to-year achievement/progress.

Academic Excellence Recommendations

- Expand ELA support
- Continue LAAR and K-DIBELS programs
- Address math crises

IEP Progress Report

- Overall Mastery -
 - 58/110 students mastered minimum 1 objective
 - 52/110 students still mastering
- Continuing to measure and analyze data to determine whether IEP goals are attainable

Seth Hall made a motion to Move Into Executive Session.

Latner McDonald seconded the motion.

The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

IV. Executive Session

A. Executive Director FY26 Evaluation

Evaluation of Joellen Freeman:

- Discussion of Evaluation and Responses
- Plans to better staff culture 2026/2027
 - Additional staff
 - Creation of leadership tiers
 - Staff lunch break
- Budget SY-26/27
 - EdOps - valuable addition to ACE
- Key Areas to Focus SY-26/27
 - Strengthen organizational stability
 - Invest in staff culture
 - Strengthen family and community partnerships
- Joellen's Additional Areas of Focus
 - Strengthen Family/Community Partnerships
 - Community/School Interaction with Board
 - Staff Appreciation

Seth Hall made a motion to Move Out of Executive Session.

Richard Cannon seconded the motion.

The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

V. Discussion of New Business

A. FY2027 Budget (Second) Discussion

Joellen Freeman led discussion:

- Governor's executive order to divert school funding to teacher salaries currently derailed due to opposition
- Budget initially presented,
 - without 5% decrease in MFP but with 3% increase in teacher salaries
 - based on student population of maximum 160
 - Medicaid Reimbursement
 - Neither Cost Report nor Interim funding accounted for in budget
 - Cost Report accounts for any difference in funding as it relates to cost of services vs amount reimbursed by Medicaid
 - ACE receives interim payment which is funded without significant delay and which *may* be accounted for in subsequent annual budgets.

B. Employee Handbook Presentation + Discussion

Joellen Freeman led discussion re:

- Proposed changes to Staff Handbook
 - "Time Off and Leave Policy"

C. Policy and Procedure Review and Discussion

Joellen Freeman led discussion re:

- Proposed new ACE "Student Entry & Arrival Policy"
- Proposed changes to ACE "Internet Usage, Internet Safety and Acceptable Use Policy"
- Proposed new ACE "Student Electronic Telecommunication Device Policy"

D. FY27 Student/Parent Handbook Review and Discussion

Joellen Freeman led discussion re:

- Proposed changes to Student/Parent Handbook
 - Excessive Absences and Tardiness
 - Return to School Policy after Illness
 - Early Sign-Out
 - Early Sign-Out for Therapy

- Bus Transportation Expectations

VI. Action Items

A. Approval of FY2027 Budget

Curtis Eberts made a motion to Approve Budget FY2027.

Davy Mize seconded the motion.

The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

B. Approval of FY2027 Employee Handbook

Seth Hall made a motion to Approve FY2027 Employee Handbook as Amended Re: Time Off and Leave Policy.

Richard Cannon seconded the motion.

The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

C. Approval of FY2027 Student Handbook

Latner McDonald made a motion to Approve FY2027 Student Handbook as Amended.

Richard Cannon seconded the motion.

Discussion per above Re: Excessive Absences and Tardiness, Return to School After Illness, Signing Out Early and Bus Transportation Expectations. Prior to vote, amended language to each policy reiterated/clarified

The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

D. FY2027 Board Officers

Holly Allen made a motion to Approve Board Composition as Amended and Discussed.

Davy Mize seconded the motion.

Discussion Re: Board Officers and proposal to identify,

- Anna Grimmatt as ACE Board Chairman
- Curtis Eberts as ACE Board Vice Chairman
- Holly Allen as ACE Board Secretary
- Hannah Nguyen as ACE Board Treasurer

The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

E. Approval of Policy and Procedure Documents

Richard Cannon made a motion to Approve new ACE policies re: "Student Entry & Arrival Policy" and "Student Electronic Telecommunication Device Policy" and amended "Internet Usage, Internet Safety and Acceptable Use Policy".

Latner McDonald seconded the motion.

Previously discussed ACE policies re: "Student Entry & Arrival Policy" and "Student Electronic Telecommunication Device Policy" and "Internet Usage, Internet Safety and Acceptable Use Policy"

The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

VII. FY2027 Committee Formation + Planning

A. Announcement of FY2027 Board Committees + Committee Meeting Schedule

Academic Excellence Committee

- Matthew Fowlkes (Chair)
- Richard Cannon
- Hannah Nguyen

Governance Committee

- Curtis Eberts (Chair)
- Anna Grimmett
- Holly Allen

Finance Committee

- Hannah Nguyen (Chair)
- Anna Grimmert
- Seth Hall

Facilities Committee

- Davy Mize (Chair)
- Richard Cannon
- Curtis Eberts

Members of Friends of ACE

- Matthew Fowlkes (Chair)
- Richard Cannon

B. Committee Goals + Meeting Schedule Creation

Committees broke out individually and discussed goals and meeting schedule for upcoming SY2026/27, with schedule per below:

Academic Excellence - Quarterly with first meeting in September 2026

Governance - Every other month with first meeting in August 2026

Finance - Every other month with first meeting in August 2026

Facilities - Quarterly with first meeting in September 2026

C.

Report: Committees Goals + Schedules

Curtis Eberts made a motion to Approve Committee Goals and SY2026/27 Meeting Schedule.

Richard Cannon seconded the motion.

The board **VOTED** to approve the motion.

VIII. Annual Online Ethics Training (and working lunch)

A. Online Ethics Training Completion

Reviewed status of Ethics Training certificates of Board members.

All in compliance except Hannah Nguyen, Seth Hall and Anna Grimmatt who will complete ASAP. All others submitted certificate of current compliance.

IX. Closing Items

A. Adjourn Meeting

Richard Cannon made a motion to Adjourn Meeting.

Curtis Eberts seconded the motion.

The board **VOTED** unanimously to approve the motion.

There being no further business to be transacted, and upon motion duly made, seconded and approved, the meeting was adjourned at 2:08 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Holly Allen

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Coversheet

ACE Educator Residency Program

Section:	IV. Discussion of New Business
Item:	B. ACE Educator Residency Program
Purpose:	Discuss
Submitted by:	
Related Material:	Individual Residency Growth Plan (IRGP).pdf ACEresidency.Candidatecommitmentform.jcf.7.25.26.docx.pdf ACEResidencyprogram.P&P.jcf.7.25.26 (1).pdf ACEResidencyverificationform.jcf.7.25.26.docx.pdf

Individual Residency Growth Plan (IRGP)

Teacher Residency Program

Resident Name: _____ Date of Plan: _____

Residency Start Date: _____

Professional Goals:

Beyond earning your teaching certification through ACE, describe the personal and professional goals you hope to achieve during your residency. Explain how these experiences will help you grow as an educator and prepare you for long-term success in the classroom.

Areas of Interest

Describe the instructional practices, classroom strategies, or professional responsibilities you feel prepared to implement during your residency. Explain how you plan to apply these skills to support student learning and professional growth.

Areas of Concern

Describe the areas of teaching in which you anticipate needing the most guidance and support during your residency. Explain why you believe additional assistance in these areas will contribute to your growth and effectiveness as an educator.



ACE Residency Program

Candidate Agreement

Candidate Name: _____

Assigned Grade Level / Subject: _____

Assigned Mentor Teacher: _____

Enrolled Teacher Preparation Program: _____

Candidate Statement of Commitment

By accepting the salaried position of being a Site-Based Educator at the Academy of Collaborative Education, I acknowledge that I have read, understood, and agree to adhere to all terms, policies, and expectations outlined in the policy handbook, including the following specific commitments:

1. Academic Standing & Reporting

- I will remain actively enrolled in an approved teacher preparation program at _____.
- I agree to submit official or unofficial transcript updates showing passing grades to School Administration (Mrs. Melton and Dr. Stanfield) at the conclusion of each academic semester.
- I understand that failure to maintain passing grades or active enrollment will result in immediate disqualification from the long-term instructional role.
- I agree to notify School Administration in writing within 48 hours if my academic status changes, or if I drop a required course.

2. Coaching & Professional Development

- I commit to actively participating in regular coaching, observation, and feedback sessions as outlined in the Policy and Procedure for this program.
- I agree to implement feedback provided by my assigned ACE Education Coach and school administrators in a timely manner.
- I will participate in all required staff development days, grade-level planning meetings, and school-wide training.

3. Professional Conduct & Work Boundaries

- I agree that all coursework, studying, and assignments related to my teacher preparation program will be completed outside of regular school operating hours and planning periods.
- I will comply with all ACE Charter School policies, Employee Handbook, State and Federal laws.

Acknowledgment & Signatures

I understand that this position is contingent upon fulfilling both my employment duties at ACE and my academic obligations in my teacher preparation program.

Candidate:

Signature:_____ **Date:** _____

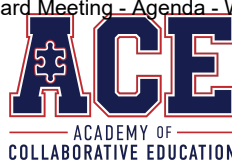
Alison Melton, Curriculum Coordinator

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Joellen Freeman, Executive Director

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

ACADEMY OF COLLABORATIVE EDUCATION
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aceforasd.org | (318) 327.8223
Tax ID: 86-3614943



ACE Residency Program

(Grow Our Own)

Purpose Statement

The Board of Directors of the Academy of Collaborative Education (ACE) establishes the ACE Educator Residency Program to develop highly qualified future educators through structured mentoring, professional learning, and supervised classroom experience. This program provides for instructional continuity while creating an internal pathway for Instructional Support Professionals (defined below) to advance toward teacher certification and future classroom leadership.

I. Purpose

ACE is committed to developing highly qualified educators who understand the school's mission, integrated instructional model, and the unique needs of students with autism spectrum disorder. The ACE Educator Residency Program provides aspiring educators with meaningful classroom experience while ensuring continuity of instruction during teacher absences or vacant teaching positions. Participation in the program does not guarantee future employment as a certified teacher. Further, nothing in this policy guarantees employment for any specified duration and all Residents/participants remain employed on an at-will basis.

II. Program Applicability

This policy applies only to employees qualified for participation in the ACE Educator Residency Program. It does not establish qualifications for day-to-day substitute teachers or temporary instructional personnel.

III. Career Advancement Pathway

ACE intentionally develops future educators through the following pathway:

Level I – Instructional Support Professional (Paraprofessional, RLT, RBT, or other approved position with at least one (1) consecutive school year of successful employment with ACE in an approved instructional support position)

Level II – ACE Educator Resident (full-time salaried instructional employee participating in coaching, mentoring, and teacher preparation as outlined in this policy)

Level III – Certified Classroom Teacher (upon meeting all Louisiana certification requirements and based on available staffing needs).

Because of ACE's specialized educational model, the Board believes the strongest classroom educators are developed through demonstrated success within the ACE environment.

IV. Eligibility Requirements

Applicants must:

- Complete at least one (1) consecutive school year of successful employment with ACE in an approved Instructional Support Position.
- Complete a minimum of 30 semester hours in an accredited associate degree program with applicable entry-level Praxis examination(s) successfully passed.
- Maintain satisfactory academic progress and submit transcripts demonstrating this progress to ACE each semester.
- Notify administration within 48 hours of any change in enrollment status.

V. Employment in Good Standing

Applicants must:

- Receive an overall satisfactory or higher performance evaluation.
- Demonstrate ethical conduct and instructional potential.
- Have no active Performance Improvement Plan or formal disciplinary action within the previous ten (10) months.

VI. Attendance & Reliability

Applicants must demonstrate dependable attendance. During the preceding ten (10) months applicants shall have:

- No more than three (3) unexcused absences;
- No more than five (5) occurrences of tardiness;
- No occurrences of job abandonment or no-call/no-show; and
- No documented pattern of excessive absenteeism.

Approved leave under ACE policy or applicable law shall not count toward these thresholds.

VII. Resident Responsibilities

Residents are expected to:

- Deliver standards-aligned instruction.
- Maintain a safe, structured learning environment.
- Collaborate with therapists and instructional staff.
- Participate in IEP implementation and documentation.
- Communicate professionally with families.
- Attend required meetings and professional development.
- Comply with all [ACE Policy & Procedures](#), [Employee Handbook](#), State and Federal laws.

VIII. Resident Support & Mentorship

ACE shall provide each Resident with:

- A certified Teacher of Record/Mentor for daily informal check-ins, weekly collaborative planning, instructional guidance, and classroom observations.

- Curriculum Coordinator support for lesson planning, curriculum pacing, assessment, grading practices, and instructional coaching.
- Director of Special Education support for IEP implementation, accommodations, compliance, and special education guidance.
- Director of Behavioral Support coaching for behavior systems, PBIS, BIPs, crisis prevention, and collaboration with behavioral staff.
- Coordinator of Therapy Services support for the integration of occupational therapy (OT), speech-language therapy, physical therapy (PT), and Adapted Physical Education (APE) services, as indicated in each student's IEP, into daily routines and the academic day.
- Executive Director/designee oversight through formal evaluations and quarterly conferences.

***[Verification form](#)

Thus, the Residency Coaching Team will consist of the Resident's Mentor, the Curriculum Coordinator, Director of Special Education, Director of Behavioral Support, Coordinator of Therapy Services, and the Executive Director.

IX. Residency Coaching Schedule

Minimum coaching expectations:

- Teacher of Record/Mentor: Daily informal check-in (10–15 minutes)
- Monthly Formal Observation - IEP understanding, submission of weekly lesson plans, classroom management (behavioral support)
- Middle of Year/End of Year Executive Director Conference

X. Individual Residency Growth Plan (IRGP)

Within thirty (30) days of acceptance, an Individual Residency Growth Plan (IRGP) will be developed by the Resident and Curriculum Coordinator. The IRGP shall include professional goals, coaching action steps, observation feedback, professional learning, progress reviews, evidence of growth, and recommendations regarding readiness for increased instructional responsibilities.

Need a form to link here [Individual Residency Growth Plan \(IRGP\)](#)

XI. Continued Participation

Residents must maintain satisfactory employment, academic progress, professional conduct, attendance, and responsiveness to coaching throughout participation in the ACE Residency Program.

XII. Program Removal

Residents may be removed from the program for failure to maintain enrollment, unsatisfactory performance, failure to implement coaching recommendations, attendance deficiencies, misconduct, policy violations, or when continued participation is not in the best interest of students or ACE. Removal does not automatically terminate

employment. When appropriate, the Executive Director may reassign the employee to another position for which the employee is qualified.

XIII. Program Completion

Successful completion requires satisfactory evaluations, completion of IRGP goals, demonstrated instructional growth, continued academic progress, professional conduct, and recommendation of the Residency Coaching Team. Completion does not guarantee placement into a certified teaching position.

XIV. Candidate Agreement

Candidates selected and qualified for participation in the ACE Educator Residency Program must sign an ACE Educator Residency Program Candidate Agreement before beginning the residency assignment.

[Candidate Agreement Form](#)

Governance Recommendation: 8.6.26

Board approval: _____



ACE Educator Residency Program

Residency Support Verification

Resident: _____

Residency Year: _____

The purpose of this verification is to document that the required residency supports outlined in the **ACE Educator Residency Program Policy** have been provided to the Resident throughout the residency year.

Each member of the Residency Support Team shall verify the provision of his or her assigned support responsibilities at the **Middle-of-Year (MOY)** and **End-of-Year (EOY)** review periods.

Residency Support Team	Required Support	MOY Signature	MOY Date	EOY Signature	EOY Date
Teacher of Record / Mentor	Daily informal check-ins, instructional guidance, classroom observations, and support as necessary.	_____	_____	_____	_____
Curriculum Coordinator	Instructional coaching, lesson-planning support, curriculum guidance, pacing, assessment, and grading support provided in accordance with the Resident’s coaching and growth plan.	_____	_____	_____	_____

Director of Special Education	Guidance regarding IEP implementation, accommodations, modifications, specially designed instruction, and compliance provided, as applicable.				
Director of Behavioral Support	Behavioral coaching, PBIS support, classroom-management guidance, and behavior-plan support provided, as applicable.				
Coordinator of Therapy Services	Support for the integration of OT, Speech, PT, and APE services into classroom instruction and daily routines provided, as appropriate.				

Executive Director / Designee	Residency progress reviewed and administrative oversight provided, including review of the Resident's continued progress within the program.	_____	_____	_____	_____
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Middle-of-Year Resident Acknowledgement

I acknowledge that I have received the residency supports described above through the Middle-of-Year review period. I understand that this acknowledgement verifies the provision of required support and does not, by itself, indicate satisfactory completion of residency requirements.

Resident Signature: _____

Date: _____

End-of-Year Resident Acknowledgement

I acknowledge that I have received the residency supports described above through the End-of-Year review period and that my residency support and progress have been reviewed with me.

Resident Signature: _____

Date: _____

Coversheet

CEO PTO policy

Section:	IV. Discussion of New Business
Item:	C. CEO PTO policy
Purpose:	Discuss
Submitted by:	
Related Material:	FY27.Timeoff.P&P.8.6.26.docx.pdf



TIME OFF POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Purpose:

Academy of Collaborative Education (ACE) recognizes that employees may need time away from work for personal, medical, family, or circumstances. At the same time, consistent employee attendance is essential to maintaining appropriate staffing, continuity of instruction, student supervision, therapeutic services, and overall operation of the school.

The purpose of this policy is to establish a consistent process for requesting, approving, documenting, and using time off while ensuring that ACE can maintain appropriate staffing and services for students.

Scope:

The policy applies to all ACE employees, regardless of position, classification, exempt or non-exempt status, or length of employment.

Eligibility for paid time off (PTO) and other forms of paid or unpaid leave is determined by the employee's classification and the applicable ACE leave policy.

General Policy:

Time off from an employee's regularly scheduled workday must be requested and approved in accordance with this policy.

Except in cases of illness, emergency, or another unforeseeable circumstance, employees must obtain approval from the Executive Director **before** taking time off.

Submission of a request does not constitute approval. Employees should not make non-refundable travel arrangements, appointments, or other commitments that depend upon the approval of time off until approval has been received.

The Executive Director has the final authority to approve or deny time-off requests based upon the circumstances of the request, staffing needs, student needs, operational requirements, available coverage, applicable blackout periods, and the employee's available leave.

Planned Time Off:

Employees requesting planned time off must submit the request at least two (2) weeks in advance.

Planned time off includes, but is not limited to:

- Vacations or personal travel
- Personal appointments that can reasonably be scheduled in advance
- Family events
- Non-emergency appointments or obligations
- Planned medical or dental appointments
- Other foreseeable absences from the employee's regularly scheduled workday

Requests submitted with less than two weeks' notice may be denied or, if approved, may be designated as unpaid time off in accordance with ACE's applicable leave policies.

Request Procedure:

Employees requesting planned time off must:

1. Submit the time-off request through ACE's designated employee timekeeping/payroll platform at least two (2) weeks before the requested absence
2. Provide the date(s) and amount of time requested
3. Identify the appropriate type of leave being requested
4. Provide any additional information reasonably necessary for ACE to evaluate the request
5. Receive approval from the Executive Director before taking the requested time off.

Employees are responsible for monitoring the status of their request.

A request that has been submitted but has not been approved should be considered **pending**, not approved.

Approval of Time Off:

All time-off requests are subject to approval by the Executive Director. Approval is not automatic based solely upon an employee having available PTO.

When reviewing requests, the Executive Director may consider:

- Student instructional and supervision needs
- Availability of qualified coverage
- Number of employees already approved to be absent
- Required meetings, professional development, training, assessments, or school events
- The employee's responsibilities and ability to prepare for absence
- Whether the requested date is subject to blackout period
- Timeliness of requests
- Other operational circumstances affecting ACE

When multiple employees request the same date or period, ACE retains discretion to determine which request may be approved based upon operational needs and the circumstances of the requests.

****Executive Director will notify the Board Chair of PTO or unplanned absence or emergencies as accordance with ACE policies. Documentation of all time off is completed by the Director of Operations.**

Blackout Dates:

ACE may designate certain dates or periods as **blackout dates** during which planned time-off request will not ordinarily be approved.

Blackout periods may include, but are not limited to:

- The beginning of the school year
- Professional development or required training days
- Days immediately preceding or following designated holidays or school breaks
- Student assessment periods

- Special school events
- Staff preparation or closing days
- Other dates identified by ACE based upon operational needs

Blackout restrictions apply to **planned or discretionary time off** and do not eliminate an employee's rights under FMLA, ADA, worker's compensation, or any other applicable federal or state law.

Illnesses and legitimate emergencies occurring during blackout periods must be reported in accordance with the unplanned absence procedure below and may require appropriate documentation.

Unplanned absences - Illness or Emergency:

ACE recognizes that illness and emergencies cannot always be anticipated.

When an employee cannot report to work because of an unexpected illness, emergency, or other unforeseeable circumstance, the employee must follow ACE's call-off procedure and notify the appropriate supervisor **as soon as possible, but no later than one (1) hour before the employee's scheduled start time**, unless circumstances make timely notification impossible.

The employee must also enter the absence into ACE's designated employee timekeeping/payroll platform as soon as reasonably possible.

Notification to a coworker does not satisfy the employee's responsibility to properly report an absence.

An employee must continue to communicate with ACE regarding the anticipated duration of the absence when the return date is uncertain.

Medical Documentation:

ACE may require appropriate documentation for an absence when permitted by law and ACE policy.

An employee absent for two (2) consecutive workdays due to illness may be required to provide documentation from a healthcare provider before returning to work.

Documentation may also be required when:

- An employee requests leave qualifying under FMLA or another applicable leave law
- An employee requests a workplace accommodation
- Documentation is reasonably necessary to determine eligibility for a particular type of leave
- ACE policy otherwise permits documentation to be requested.

Paid Time Off:

Employees may use available PTO in accordance with their employment classification and ACE's PTO Policy.

PTO availability does not guarantee approval of a requested absence.

Employees may not use more PTO than they have available unless otherwise specifically authorized under an applicable ACE policy.

PTO will be applied to qualifying absences in accordance with ACE's leave policies.

Unpaid Time Off:

Unpaid time off is **not an additional leave benefit** and should not be considered an extension of an employee's available PTO.

An employee who has exhausted PTO may request unpaid time off. Approval remains at the discretion of the Executive Director unless the absence is protected by applicable law.

Unauthorized unpaid absences may be considered unexcused absences and may result in disciplinary action.

FMLA and Other Protected Leave:

Absences that may qualify for protection under the Family and Medical leave Act (FMLA), the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), workers' compensation laws, military leave laws, or another applicable federal or state law will be administered in accordance with the applicable law and ACE policy.

Employees should notify ACE when an absence involves circumstances that may qualify for protected leave.

For FMLA-eligible employees, ACE requires available accrued PTO to run concurrently with unpaid FMLA leave as permitted by law. Use of PTO does not extend the employee's FMLA entitlement.

Employee Responsibilities Before Approved Leave:

Approval of time off does not relieve an employee of the responsibility to appropriately prepare for the absence.

Before planned leave, employees must complete responsible preparations necessary to maintain continuity of services.

Instructional employees must ensure that required lesson plans, student information, schedules, instructional materials, emergency substitute information, and other required materials are current and available in accordance with ACE procedures.

Employees may not condition their absence upon another employee informally agreeing to "cover" their responsibilities. Staffing and coverage decisions remain the responsibility of ACE administration.

Failure to Follow Time-Off Procedures:

Failure to comply with this policy may result in the absence being designated as unapproved, unexcused, or unpaid, as permitted by applicable law and ACE policy.

Examples include:

- Taking planned time off without approval
- Failing to provide required advance notice

- Failing to follow call-off procedures
- Failing to report an absence
- Failing to enter required leave information
- Falsifying the reason for an absence or documentation
- Failing to provide required documentation
- Failing to return to work as scheduled without authorization

Violation may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

No Call/No Show:

Failure to report to work without properly notifying ACE constitutes a no call/no show and may result in disciplinary action.

An employee who fails to report to work or notify ACE for **three (3) consecutive scheduled workdays** may be considered to have voluntarily resigned employment, subject to applicable law and the circumstances involved.

Policy Administration:

The Executive Director is responsible for the administration and interpretation of this policy.

ACE reserves the right to modify scheduling and leave procedures as necessary to meet student, staffing, safety, instructional, therapeutic, and operational needs.

Nothing in this policy is intended to interfere with, restrict, or deny any employee right provided by applicable federal or state law.

Governance Recommendation: 8.6.27

Board Approval:

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