



Student Handbook

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GENERAL OVERVIEW

Palmetto Excel provides adults age 21+ the opportunity and support to earn an accredited high school diploma and develop career paths with industry-recognized certifications in sectors of the local economy that offer better-than-average employment and growth opportunities. The school will “meet students where they are” and empower them to complete their education by providing a flexible structure and supportive relationships to help them manage work, life, and family concerns as they achieve their educational goals.

Palmetto Excel Vision

At Palmetto Excel, we create an environment where students are empowered to genuinely engage, challenged to take ownership of their learning, and highly motivated to reach their goals.

Palmetto Excel Mission

How do we empower our students?

- We proactively develop individualized barrier removal strategies.

How do we engage our students?

- We collaboratively design relevant career and college pathways plans.

How do we motivate our students?

- We build confidence through relatable academic content that results in achievement and mastery of skills.

Program Description

Palmetto Excel is a publicly funded charter high school for adults age 21+ in the Tri-County area of the Lowcountry of South Carolina. Students are afforded the opportunity to earn an accredited high school diploma and career certification. We support our students in reaching their academic and career goals by offering drop-in childcare, transportation support, a flexible schedule within our school day (9 am - 3:50 pm), and academic coaching, all at no cost to students.

Palmetto Excel follows an established successful national model, sponsored by Palmetto Goodwill, where graduates have been shown to earn \$10,000 per year (on average) more than their peers and an estimated \$250,000 more in lifetime earnings. Graduates not only positively change their life trajectories, but they positively affect their communities and improve generational poverty within the Tri-County area.

Program Schedule

Palmetto Excel offers five academic terms per year in 8-week segments. This allows students to earn credits at an accelerated pace annually and reach their graduation goals much sooner than in a traditional high school.

The instructional days for Palmetto Excel students are Monday – Thursday for classes. There are 4 class periods daily, beginning at 9:00 AM and concluding at 3:50 PM. A midday lunch period occurs from

12:05 to 12:40. Students are responsible for providing their own lunch. On Fridays, students can attend tutoring, career pathway education, and opportunities for making up classwork; these activities are under the direction of staff members and may be optional days for students.

Non-Discrimination Policy

Palmetto Excel is committed to a policy prohibiting discriminatory practices in all aspects of its policies, programs, practices, and operations. All applicants and students shall be treated equally without regard to race, age, color, religion, gender or expression of gender identity, national origin, political affiliation, disability, matriculation, personal appearance, sexual orientation, family responsibilities, familial status, veteran status, marital status, pregnancy, childbirth, genetic background, or any other legally protected characteristic.

In compliance with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Palmetto Excel is a public charter high school that does not discriminate based on sex (including pregnancy and gender identity) in the educational programs and activities in which it operates, including employment, admissions, recruitment, referrals, and collective bargaining. If a student believes that he or she has been discriminated against in violation of Title IX, please reference Palmetto Excel's administrative offices.

For more information about Title IX, please contact:

Dr. Ruth Chambers-Turner

Director

Rchambers-turner@palmettoexcel.org

843-259-9076

STUDENT SERVICES

Academic Success Coaches

Each student at Palmetto Excel will be assigned to an academic success coach. This coach will help students address obstacles in their life that hinder educational progress and facilitate access to support services to help them stay in school and achieve their goals. The coach will meet the student individually to construct a graduation plan and provide the student opportunities to share concerns and address any barriers the student may face. Regular meetings may be scheduled based on the student's needs. Coaches are also responsible for tracking students' academic progress, scheduling courses, and addressing attendance or conduct concerns.

Childcare

Palmetto Excel will operate the Youth Learning Childcare (YLCC) center, a drop-in center for students with children between the ages of 8 weeks and 12 years. The drop-in center will only be available when a student attends classes, Palmetto Excel meetings, or studies on-site. The YLCC will be open from 8:40 AM until the end of the school day at 4:00 PM. The YLCC drop-in center provides an introductory curriculum and age-appropriate activities for children in attendance.

Transportation

Palmetto Excel academic success coaches may assist with solutions such as CARTA public transportation passes if students have transportation challenges to and from school. Palmetto Excel also distributes a limited number of gas cards. Students must be in good attendance standing to retain transportation support. Students who are struggling with transportation should let their coach know immediately.

Career Pathway and Certification Planning

All Palmetto Excel students will participate in career pathway planning and obtain an industry-recognized certification within an in-demand job category in the Greater Charleston area. With community certification partners such as Trident Technical College and KLR, all students will prepare for a career in one of these identified fields. Students may also discuss possible careers within the US Armed Forces and take the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) exam, which provides students with knowledge of what job categories best meet their talents. Likewise, all students will participate in the Senior Seminar course, preparing them with workplace skills, resume building, and interview rehearsals.

GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

Credits Needed

South Carolina students must earn 24 high school credits for an accredited diploma. These credits must be obtained in the following areas:

- English- 4 credits/ including participation in End-of-Course (EOC) testing in English.
- Mathematics- 4 credits/ including participation in EOC testing in Algebra I.
- Science- 3 credits/ including participation in EOC testing in Biology.
- Social Studies- 3 credits/ including EOC testing in US History and Constitution.
- Phys Ed/Health- 1 credit.
- Computer Science- 1 credit.
- Career Technical Ed./Certification (Credit substitutes for Foreign Language)- 1 credit.
- Personal Finance- .5 credit.
- Electives- 6.5 credits
- Senior Seminar – 1 credit

Palmetto Excel students must take EOC tests to earn a SC high school diploma. EOC testing accounts for 20% of final grades in EOC-tested courses. Students must earn a passing grade in EOC-tested courses to earn a SC high school diploma. All students must also earn a National or State Industry Certification or at least 6 hours of Dual Enrollment Credits to meet Palmetto Excel graduation requirements.

SPECIAL EDUCATION POLICY & PROCEDURES

A student who has been diagnosed with a disability, or who has had an IEP/504 Plan in the past, or who believes they have a disability and would like to be evaluated for special education services should discuss the matter with their Academic Success Coach or contact either the 504 Coordinator or Special Education Coordinator. Palmetto Excel has the following systems to proactively screen, identify, evaluate, and serve students suspected of having a disability.

Palmetto Excel Adult High School will issue an annual public notice to all attending students. The school is responsible for finding students who may be eligible for services under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. This notice shall inform students throughout the school of identification activities and the procedures followed to ensure the confidentiality of information about students with disabilities. If students believe they may be eligible for accommodations or services, they should contact the 504 Coordinator or Special Education Coordinator. Palmetto Excel utilizes a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) to implement interventions and problem-solve educational concerns. Student Rights in the 504 Process:

Student Rights in the 504 Process

The 504 process is collaborative. Palmetto Excel will work with students (and guardians if applicable) to identify, locate, and evaluate students who may need services. If screening results and other educational information provide the basis to suspect a disability, an evaluation planning meeting is scheduled to review available information and determine the additional information (if any) needed to consider eligibility, identify the student's strengths and weaknesses, and develop educational recommendations. The student (and guardians if applicable) will be provided Procedural Safeguards / Notice of Rights at the time of this collaborative meeting. If the student is referred for an evaluation, informed student consent must be obtained prior to beginning the evaluation. Once written consent is obtained, the district will proceed with the evaluation process. The initial evaluation must be conducted within 60 calendar days of receiving written consent for the evaluation.

Eligibility Determination

Once the evaluation process is completed, the collaborative team, including the student and school staff, reconvenes to review the evaluation and consider eligibility. The team must consider multiple sources of data when determining eligibility. Following the Eligibility Determination meeting, the student will receive a Prior Written Notice or Conference Summary explaining the decisions of the team and the district.

Confidentiality of Information

Palmetto Excel maintains confidential records concerning students enrolled in the school, including students with disabilities. Student consent (and guardian consent, where applicable) must be obtained before releasing personally identifiable information.

ATTENDANCE POLICY AND PROCEDURES

The Palmetto Excel (PE) offers classes in accelerated 8-week terms, which makes daily on-time attendance very important for students. Missing even one day of classroom instruction can dramatically slow progress and make a student's path to graduation longer.

For this reason, Palmetto Excel has structured policies around attendance to maximize student opportunities for success in its accelerated program and to support students in meeting their academic goals. Additionally, Palmetto Excel provides multiple interventions within these policies to allow time to understand student barriers to attendance, create support plans, and re-engage when students must temporarily halt attendance or are dismissed for non-attendance.

In-person Instruction

All classes are in-person classes. For in-person classes, the student must be physically present to be marked as in attendance.

Absences will be excused for the following reasons:

- Student illness (students may be required to provide a doctor's note for multiple day absence)
- Illness of a family member
- Student doctor's appointment
- Family member of a student doctor's appointment
- Death in the student's immediate family or close friend
- Observance of a religious holiday
- Absences to allow students to visit their parent or immediate family member in the military immediately before, during, or after deployment.
- Jury duty or attendance at court or an administrative hearing under a subpoena or as a party to the action.
- Emergency or other circumstances approved by the assigned Academic Success Coach

Getting Course Work After an Absence/Tardiness

If a student is absent from school (excused or unexcused), the student must take responsibility for getting assigned classwork from the teacher. The student and teacher determine the next steps for completing missed coursework and assignments. If a student encounters difficulties obtaining these materials, he or she should contact their coach for further assistance.

Students who are late to school (tardy) and miss classes must also obtain missed class notes and assignments from teachers. Students must be present for at least 50% of their assigned school day and for at least 50% of the assigned period to be considered "present" for the day. Chronic tardiness to classes may also result in an attendance conference and/or attendance plan from the Academic Success Coach.

Excused Absence Policy

If a student knows he/she has a planned absence (such as a doctor's appointment, family situation, or legal appointment) or an unplanned absence, the student should inform his/her Academic Success Coach as soon as possible to work out a plan for obtaining missed classwork. The Academic Success Coach will determine if these absences are excused or unexcused per the guidelines above.

For some absences to be excused, a student must bring a note or other documentation to their Academic Success Coach. Documentation or a message must be brought to the Academic Success Coach within five days of the student's return to school. Absences can only be excused by the student's Academic Success Coach or the school Director. Even if the absence is excused, the student will have missed work and class time that they must make up.

Absence Outreach

If a student has an overall attendance rate of 50% or below, the student's Academic Success Coach will contact the student to determine any issue, barrier, or support needed and reconnect the student with the teacher. The goal is to have the student resume constant in-person attendance and appropriate academic progress. Students are considered "present" when they attend at least 50% of their academic day and 50% of their assigned class period.

As soon as the student's overall attendance rate falls to 50%, or in the event chronic absence is causing academic difficulty, the student's Academic Success Coach will determine if an attendance support plan is needed. The Academic Success Coach determines this action based on the students' current communication, engagement, and productivity in classes. The Academic Success Coach will review an internal Palmetto Excel checklist to determine the necessary action. Based on that determination, the Academic Success Coach will complete one of the following:

- If a student is responsive to the coach, the coach will determine if a formal attendance support plan is needed.
- If a student is not responsive to the coach after four days (one academic week), then the student will be moved to the re-engagement list and have four days of creative outreach by the Palmetto staff to have the student return to classes.
- If the student does not respond after the four days on the re-engagement list, then the student is recommended to be withdrawn from Palmetto Excel.
- **If an attendance support plan is created**, students will be monitored for two weeks (8 school days). While on an attendance support plan, if the student is not responsive to the attendance support and/or is not showing progress (defined as absence for 3 of the four days of the plan), then a Student Support Team (SST) meeting will be scheduled.

The SST meeting may include the student, student's coach, and teacher(s) to discuss the student's current performance and if another attempt at intervention and planning to support the student in making up key assignments is feasible OR if the student should be recommended for withdrawal.

Palmetto Excel's Levels Of Attendance Support (Tiered Interventions And Support)

- Attendance Support Plan- may include voluntarily or involuntarily altering academic schedules and **students' mandatory attendance at Friday tutoring and make-up sessions.**
- Student Support Team Meetings (SST)
- Interim leave of absence - Temporary withdrawal from a term and return to Palmetto Excel the next academic term.
- Recommended for withdrawal from Palmetto Excel.

Attendance Support Plans

Attendance support plans are individualized plans to support a student who is consistently absent from class.

If a student experiences an overall attendance rate of 50% or lower, or if chronic absence is hindering academic progress, the student's Academic Success Coach will establish a conference with the student. The student must then meet with the Academic Success Coach within two school days of being contacted to discuss barrier removal services and/or to create an attendance support plan.

In consultation with other Palmetto Excel staff, the Academic Success Coach will determine if a student needs to be placed on an attendance plan. The Academic Success Coach will collaborate with the teacher(s) to determine the next steps for the student based on attendance and current productivity. This process allows the Academic Success Coach to understand the root cause of the absences and evaluate the student's current academic engagement level, productivity, and course schedule.

- During the eight school days following the plan's creation, the Academic Success Coach will carefully track the student's attendance. If a student is on an attendance support plan, the plan will include a timeline for all missing work and assignments with specific deadlines. The plan will also include tutoring times (designated Friday attendance), office hours, and next steps for makeup work and instruction.
- If the student has less than three absences during the eight-day period, then the student may no longer be subject to the plan. However, if the student remains consistently and consecutively absent while on the plan, additional actions will follow as outlined above. If the student still shows consistent or consecutive absences on the attendance support plan and after attempting other interventions, then the student will be recommended for withdrawal.

Withdrawal from Palmetto Excel for Non- Attendance

Any student who is withdrawn or wishes to withdraw will be allowed to re-enroll in the next **term if space is available. Withdrawn students returning to Palmetto Excel must reapply on the Palmetto Excel website and attend iExcel to be re-enrolled.**

Students with a 504 plan

For any student with an ADA Section 504 plan, there will be a Student Support Team meeting (SST). The 504 Coordinator will be consulted to determine what accommodations, if any, will be given to the student before withdrawing the student.

Childcare Accountability as it Relates to Attendance

Any student who has been awarded a childcare spot in the YLCC will forfeit the ability to have their child attend if the attendance plan is not followed and they are withdrawn from Palmetto Excel.

INCLEMENT WEATHER POLICY

In the event of inclement weather, Palmetto Excel will follow Charleston County Schools and Trident Technical College's closing or delayed opening decision. In addition, up-to-date information on emergency closing decisions will be on the Manager of Office Administration's voicemail at (843)-329-9662 and the Palmetto Excel website palmettoexcel.org.

CODE OF STUDENT CONDUCT

The Palmetto Excel conduct code aims to allow all students to pursue education in a safe and welcoming environment. Standards of conduct will reflect the expectations of the workplace and maintain an orderly educational environment for all students and staff.

Student Behavior Expectations

A culture of respect is critical to the success of Palmetto Excel. Students must demonstrate respect through appropriate actions, words, tone, and body language. All expected behavior is focused on preparing students for success in life and careers. Unacceptable behavior includes any behavior that harms another person or infringes on another student's ability to learn. This Code of Conduct applies to conduct on or adjacent to school property, or that is directed to students or staff of the school. After enrolling in Palmetto Excel, students are provided a copy of this policy and examples of how each infraction can be prevented, along with expectations around intervention, largely led by the Academic Success Coaches and Director Services.

Conduct Violations

To ensure expectations are clear for all students, below is a list of conduct violations -- classified by severity of the offense into five tiers -- along with the possible responses for each violation.

Tier 1 Behaviors

- Smoking cigarettes, e-cigarettes, cigars, or other tobacco-based products inside Trident Technical College property.

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- Wearing clothing that reveals private body parts, underwear, see-through clothing, or pieces of clothing that are extremely short.
- Violation of computer use policy for which no other response is specified in this policy.
- Arguing with Palmetto Excel staff, demonstrating defiant behavior, or exhibiting non-compliance with Palmetto Excel staff.
- Inappropriate dancing and/or sexually suggestive movement.
- Using sexually suggestive language, especially in a threatening or disruptive manner.
- Using profanity in a disruptive manner.

Tier 1 Responses

1st Offense Response	2nd Offense Response	3rd Offense Response
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student disciplinary write-up • Verbal re-direction/ coaching session 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student disciplinary write-up • Placement on a behavior modification plan • Mandatory mediation meeting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Placement on a behavior modification plan • Mandatory mediation meeting • Short-term (1-5 days) suspension if behavior is a safety threat

Tier 2 Behaviors

- Loud, boisterous behavior, including peer-to-peer arguing, language, and tones that disrupt Palmetto Excel, TTC, or patrons of area retail stores and restaurants.
- Being under the influence of drugs (including marijuana) or alcohol.
- Off-campus use of marijuana or other illicit drugs or alcohol that results in the student emitting an odor that is distracting to peers or Palmetto Excel staff.

Tier 2 Responses

1 st Offense Response	2 nd Offense Response	3 rd Offense Response
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student disciplinary write-up • Verbal re-direction /coaching session • Small group session • Leave campus to “air out” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student disciplinary write-up • Placement on a behavior modification plan • Mandatory mediation meeting • Small group session • Leave campus to “air out” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Placement on a behavior modification plan • Mandatory mediation meeting • Short-term (1-5 days) suspension if behavior is a safety threat • Leave campus to “air out”

Tier 3 Behaviors

- Committing academic dishonesty by copying from a peer, duplicating a peer’s work and submitting it as one’s work, cutting and pasting Internet-based content, and submitting it as one’s own and/or printing Internet content and submitting as one’s own.
- Engaging in sexual activity on the Palmetto Excel or TTC campus, including exposure and contact with private body parts.
- Stealing and/or attempting to steal from Palmetto Excel as a school, Palmetto Excel staff, and/or Palmetto Excel peers items valued at less than \$100.

Tier 3 Responses

1 st Offense Response	2 nd Offense Response	3 rd Offense Response
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student disciplinary write-up • Mandatory tutoring • Small group session • Academic probation • Community service • Short term (1-5 days) suspension • Failure of class (academic dishonesty) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student disciplinary write-up • Placement on a behavior modification plan • Mandatory mediation meeting • Small group session • Academic probation • Community service • Failure of class (academic dishonesty) • Short term (1-5 days) suspension • Long term suspension/expulsion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short term (1-5 days) suspension • Long term suspension/expulsion • Failure of class (academic dishonesty)

Tier 4 Behaviors

- The use of technology to access sexually and/or violently explicit content, to post inappropriate or unauthorized pictures, and/or post threats, embarrassing, or hurtful images of Palmetto Excel peers.
- Engaging in sexual harassment by proposing or soliciting sexual favors, sex-based responses, or reactions, especially in a way that is offensive, obscene, and/or hurtful.
- Bullying or otherwise making threats; physically or verbally intimidating a Palmetto Excel staff member and/or peer.
- Stealing and/or attempting to steal from Palmetto Excel as a school, Palmetto Excel staff, and/or Palmetto Excel peers items valued at \$100 or greater.
- Creating or falsifying communications, records, or documents, including phone records

and text.

- Committing false alarms.
- Fighting or otherwise engaging in violence; causing physical harm to another person.
- Malicious destruction of property causing less than \$1,000 in damage.
- Possession, use, sale, or exchange of a dangerous weapon such as a knife or box cutter.
- Possession or use of drug paraphernalia or a drug that is illegal under Federal law (including marijuana) in or within 500 feet of Palmetto Excel. (*Note:* see Tier 5 for more serious drug offenses.) *Note:* any materials confiscated by Palmetto Excel under this provision will be turned over to the police.
- Suspended for a tier 1-4 infraction two times or more.

Tier 4 Responses

1st Offense Response	2nd Offense Response	3rd Offense Response
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student disciplinary write-up • Community service • Short-term (1-5 days) suspension 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student disciplinary write-up • Placement on a behavior modification plan • Require cellphone to be “checked” with Academic Success Coach each day • Mandatory mediation meeting • Community service • Short-term (1-5 days) suspension • Long term suspension/expulsion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short-term (1-5 days) suspension • Long term suspension/expulsion

Tier 5 Behaviors

Hitting or otherwise assaulting a Palmetto Excel staff member, or threatening serious bodily harm to a Palmetto Excel staff member, or:

Any conduct that is a felony under South Carolina or Federal law, such as:

- Felony assault (such as assault with a dangerous weapon, assault with intent to cause serious bodily harm, or assault while committing another crime).
- Robbery (theft of something from a person’s immediate possession).
- Possession of a firearm; possession of a switchblade (spring loaded) knife; possession of a knife that is longer than three inches with intent to use the knife unlawfully against another person. Note: any materials confiscated by Palmetto Excel under this provision will be turned over to the police.
- Manufacturing, sale, or possession with intent to distribute of a schedule I, II or III controlled substance. Note: any materials confiscated by Palmetto Excel under this provision will be turned over to the police.
- Malicious destruction of property causing more than \$1,000 in damage.
- Bomb threat.

Tier 5 Responses

1 st Offense Response
Expulsion

Discipline Process

The student is written up by the teacher (if the incident occurred in class), an Academic Success Coach, or a non-instructional staff member (if the incident did not occur in class), and the write-up goes to the Director.

After class (if it is a Tier 1 incident that occurred in class) or after the incident (in all other cases), the Director meets with the student and, if available, the student’s Academic Success Coach. During this meeting, the student is to complete a “First Person Narrative,” which is an opportunity for the student to tell what happened in writing from their perspective.

The student follows the remainder of their daily schedule unless a suspension is issued before the end of the school day. If a suspension is issued, the student will leave Palmetto Excel immediately.

The teacher (or other staff) must complete a “First Person Narrative” no later than the beginning of the next business day.

The Director reviews both First-Person Narratives and determines the appropriate discipline intervention based on the disciplinary protocol and past offenses with the goal of making the discipline individualized, fair, equitable, developmentally appropriate, proportionate to the severity of the student’s offense, and, where appropriate, restorative.

Law enforcement will be involved only if school personnel determine that student behavior cannot safely and appropriately be handled through other disciplinary action.

Following is a description of each discipline intervention.

Disciplinary Write-Up and Verbal Re-direction/Coaching

Counseling by an Academic Success Coach is the initial step to mentor or modify conduct. The Coach will discuss the behavioral concern or conduct violation, affirm expectations regarding conduct, and communicate the response if there is no improvement. Coaching will be documented in the student’s file. Immediate resolution of the problem or issue is expected, and coaches will follow up with the student to ensure consistent success.

Behavior Modification Plan

The conduct violation and expectations will be communicated in writing to the student, and the student will be provided with a written behavior modification plan. Immediate resolution of the problem or issue is expected.

Short Suspension (1-5 days)

The Director will investigate the conduct violation and adhere to the student discipline code of conduct. The Director will meet with the student to give the student notice of the charge and the information the school has to believe the student engaged in the conduct. The student will be allowed to present his/her side of the story and/or an explanation for his/her behavior verbally and through completing a “first person narrative.” If, after receiving

the student's statement, the Director determines that a suspension is warranted, the student will be told the timeframe for the suspension. A letter including the length and reason for the suspension will be given to the student. All students receiving suspension will be afforded the opportunity to appeal (see process in next section). Immediate resolution of the problem or issue is expected upon a student's return. While suspended, students will receive work and access to teachers and coaches to assist them. Any schoolwork that the student cannot complete during the suspension may be made up upon returning to school.

Suspensions may only be used to ensure safety or respond to the most serious offenses.

**Long Term Suspension
(6-10 days) or
Expulsion**

Expulsion may be necessary when any of the above interventions do not improve conduct or if a student commits a Tier 5 or multiple Tier 4 conduct violations. The Director should investigate the matter promptly (ordinarily within three days) and review the performance history and record of progressive discipline with the Senior Director. If the decision is made to move forward with expulsion, a hearing shall be scheduled promptly (and ordinarily to occur within five days of the decision to proceed with the hearing). Written notice must be provided at least 1-2 days before the expulsion hearing of the specific grounds for the expulsion and the nature of the evidence supporting the expulsion. The decision maker at the hearing shall be impartial and shall only consider evidence presented at the hearing. The student shall be permitted to present evidence at the hearing. The decision shall be provided in writing to the student promptly after the hearing (ordinarily within two days). All students receiving expulsion will be afforded the opportunity to appeal (see process in next section). While suspended, students will receive work and access to teachers and coaches to assist them. Any schoolwork the student cannot complete during the suspension may be made up upon returning to school.

When a staff member recommends the expulsion of a student,

the School Director or Director may suspend the student until the conclusion of the investigation, following the procedure for short suspensions outlined above. This may occur if the school Director or designee believes that the students must be suspended immediately to prevent or substantially reduce the risk of:

- Interference with an educational function or school purposes; or
- A physical injury to themselves, other students, school employees, or visitors to the school.

Long-term suspensions and expulsions may only ensure safety or respond to the most serious offenses.

Discipline Appeal Process

Students shall have two business days after being notified of a suspension or expulsion to contact the school Director to request a meeting to appeal a suspension or expulsion. The staff hearing the appeal shall, if feasible, be above, in the supervisory chain of the school, the person who made the suspension or expulsion decision. During the meeting, the student shall have the right to review the summary of the conduct violations and present their case.

Discipline Process for Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities who demonstrate conduct violations will immediately be referred to the Special Populations Coordinator, who will develop and implement intervention plans. Students with conduct violations that could be the direct result of their disabilities will be required to attend a mandatory intervention meeting with their instructors, their Academic Success Coach, and the Special Populations Coordinator.

Return After Expulsion

An expulsion from Palmetto Excel will ordinarily be for five terms, equivalent to one full year. After five terms, a student can re-apply to Palmetto Excel using the same process and subject to the same requirements as any other student. Before the first day of class, he/she will also be required to (1) submit a letter to the school Director explaining why he/she is ready to return to Palmetto Excel and (2) participate in a re-entry meeting with the student's Academic Success Coach, the School Director and the Senior Director.

Bullying Prevention Policy

Palmetto Excel (“Palmetto Excel”) strives to be a place where all students can learn within a safe environment. Acts of bullying, harassment, and intimidation is an attack on core Palmetto Excel values. Thus, Palmetto Excel has established this comprehensive bullying prevention policy to facilitate our mission. This policy aims to protect the dignity and safety of the Palmetto Excel community. Palmetto Excel staff will promptly report and investigate all bullying incidents and apply appropriate consequences to those who engage in bullying. No bullying will be tolerated.

Definition of Bullying

Bullying means any severe, pervasive, or persistent act or conduct, whether physical, electronic, or verbal, that:

1. May be based on a student’s actual or perceived race, color, ethnicity, religion, national origin, sex, age, marital status, personal appearance, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, intellectual ability, familial status, family responsibilities, matriculation, political affiliation, genetic information, disability, source of income, status as a victim of an intra-family offense, place of residence or business, or any other distinguishing characteristic, or on a student’s association with a person, or group with any person, with one or more of the actual or perceived foregoing characteristics; and
2. Can reasonably be predicted to:
 - a. Place the student in reasonable fear of physical harm to their person or property;
 - b. Cause a substantial detrimental effect on the student’s physical or mental health;
 - c. Substantially interfere with the student’s academic performance or attendance;
or
 - d. Substantially interfere with the student’s ability to participate in or benefit from the services, activities, or privileges provided by Palmetto Excel.

Prohibition against Bullying and Retaliation

Acts of bullying, including cyberbullying, whether by a student, volunteers, or staff, are prohibited:

1. On Palmetto Excel grounds and immediately adjacent property,
2. At Palmetto Excel sponsored or related events on and off Palmetto Excel grounds,
3. On transportation provided or sponsored by Palmetto Excel,
4. Using any electronic devices owned by Palmetto Excel or
5. Using any electronic devices not owned by Palmetto Excel if the acts of bullying or

cyberbullying -- such as messages on social media – create a hostile environment at Palmetto Excel for the victim or witnesses, infringe on their rights at Palmetto Excel, or materially and substantially disrupt the orderly operation of Palmetto Excel.

Retaliation against a student, volunteer, or staff member who reports bullying, provides information about an act of bullying, or witnesses an act of bullying is also prohibited, and this will also result in disciplinary action.

Reporting Incidents of Bullying or Retaliation

Palmetto Excel expects all staff members and volunteers to report incidents of bullying or retaliation they witness or are made aware of. Staff members should immediately report all such incidents to the Director.

Students, parents, guardians, and community members are encouraged by Palmetto Excel to report any incidents of bullying or retaliation that they witness or of which they are made aware. Bullying or retaliation should be reported to:

Dr. Ruth Chambers-Turner

Director

Rchambers-turner@palmettoexcel.org

843-259-9076

Reports of bullying or retaliation made by students, parents, guardians, and community members may be anonymous.

A student, volunteer, or employee who promptly and in good faith reports an incident of, or information about, bullying in compliance with this policy shall be immune from a cause of action for damages arising from the making of such report.

Investigating Incidents of Bullying

The Director is responsible for investigating reports of bullying. An investigation of an incident will be initiated promptly after the Director receives a bullying report and will ordinarily conclude no later than 30 days after such a report. As part of the investigation, the Director may interview involved or relevant parties, including alleged victims, bullies, witnesses, staff, parents, or guardians.

The Director will provide confidentiality as far as possible to relevant parties as part of the investigation and inform all relevant parties that retaliation for reporting acts of bullying is prohibited.

The Director is charged with determining whether a reported incident constitutes a case of bullying. These determinations will be made considering the totality of the incident's circumstances.

Sanctions

Palmetto Excel recognizes that for sanctions to be an effective component of a bullying prevention plan, they must be applied consistently, fairly, and equitably. To this end, Palmetto Excel shall ensure that staff follow these guidelines as closely as possible while allowing flexibility to adapt sanctions to individual contexts. Furthermore, to ensure equitability in applying sanctions, measures will be applied on a graduated basis determined by the nature of the offense, the disciplinary history of the student involved, and the age and developmental status of the student involved. Responses to incidents of bullying or retaliation will be consistent with Palmetto Excel's Code of Conduct and Discipline Policy and may include:

- Verbal Re-direction
- Behavior Modification Plan
- Short Suspension
- Expulsion

Appeals

Parties dissatisfied with the outcome of a bullying investigation may appeal the determination of the Director. This appeal should be submitted no later than 30 days after the initial determination. Upon receipt of an appeal, the school Director must conduct a secondary investigation within 30 days of receiving an appeal. These 30 days may be extended by up to 15 days if the School Director sets forth in writing why more time is needed to investigate. Additionally, upon the receipt of an appeal, the school Director must inform the party making the submission of their ability to seek additional redress.

PALMETTO EXCEL ACADEMIC & BEHAVIORAL EXPECTATIONS

Your success in school will undoubtedly influence your life. Consistent attendance, behavior, and giving your best effort academically is essential to your success. Palmetto Excel students make a positive mark on their school and community through diligent work, courtesy, honesty, and respect for school property and fellow students and staff. Once you have reviewed the Student Handbook, please sign and date below and return it to Palmetto Excel staff.

I certify that I have read, understand, and agree to the policies outlined in The Palmetto Excel Student Handbook. I further certify that I have received a copy of the student handbook.

Signature

Date

Received by: Palmetto Excel Staff Initials