

## **ATTENDANCE POLICY FOR PARADISE CHARTER MIDDLE SCHOOL**

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The Paradise Charter Middle School Board of Directors (hereinafter referred to as “the Board”) believes that absenteeism, whatever the cause, may be an early warning sign of poor academic achievement and may put students at risk of dropping out of school. The Board desires to ensure that all students attend school in accordance with the state's compulsory education law and take full advantage of educational opportunities provided by Paradise Charter Middle School (hereinafter referred to as ‘PCMS’ or “the School”).

The Principal/Superintendent or designee shall establish a system to accurately track student attendance to identify individual students who are chronically absent and truant, as defined in law and Board policy.

### **Excused Absences**

A student's absence shall be excused for the following reasons (Education Code 48205):

1. Personal illness, including mental and behavioral health
2. Quarantine under the direction of a county or city health officer
3. Medical, dental, optometrically, or chiropractic appointment.
4. For the purpose of attending the funeral services or grieving the death of either a member of the pupil's immediate family, or of a person that is determined by the pupil's parent or guardian to be in such close association with the pupil as to be considered the pupil's immediate family, so long as the absence is not more than five (5) days per incident. “Immediate family” means the parent or guardian, brother or sister, grandparent, or any other relative living in the household of the pupil.
5. For any of the following reasons, if an immediate family member of the pupil, or a person that is determined by the pupil's parent or guardian to be in such close association with the pupil as to be considered the pupil's immediate family, has died:
  - a. To access services from a victim services organization or agency.
  - b. To access grief support services.
  - c. To participate in safety planning or to take other actions to increase the safety of the pupil or an immediate family member of the pupil, or a person that is determined by the pupil's parent or guardian to be in such close association with the pupil as to be considered the pupil's immediate family, including, but not limited to, temporary or permanent relocation.

Absences under this section shall not be excused for more than three (3) days per incident, unless extended on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of the school administrator. "Immediate family" means the parent or guardian, brother or sister, grandparent, or any other relative living in the household of the pupil.

6. Upon advance written request by the parent/guardian and the approval of the Principal/Superintendent justifiable personal reasons including, but not limited to:

- a. Appearance in court
- b. Attendance at a funeral service
- c. Observance of a religious holiday or ceremony
- d. Attendance at religious retreats for no more than one schoolday per semester
- e. Attendance at an educational conference on the legislative or judicial process offered by a nonprofit organization

6. To spend time with an immediate family member who is an active duty member of the uniformed services, as defined in Education Code 49701, and has been called to duty for, is on leave from, or has immediately returned from, deployment.

Such absence shall be granted for a period to be determined at the discretion of the Principal/Superintendent.

7. Participation in religious instruction or exercises as follows: The student shall be excused for this purpose on no more than four (4) school days per month.

8. Attendance at a naturalization ceremony to become a United States citizen

9. A student who holds a work permit to work for a period of not more than five (5) consecutive days in the entertainment or allied industries shall be excused from school during the period that the student is working in the entertainment or allied industry for a maximum of up to five (5) absences per school year subject to the requirements of Education Code section 48225.5.

10. In order to participate with a not-for-profit performing arts organization in a performance for a public-school student audience for a maximum of up to five (5) days per school year provided the student's parent or guardian provides a written note to the school authorities explaining the reason for the student's absence.

11. For the purpose of participating in a cultural ceremony or event. "Cultural" for these purposes means relating to the habits, practices, beliefs, and traditions of a certain group of people.

12. For the purpose of a middle school pupil engaging in a civic or political event as indicated below, provided that the pupil notifies the school ahead of the absence. A “civic or political event” includes, but is not limited to, voting, poll working, strikes, public commenting, candidate speeches, political or civic forums, and town halls.

- a. A middle school pupil who is absent pursuant to this provision is required to be excused for only one schoolday-long absence per school year.
- b. A middle school pupil who is absent pursuant to this provision may be permitted additional excused absences in the discretion of a school administrator.

13. Other reasons authorized at the discretion of the Principal/Superintendent based on the student's specific circumstances.

For the purpose of the absences described above, immediate family means the student's parent/guardian, brother or sister, grandparent, or any other relative living in the student's household.

Students absent for the reasons deemed “excused” shall be allowed to complete all assignments and tests missed during the absence that can be reasonably provided and, upon satisfactory completion within a reasonable period of time, shall be given full credit for their work. The teacher of the class from which a student is absent shall determine which tests and assignments shall be reasonably equivalent to, but not necessarily identical to, the tests and assignments that the student missed during the absence.

#### Unexcused and Excessive Absences

Regular school attendance is critical for student success. Students who miss a significant number of school days without valid documentation (such as a doctor’s note or other verification) may be considered excessively absent. If a student accumulates 10 or more unexcused or unverifiable absences in a school year, the School may require that all future absences be verified with a doctor’s note or appropriate professional documentation.

Excessive absences without proper documentation may result in the following actions:

- A parent/guardian meeting with school administration
- Implementation of an Attendance Improvement Plan
- Referral to a Student Study Team or Attendance Review Board
- Additional interventions as outlined in the School’s tiered attendance response

All absences must be reported and documented in a timely manner. The School encourages families to communicate proactively about any barriers to attendance and to schedule appointments outside of school hours whenever possible.

#### Method of Verification

When students who have been absent return to school, they must present a satisfactory explanation verifying the reason for the absence. The following methods may be used to verify student absences:

1. Written note from parent/guardian, parent representative;
2. Conversation, in person or by telephone, between the verifying employee and the student's parent/guardian or parent representative. The employee shall subsequently record the following:
  - a. Name of student;
  - b. Name of parent/guardian or parent representative;
  - c. Name of verifying employee;
  - d. Date or dates of absence; and
  - e. Reason for absence
3. Visit to the student's home by the verifying employee, or any other reasonable method which establishes the fact that the student was absent for the reasons stated. The employee shall document the verification and include the information specified in item #2 above
4. Physician's verification
  - a. When excusing students for confidential medical services or verifying such appointments, School staff shall not ask about the purpose of such appointments but may contact a medical office to confirm the time of the appointment.
  - b. If a student has had ten (10) absences in the school year for illness verified by methods listed in #1-#3 above without a healthcare provider's note, any further absences for illness must be verified by a healthcare provider.

Insofar as class participation is an integral part of students' learning experiences, parents/guardians and students shall be encouraged to schedule medical appointments during non-school hours.

At the beginning of each academic year, notifications shall be sent to the parents/guardians of all students and to all students informing them that school authorities may excuse any student from school to obtain confidential medical services without the consent of the student's parent/guardian.

The Principal/Superintendent or designee shall ensure that staff assigned to fulfill attendance-related duties are trained in implementing a trauma-informed approach to chronic absence and receive information about the high correlation between chronic absence and exposure to adverse childhood experiences.

### **Chronic Absence and Truancy**

The Principal/Superintendent or designee shall consult with students, parents/guardians, school staff, and community agencies, as appropriate, to identify factors contributing to chronic absence and truancy.

A student's truancy, tardiness, or other absence from school shall not be the basis for suspension or expulsion. Alternative supportive strategies and positive reinforcement for attendance shall be used whenever possible.

The Principal/Superintendent, or designee shall develop a tiered approach to reducing chronic absence, which includes positive behavior supports and a restorative practice approach. Students who are identified as chronically absent or truant will receive interventions and/or behavior support. Such an approach shall include strategies for preventing attendance problems, which may include, but are not limited to, efforts to provide a safe and positive school environment, relevant and engaging learning experiences, school activities that help develop students' feelings of connectedness with the school, school-based health and/or mental health services, letters alerting parents/guardians to the value of regular school attendance, and incentives and rewards to recognize students who achieve excellent attendance or demonstrate significant improvement in attendance.

The tiered approach shall also provide for early outreach to students as soon as they show signs of poor attendance or if they were chronically absent in the prior school year. Early intervention may include identification and a support plan developed and monitored by school staff, personalized outreach, individual attendance plans, and/or mentoring to students with moderate levels of chronic absence, with additional intensive, interagency wrap-around services for students with the highest level of absence.

Students with serious attendance problems shall be provided with interventions specific to their needs, which may include, but are not limited to, health care referrals, transportation assistance, counseling for mental or emotional difficulties, academic support, efforts to address school or community safety concerns, discussions with the student and parent/guardian about their attitudes regarding schooling, or other strategies to remove identified barriers to school attendance. The Principal/Superintendent, or designee may collaborate with child welfare services, law enforcement, courts, public health care agencies, other government agencies, and/or medical, mental health, and oral health care providers to make alternative educational programs and support services available for students and families.

### Truancy Process

In accordance with Board policy:

1. Students shall be classified as truant if absent from school without a valid excuse three full days in one school year, or tardy or absent for more than any 30-minute period during the school day without a valid excuse on three occasions in one school year, or any combination thereof. Such students shall be reported to the Principal/Superintendent or designee.

The parent/guardian of a student classified as a truant shall be notified of the following:

- a. The student is truant;
  - b. The parent/guardian is obligated to compel the student to attend school;
  - c. The parent/guardian who fails to meet this obligation may be guilty of an infraction of the law and subject to prosecution;
  - d. The parent/guardian has the right to meet with appropriate school personnel to discuss solutions to the student's truancy;
  - e. The student may be subject to arrest by a probation officer, a peace officer, a school administrator, an attendance supervisor or their designee under Education Code section 48264 if found away from home and absent from school without a valid excuse;
2. Upon the third (3<sup>rd</sup>) unexcused absence or unexcused tardy over 20 minutes , a student and the parent or legal guardian will receive a first written warning and will be invited to attend a meeting with a school counselor or other school designee to discuss the root causes of the attendance issue and develop a joint plan to improve the pupil's attendance.
  3. Upon reaching four (4) unexcused absences or unexcused tardies over 30 minutes within the same school year, a student and their parent/guardian will be given a second written warning by the Principal/Superintendent. A record of the written warning may be kept at the school for not less than two years or until the pupil graduates or transfers from the school. If the student transfers from that school, the record may be forwarded to the school receiving the student's school records.
  5. Upon reaching five (5) unexcused absences or unexcused tardies over 30 minutes within the same school year, the student will be classified as a habitual truant and will receive a third written warning letter.
  4. Upon reaching six (6) unexcused absences or unexcused tardies over 30 minutes within the same school year, the student and their parent/guardian will required to attend, a school attendance review team ("SART") or a Student Study Team ("SST") meeting arranged by the Principal/Superintendent and a formal SART plan put in place.
  5. If the conditions of the SART plan are not met, the student may incur additional administrative action up to and including disenrollment from the Charter School, consistent with the Involuntary Removal Process described below.
  6. If a student is absent ten (10) or more consecutive school days without valid excuse and the student's parent/guardian cannot be reached at the number or address provided in the registration packet and does not otherwise respond to the Charter School's communication attempts, as set forth above, the student will be in violation of this Policy and the SART plan (if any) and may be subject to disenrollment in compliance with the Involuntary Removal Process described below. If

the student is disenrolled after the Involuntary Removal Process has been followed, notification will be sent within thirty (30) days to the student's last known school district of residence.

7. Any documentation received by the Charter School regarding a student's enrollment and attendance at another public or private school (i.e., CALPADS report) shall be deemed evidence of a **voluntary** disenrollment and shall not trigger the Involuntary Removal Process below.

8. For all communications set forth in this process, the Charter School will use the contact information provided by the parent/guardian in the registration packet. It is the parent's or guardian's responsibility to update the Charter School with any new contact information.

### **School Attendance Review Team Process**

The School Attendance Review Team ("SART") panel will be composed of the Principal/Superintendent and designee.. The SART panel will discuss the absence problem with the student's parent/guardian to work on solutions, develop strategies, discuss appropriate mental health support and other supportive services for the student and student's family, and establish a plan to resolve the attendance issue.

1. The SART panel shall direct the parent/guardian that no further unexcused absences or tardies can be tolerated.
2. The parent/guardian shall be required to sign the plan formalizing the agreement by the parent/guardian to improve the child's attendance or face additional administrative action. The plan will identify the corrective actions required in the future, and indicate that the SART panel shall have the authority to order one or more of the following consequences for non-compliance with the terms of the plan:
  - a. Parent/guardian to attend school with the child for one day
  - b. Student retention
  - c. After school detention program
  - d. Required school counseling
  - e. Loss of field trip privileges
  - f. Loss of school store privileges
  - g. Loss of school event privileges
  - h. Mandatory Saturday school
  - i. Required remediation plan as set by the SART
  - j. Notification to the County District Attorney
3. Notice of action recommended by the SART will be provided in writing to the parent/guardian.

### **Process for Students Who Are Not in Attendance at the Beginning of the School Year**

When a student is not in attendance on the first five (5) days of the school year, the Charter School will attempt to reach the student's parent/guardian on a daily basis for each of the first

five (5) days to determine whether the student has an excused absence, consistent with the process outlined in this policy. If the student has a basis for an excused absence, the student's parent/guardian must notify the Charter School of the absence and provide documentation consistent with this policy. However, consistent with process below, students who are not in attendance by the sixth (6<sup>th</sup>) day of the school year due to an unexcused absence will be disenrolled from the Charter School roster after following the Involuntary Removal Process described below, as it will be assumed that the student has chosen another school option.

1. Students who are not in attendance on the first (1<sup>st</sup>) day of the school year will be contacted by phone to ensure their intent to enroll in the Charter School.
2. Students who have indicated their intent to enroll but have not attended by the third (3<sup>rd</sup>) day of the school year and do not have an excused absence will receive a letter indicating the student's risk of disenrollment.
3. Students who have indicated their intent to enroll but have not attended by the fifth (5<sup>th</sup>) day of the school year and do not have an excused absence will receive a phone call reiterating the content of the letter.
4. Students who are not in attendance by the sixth (6<sup>th</sup>) day of the school year and do not have an excused absence will receive an **Involuntary Removal Notice** and the CDE Enrollment Complaint Notice and Form. The Charter School will follow the Involuntary Removal Process described below, which includes an additional five (5) schooldays for the parent/guardian to respond to the Charter School and request a hearing before disenrollment.
5. The Charter School will use the contact information provided by the parent/guardian in the registration packet.
6. Within thirty (30) calendar days of disenrollment, the Charter School will send the student's last known school district of residence a letter notifying it of the student's failure to attend the Charter School.
7. Any documentation received by the Charter School regarding a student's enrollment and attendance at another public or private school (i.e., CALPADS report) shall be deemed evidence of a voluntary disenrollment and shall not trigger the Involuntary Removal Process below.

### **Involuntary Removal Process**

No student shall be involuntarily removed by the Charter School for any reason unless the parent or guardian of the student has been provided written notice of the Charter School's intent to remove the student ("Involuntary Removal Notice"). The Involuntary Removal Notice must be provided to the parent or guardian no less than five (5) schooldays before the effective date of the proposed disenrollment date.



The written notice shall be in the native language of the student or the student's parent or guardian or, if the student is a foster child or youth or a homeless child or youth, the student's educational rights holder. The Involuntary Removal Notice shall include:

1. The charges against the student
2. An explanation of the student's basic rights including the right to request a hearing before the effective date of the action
3. The CDE Enrollment Complaint Notice and Form

The hearing shall be consistent with the Charter School's expulsion procedures. If the student's parent, guardian, or educational rights holder requests a hearing, the student shall remain enrolled and shall not be removed until the Charter School issues a final decision. As used herein, "involuntarily removed" includes disenrolled, dismissed, transferred, or terminated, but does not include suspensions or expulsions pursuant to the Charter School's suspension and expulsion policy.

Upon a parent's or guardian's request for a hearing, the Charter School will provide notice of hearing consistent with its expulsion hearing process, through which the student has a fair opportunity to present testimony, evidence, and witnesses and confront and cross-examine adverse witnesses, and at which the student has the right to bring legal counsel or an advocate. The notice of hearing shall be in the native language of the student or the student's parent or guardian or, if the student is a foster child or youth or a homeless child or youth, the student's educational rights holder and shall include a copy of the Charter School's expulsion hearing process.

If the parent/guardian is nonresponsive to the Involuntary Removal Notice, the student will be disenrolled as of the effective date set forth in the Involuntary Removal Notice. If parent/guardian requests a hearing and does not attend on the date scheduled for the hearing, the student will be disenrolled effective the date of the hearing.

If as a result of the hearing the student is disenrolled, notice will be sent to the student's last known school district of residence within thirty (30) calendar days.

A hearing decision not to disenroll the student does not prevent the Charter School from making a similar recommendation in the future should student truancy continue or re-occur.

### **Reports**

The Principal/Superintendent or designee shall periodically report to the Board regarding student attendance patterns, including rates of chronic absence, and truancy rates for the school, by grade level and numerically significant student groups as defined in Education Code 52052. Such information shall be used to evaluate the effectiveness of strategies implemented to reduce chronic absence and truancy and to develop annual goals and specific actions for student

attendance and engagement to be included in the Paradise Charter Middle School charter, local control and accountability plan and other applicable school plans.

**Adopted: January 24, 2023**

**Amended: June 12, 2025**