

Pataula Charter Academy Enrollment Policy

Purpose:

The purpose of this policy is to give guidance on student enrollment for the purposes of consistency and maintaining legal and regulatory compliance.

Policy Statement:

Pataula Charter Academy (PCA) shall abide by the provisions stated in Federal and State law regarding enrollment and shall forbid discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, or age in its programs and activities. As such PCA will adhere to the following enrollment provisions:

1. Official Attendance Zone

The official attendance zone of PCA shall include the following Georgia counties: Baker, Calhoun, Clay, Early, and Randolph as has been duly approved in the charter by state authorizing agencies.

2. Enrollment Eligibility/Criteria

Any student who resides with a parent/legal guardian within the official attendance zone and provides a timely and valid evidence of proof of residency within the official attendance zone shall be considered eligible for enrollment except as set forth herein. Valid evidence of proof of residency shall be defined as forms of evidence required by other public schools in the State of Georgia and as defined in PCA's policies or procedures

The enrollment criteria above notwithstanding, a student shall be restricted from enrolling when PCA determines that:

- (1) The student is currently subject to a disciplinary order in another school or school district, including a short term suspension, long-term suspension, or expulsion; and
- (2) The offense which led to the suspension or expulsion in the other school or school district was an offense for which suspension or expulsion could be imposed pursuant to PCA's Code of Conduct.

Such enrollment restriction shall remain in place for the time remaining on the existing disciplinary order.

Moreover, if upon receipt of an enrolling student's disciplinary record or other evidence from the student's prior school or school district, PCA determines that the student's prior conduct:

- (1) Constitutes a violation of PCA's Code of Conduct for off-campus behavior;
- (2) Could result in the student being criminally charged with a felony; and
- (3) Makes the student's continued presence at school a potential danger to persons or property at the school or disrupts the educational process.

In such an instance, PCA shall enroll the student, but shall hold a disciplinary hearing in accordance with its tribunal policy to determine whether a violation of the Code of Conduct has occurred and, if so, the appropriate sanction.

PCA shall not have any other enrollment criteria.

3. Pre-Enrollment Process

There will be an open pre-enrollment period each year during which time students interested in attending PCA may submit a basic pre-enrollment application. The dates and times for this open enrollment period shall be established by the school's administration. The pre-enrollment application shall only ask for basic information such as name, grade, county of residence, and contact information.

All students currently enrolled at the time of the deadline for pre-enrollment applications will automatically be placed for the following school year.

All other applicants will be enrolled based on a random lottery to be held in accordance with the provisions set in the Enrollment Lottery Section of this policy.

4. Enrollment Priority

As allowed by law PCA may give enrollment priority to applicants in either of the following categories, as prioritized in the Charter:

1. Currently enrolled students, so long as the student remains eligible according to the eligibility criteria;
2. Any student whose parent or guardian is a member of the governing board of the charter school or is a full-time teacher, professional, or other employee at the charter school; and
3. A sibling of a student enrolled in the charter school;

In order to clarify the above general terms set out in the Charter, and to fairly and consistently provide for priorities, which are statutorily authorized exceptions to the lottery's uniform and fair method of assigning enrollment placements, the Governing Board of PCA finds that the following definitions are in the best interests of PCA and shall control in the interpretation of the Charter's specified enrollment priorities.

Siblings: For the purposes herein, to facilitate the maintenance of a stable family unit within the same household and to foster and facilitate an effective and productive home learning environment, it is the goal and policy of PCA to define a sibling as follows:

A sibling is defined as:

1. Biological siblings that share parents;
2. "Half" siblings that share a single parent;
3. "Step" siblings that share a parent or parents through marriage;
4. Children who share a parent or parents through adoption or guardianship; and
5. Foster children awaiting permanent placement during their tenure in the same household.

Governing Board, Teacher or Other Employee: For the purposes herein, to facilitate the maintenance of a stable family unit within the same household, to foster and facilitate an effective and productive home learning environment, and to support regular service to the school, it is the goal and policy of PCA to define a member of the governing board of the charter school, a full-time teacher, professional, or other employee of PCA as follows:

1. An appointed member of the Pataula Charter Academy Governing Board;
2. A full-time teacher with PCA;
3. A full- or part-time teaching assistant or paraprofessional working with and under a full-time teacher;
4. Personnel holding a regular, full- or part-time position, hired for the performance of professional, administrative, after school, athletic, or secretarial services;
5. Full-time janitorial or maintenance staff;
6. A full- or part-time, regularly-scheduled school nurse or other medical professional; and
7. Other employees, under contract, who hold regularly-scheduled part-time jobs at PCA.

All of the foregoing board members, teachers, and other employees must currently be serving in that capacity to be eligible for enrollment priority under this policy.

Members of Committees of The Board who are not also members of the PCA Governing Board are not eligible for the enrollment priority. Additionally, the following are not deemed to be employees of PCA for the purposes of the Enrollment Priority Policy:

1. Contractors or subcontractors;
2. Long-term or short-term substitute teachers
3. Persons employed by other school districts that provide regular or intermittent services to PCA;

4. Volunteers; and
5. Other vendors or service providers

Upon the parent or guardian's separation of employment with PCA or termination of membership on the PCA Governing Board, the established Enrollment Policies will govern the enrollment of future students but shall not impact the enrollment status of any current student.

5. Enrollment Lottery and Waiting List

As defined in the PCA Charter, a random lottery process will be implemented to fill student vacancies in such cases where the numbers of pre-enrollment applications exceed the capacity of any PCA program, class, grade level, or building. Enrollment is provisional until all documentation is received to confirm the following:

- residency,
- grade level, and
- that there is no discipline history that would prevent enrollment pursuant to the policy set forth herein.

If a lottery is required the lottery is to be held in an open forum and must be conducted in a manner that is consistent with Georgia Law and appropriate administrative procedures.

Wait list positions will not be secured from year to year.

Every reasonable effort shall be made to contact the next person on the wait list if a slot becomes available. However, if contact or a decision is not made within 72 hours the next student on the list may be extended the offer.

6. Enrollment

Once a student has been accepted through the lottery or otherwise, they will be required to complete a comprehensive enrollment packet with all the necessary documentation needed for public school enrollment. This will include an Affidavit of Residency with two proofs of residency to ensure the student lives within the attendance zone.

PCA shall not charge tuition or enrollment fees.

PCA shall not require its students to provide materials or equipment to participate in the educational program of the school. All required textbooks and other reading materials must be provided to the students free of charge.

Authority: O.C.G.A. § 20-2-751.2; 20-2-751.5; 20-2-2066

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