



The Pennsylvania
LEADERSHIP
CHARTER SCHOOL

INFO PACKET

PALCS MAKES IT POSSIBLE!

Welcome to THE PENNSYLVANIA LEADERSHIP CHARTER SCHOOL



A Note from Our CEO

My name is Dr. Karla Johnson, and I am the proud CEO of The Pennsylvania Leadership Charter School (PALCS).

At PALCS, we embrace an innovative approach to education that meets every student's unique needs and prepares them for success in the future.

For more than 20 years, PALCS has remained committed to excellence through a strong curriculum, flexibility, and continuous innovation in K-12 cyber education. We take great pride in providing high quality courses, meaningful learning experiences, and robust resources that empower our students. It is an honor to continue serving the families and students of Pennsylvania.

The Pennsylvania Leadership Charter School (PALCS) is a state-licensed public cyber charter school for students in Kindergarten through grade 12 who reside within the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. PALCS is a publicly funded school, and any Pennsylvania resident between the ages of 5 and 21 is eligible to enroll. In operation since 2004, PALCS curriculum meets or exceeds all Pennsylvania State Academic Standards set by the PA Department of Education. Students attend school online Monday-Friday during the school year. They can access lessons and submit assignments on our school website, PALCSchool.org.

Our Mission

The Mission of The Pennsylvania Leadership Charter School is to provide an academically challenging, knowledge-based curriculum, individually designed for each child's needs. PALCS will combine the benefits of a classical-based education with cutting edge technology and proven teaching and learning education practices.

By studying the lives and works of the great leaders in history, PALCS students will develop multicultural perspectives and a global awareness. PALCS will prepare students to be informed, responsible citizens who will succeed through mentoring leadership.

Our Vision

The Pennsylvania Leadership Charter School's vision is to provide parents with an option for public education that tailors an educational experience to the unique needs of their child and allows them to receive that experience via the World Wide Web. PALCS teachers are encouraged to develop their own curriculum, resources, and alternative learning styles to ensure that each student experiences the most effective pedagogy.



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Attendance

PALCS follows a standard school year of 180 days. In order to track attendance, students are required to log into PALCSchool every school day, Monday-Friday, excluding assigned school holidays.

The PALCS education model is primarily asynchronous, with multimedia lessons posted and accessible at flexible hours. However, assignments have regular deadlines and are paired with live virtual lessons.

Students need to log in every school day and be sure work is completed but are not required to log in at the same time every day or be online for a certain length of time. It is strongly suggested that families create a school routine.

The flexible structure gives students the ability to participate in enrichment activities, such as traveling, sports, or performing, and also allows students to spend as much or as little time as needed to successfully complete their work.

As PALCS covers public school core content, completing work may take roughly the length of a traditional school day. However, this is quite flexible from day-to-day and varies based on student age, course difficulty level, and the number of classes a student is taking. Students usually engage in schoolwork 4-7 hours per day.

Calendar, attendance, and more: palcs.org/policies

Daily Posted Assignments

Students will log on every school day and see lessons and assignments posted for their classes by highly qualified, PA-certified teachers. Daily posted lessons include written and narrated material, videos, presentations, educational games, and other interactive elements.

Students complete assignments to show what they have learned. Students may take quizzes, complete writing exercises, worksheets, or projects, post to forums with other students, or make and submit audio or video recordings.

Lessons are posted about a week before assignment due dates. Students have until 11:59 p.m. on the due date to complete and submit work. Assignments may be completed any time before the due date, though students may only work ahead as far as lessons are posted. Assignments should be challenging but not overwhelming.

Students spend most of their school time working in this asynchronous fashion. Students can re-watch videos, spend the right amount of time on work, and take breaks. Teachers grade and respond individually to student assignments.

Explore our school demo: palcs.org/demo



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Live Instruction

Each course has at least one live virtual lesson per week. Teachers will host a Zoom session that lasts about an hour with a small group of students on a similar academic level on a recurring weekly schedule. The live session will enhance students' knowledge of the asynchronous lessons posted for the week.

Most sessions are slotted into a one hour window between about 9 a.m.–2 p.m. during the week. For example, a live Language Arts lesson may be every Monday at 10 a.m. and a live Math lesson may be every Tuesday at 1 p.m.

Students will see their teacher and other students in the class. Students must either attend the session live or watch a recording of the session. For most classes in middle and high school, as well as elementary electives, students have the choice of live attendance or watching a recording, although live attendance is strongly encouraged. Live attendance is mandatory for elementary students for two core courses. Depending on course selection and student ability level, other live attendance may be required. Teachers are also available for optional lesson help many times during the week.

Watch sample lessons: palcs.org/live-lessons

Academic Standards

As a public school, PALCS curriculum follows the PA Standards Aligned System and meets or exceeds all Pennsylvania Core Standards. PALCS courses are academically equivalent to traditional brick-and-mortar school courses and taught by PA-certified teachers.

PALCS teachers curate quality material for courses. Most instructional material is designed by our

teachers, so students will see course information, video, and activities created by PALCS. We also review and select educational materials from a variety of well-known and reputable publishers, such as Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, Pearson, Holt McDougal, and McGraw Hill. We pair this with online resources, including but not limited to iReady, Newsela, Headsprout, Raz-Kids, ReflexMath, and Achieve3000. Everything needed for class online is accessed through our custom-built school website, PALCSchool.

Materials

PALCS provides access to educational tools and materials. Enrolled students receive a laptop, headset with microphone, and 3-in-1 printer/copier/scanner. Families provide a highspeed internet connection which is reimbursed by PALCS each semester.

Course materials are provided by PALCS. As a cyber school, all instruction is delivered online and assignments are submitted online. Most of our textbooks are digital. However, students in different grades and courses receive a variety of items. Students in elementary receive workbooks, as well as math manipulative kits and handwriting practice papers. Middle school and high school course materials are mostly digital. Most Language Arts courses provide some storybooks and novels and all provide access to a digital library. Most science labs are digital, though some grades receive science kits. Students taking art receive art kits.

Our curriculum serves as the foundation at PALCS. The greatest strength of this curriculum resides with the teachers, who develop unique courses with engaging content and interact with students on a daily basis.



Course Selection

PALCS offers over 250 courses across grades K-12. Courses have multiple levels of difficulty in all core courses (Language Arts, Math, Science, and Social Studies), with optional electives including Art, Music, Technology, and World Language at every grade level. PALCS is able to serve students who need extra support, are working on-level, or are working at an advanced pace in different courses. Academic, college-prep, and honors/AP tracks are available.

Course placement is based on a variety of individual student factors. If courses are already known for the year in a previous school, PALCS will attempt to match those courses. Upon enrollment, students are given a survey to indicate interest in courses, and placement testing is often administered to verify difficulty level. The results of this benchmark, along with previous academic records, teacher recommendation, and student work, are factors that are considered for placement or academic difficulty level. Once enrolled, families may ask academic questions directly to their teachers or others on the academic team.

View our course catalog: palcs.org/curriculum

Parent Involvement

At PALCS, we warmly embrace the concept of “Learning Coaches,” inviting parents/guardians into a nurturing partnership alongside teachers and the school to enrich the student’s educational journey. A Learning Coach, often the primary caregiver, plays a crucial role in guiding their child through the school’s online platform and ensuring assignments are completed on time. This commitment varies and is tailored to each child’s age, motivation, and unique learning needs. Especially for younger students, those facing motivational challenges, and students with special needs, a Learning Coach’s involvement is more

hands-on, helping them effectively engage with and complete their coursework. Despite PALCS teachers providing the core instruction, the Learning Coach’s role is pivotal, offering a support system that extends beyond the traditional roles found in conventional schools. Together, we create a warm, supportive learning environment that champions every student’s success.

**Check if PALCS is right for you:
palcs.org/compatibility**

Academic Assistance

PALCS teachers and students will get to know each other digitally through coursework. We expect that students will sometimes need support beyond posted work or live virtual lessons. PALCS teachers offer optional live lesson help several times during the week in a Zoom room. Teachers are generally available within school hours, 8 a.m.–4 p.m. Monday–Friday and can also be reached via email or phone. For extra assistance, we offer homework help with support teachers in the evenings.

For students who are struggling, academic advisors work as a team with the student, parents, teachers, and the school counselor to come up with a plan to get the student back on track. Parents have their own school login to monitor progress and may attend parent/teacher conferences.

**Get to know us:
palcs.org/academic-administration**



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School Counseling

The School Counseling department provides students with developmental, educational, preventative, and responsive services while encouraging and supporting educational achievement. Our school counseling department is fully staffed with a counselor for each grade level. As students progress toward graduation, the counseling department assists with future plans, such as selecting and applying to post-secondary education and finding scholarships.

Success

PALCS has been rated the #1 Online High School and Top 5 for online middle and elementary school in Pennsylvania by niche.com for years. The PALCS class of 2019 earned the highest SAT and ACT scores of all charter schools in the state. PALCS graduates receive a tier 1 public school diploma, recognized by the Pennsylvania Department of Education and all postsecondary schools. Thousands of PALCS graduates have attended schools ranging from community colleges, private schools, major state universities, and Ivy League schools.

What makes PALCS unique: palcs.org/compare

Special Programs

In addition to our standard coursework, there are several academic programs available for PALCS students.

The University Scholars Program provides core subject courses for accelerated and talented students. The Center for Performing and Fine Arts offers a pre-professional arts education. Both of these programs have competitive entry and offer blended online/on-site coursework opportunities for students in grades 6-12.

The Professional Studies Program is for students in grades 9-12 and offers online career exploration courses for students interested in the fields of business management, IT, hospitality and tourism, health and human services, and aviation.

Learn about our programs: palcs.org/programs

Socialization Opportunities

PALCS understands the importance of social connection. Online school is structurally different than traditional brick-and-mortar school; academics are mostly separate from socialization, so families can choose to engage in activities and interaction with other students. PALCS does offer live virtual lessons and some online class participation. Beyond that, students may select events that are of interest to them. PALCS offers online student activities and clubs, as well as organizes many field trips and events throughout the school year. Our field trips are both educational and engaging, giving students the opportunity to meet their peers and some of the PALCS faculty. PALCS also gives parents access to the Family Support Network for further interaction.

**See what activities we offer:
palcs.org/field-trips**



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Enrollment

The PALCS enrollment process has a few easy steps.

1. Start an application at palcs.org/enroll.

You will be asked to enter information about your family, your residence, your school, and other demographic data. If you have more than one student, finish the full application for your first student, and then you will be able to add another with some information carried over.

2. Submit your additional documents.

PALCS requires proof of age, an immunization record, and proof of residency. Acceptable documents are listed in the application and on the enrollment page. Documents can be submitted at the end of your application or emailed to admissions@palcs.org. Once your complete application and documents are received, PALCS Admissions will follow up with your family.

3. Get scheduled for an orientation.

PALCS now hosts online and in-person orientations. Your orientation will be scheduled for a morning or early afternoon on a weekday. Materials will be shipped to you, and our orientation team will cover school policies and help you get ready for school.

4. Become a PALCS Family!

Students are officially enrolled in PALCS after orientation. You are still an enrolled student with your current school until after your PALCS orientation. We will notify your school district once you are officially enrolled. Welcome to the PALCS community!

Start the Enrollment Process:
palcs.org/enroll-now

Questions

Find out what PALCS can make possible for your family. Email us at info@palcs.org or call 610-701-3333



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Special Education and IEP FAQ

Q1: Does PALCS provide education services for students with special education needs?

A1: Yes, we provide a free and appropriate public education to all students who qualify for special education services.

Q2: Will PALCS be able to adopt my son/daughter's IEP?

A2: We will offer comparable services for a Pennsylvania public school IEP* as it stands for the first 45-60 days of the enrollment. A meeting will be held within that time frame to make revisions as necessary due to the change in school and educational placement. During this meeting with our special education team, you will discuss your child's needs, the current IEP, and make any adjustments as needed.

** Students may come to us with an out of state IEP or a private school evaluation. The students may not automatically qualify for an IEP upon entering, but their paperwork will be reviewed and the next steps will be discussed at the orientation meeting (not prior).*

Q3: How does PALCS handle students with an IEP?

A3: We will collect all documents upon enrollment review and will propose comparable placement for the first 45-60 days of enrollment, after which an IEP meeting will be held. The student will be matched with a case manager upon enrollment who will serve as additional support.

Q4: Does PALCS provide a life skills program?

A4: Yes. Life Skills has virtual live lessons with your teacher, as well as daily assignments. These are tailored to each student's educational level and are aligned with alternative state standards.

Q5: Does PALCS provide related services such as Speech, OT, PT, and Tutors?

A5: Yes, we provide virtual/in-person related services and therapies. Related services are provided based on evaluation data and recommendations. Tutors are not offered to families until proper evaluations and interventions have occurred to ensure that we are providing the least restrictive environment for each student.

Q6: Can I keep my current related service provider? My child loves them and does really well.

A6: We cannot promise to keep your current provider, as we contract with a variety of outside agencies that manage and help us provide related services across the state. We can promise to provide services by qualified therapists/providers as long as it has been identified as a need for your child through the IEP process.

Special Education and IEP FAQ

Q7: My child does not have an IEP, but I want to request one; how long will it take to get one?

A7: Not all students qualify for an IEP. There is an initial evaluation process that needs to occur which is based on any current educational concerns. If a parent would like his/her child to be evaluated, the parent must complete an Evaluation Request Form. The request form will be reviewed by the special education department, and if the department believes that an evaluation is warranted based on the data provided, the parent will be asked to sign a Permission to Evaluate Form. A school psychologist will then contact the parent to set up an appointment for testing. It can take up to 60 days for an evaluation to be completed. If the student does qualify, an IEP meeting will be held within 30 calendar days.

Q8: My old school never followed the IEP, so I do not want it for my child anymore. Do you have to have it?

A8: In order to best serve your child, it is imperative that we have all current data and documentation related to any current or prior special education services that have been received. We request that parents provide us with all documents, but PALCS will also request this document from your previous school district.

** If the parent continues to desire to exit their child from Special Education, they should provide that request in writing to the Supervisor of Special Education. The supervisor will then issue a NOREP reflecting the request.*



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info@palcs.org

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Join us for an Info Session!