

Introduction

Students at Polk State College are expected to act in a responsible manner so as to support and enhance the educational process. Polk State has a tradition of excellent conduct by its students, and the degree of responsibility they exhibit is a reflection of the educational atmosphere of the college. Although the vast majority of students will never be affected when acts of unacceptable conduct occur, they must be dealt with in a manner supportive of our educational purpose.

Polk State's District Board of Trustees (DBOT) has established rules that define unacceptable conduct, set forth the penalties and disciplinary procedures that apply when violations occur, and describe the due process requirements that will be used. College administration has created Polk State Procedures to provide guidance for carrying out these rules.

The "Student Rights and Responsibilities" section of the Polk State Student Handbook reflects the rules and procedures as it provides all students with guidelines expected of them. All charter high school students and parents are expected to read and understand this section of the handbook. The handbook states, in part, as listed below.

Student safety is Polk State's priority. To ensure safety, the following actions are prohibited on campus, at any College-related activity, or at other locations as may be provided by law. Violation of any Board rules may lead to disciplinary warning, probation, suspension, expulsion, or other appropriate and authorized penalty. The following are some examples of unacceptable conduct:

- *Illegal use or possession of drugs or narcotics*
- *Actions which are disruptive to the normal, orderly and peaceful operation of the College*
- *Possession or consumption of alcoholic beverages in violation of State law and College policy*
- *Cheating or plagiarizing on tests, projects, or assignments*
- *Stealing*
- *Illegal gambling*
- *Use of indecent or abusive language*
- *Unauthorized use of the College name*
- *Lewd or indecent conduct*
- *Violation of local ordinances or of State or Federal law*
- *Hazing*
- *Forgery, alteration, or misuse of documents or records*
- *Furnishing false information with the intent to deceive*
- *Possession and/or use of firearms, fireworks, explosive chemicals, and other lethal weapons*
- *Repeated offenses of a less serious nature*
- *Participation by students in disruptive activities at state institutions of higher learning as defined and prohibited under the provision of Section 877.13, Florida Statutes*

In addition to the DBOT Rules and the PSC Procedures, the charter high schools have created policies to address Florida State Statutes that are specific to K-12 educational programs and schools and which supersede College rules and procedures to the degree specified in the text of the Statutes. This handbook presents these charter high school policies.

Polk State Charter high school Policies (*Superseding DBOT Rules and Polk State Procedures as specified by Florida Statute*)

HS.1 Teacher and Principal (Director) Control of Students (State Statute 1003.31)

During the time a student is on a school bus or is on the school campus participating in a designated charter high school class

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or activity, the student is under the control and direction of the principal (director) or his/her designee, the teacher, or other charter high school staff.

(Please note that since school bus transportation is provided through a contract with the Polk County School Board, students riding a school bus are also subject to all PCSB rules and policies while on the bus.)

HS.2 Authority of Teachers (State Statute 1003.32)

Each charter high school director will support the authority of charter high school teachers to remove disobedient, disrespectful, violent, abusive, uncontrollable, or disruptive students from the classroom; and when appropriate and available, place such students in an alternative educational setting.

HS.3 Tobacco Products (State Statute 386.212)

Students age 17 and under are not allowed to be in possession of tobacco products. Students caught in violation of this Statute may be fined \$25.00 by a law enforcement officer.

HS.4 Bullying and Harassment (State Statute 1006.147)

Bullying or harassment of any charter high school student or staff member is prohibited during any charter school related or sponsored program or activity or through the use of data or computer software that is accessed through a charter school computer, computer system or computer network.

“Bullying” means systematically and chronically inflicting physical hurt or psychological distress on one or more students and may involve teasing; social exclusion; threat or intimidation; stalking; physical violence; theft; sexual, religious or racial harassment; public humiliation; or destruction of property. *(Definition related to stalking is found in State Statute 784.048)*

“Harassment” means threatening, insulting, or dehumanizing gesture or the use of data or computer software or written, verbal or physical conduct directed against a charter school student or a staff member. It places a person in reasonable fear of harm or danger to his or her person or damage to his or her property. It has the effect of substantially interfering with a student’s educational performance, opportunity or benefit or has the effect of substantially disrupting the orderly operation of the charter high school.

Bullying and harassment include retaliation against a student or school employee for asserting or alleging an act of bullying or harassment. Reporting an act of bullying or harassment that is not made in good faith is considered an act of retaliation.

The charter high schools provide opportunities for students and staff to report incidents of bullying and harassment. A reporting form is found on each of the charter high school websites, accessed through the Polk State College website at www.polk.edu. This reporting form can be completed and put in the “bully box” located in the main office at each charter high school, or it can be submitted electronically via email to the principal (director) or his/her designee. The email address is on each website.

A report of bullying or harassment will be investigated by the principal (director) or assistant principal (assistant director). The school counselor will not be involved in the investigation. However, the counselor will be involved in developing a plan of action for the victim if it is determined that bullying or harassment has occurred.

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HS.5 Attendance (State Statute 1003.04)

Every charter high school student is expected to attend school. The school will monitor and record attendance in each high school class. A parent may be asked to justify a student's absence. Since attendance has a direct impact on student achievement, poor attendance may result in a low course grade. It may also threaten a student's overall success in the charter high school, and could result in removal from the program.

HS.6 Hazing (State Statute 1006.135)

Hazing is defined in State Statute as follows:

Any action or situation which recklessly or intentionally endangers the mental or physical health or safety of a student for the purpose of initiation or admission into or affiliation with any organization operating under the sanction of a school. Hazing shall include, but is not limited to pressuring or coercing the student into violating state or federal law, any brutality of a physical nature, such as whipping, beating, branding, exposures to the elements, forced consumption of any food, liquor, drug, or other substance, or any forced physical activity which would adversely affect the physical health or safety of the student, and shall include any activity which would subject the individual to extreme mental stress, such as sleep deprivation, forced exclusion from social contact, forced conduct which could result in extreme embarrassment, or any other forced activity which could adversely affect the mental health or dignity of the student.

Hazing does not include customary athletic events or other similar contests or competitions or any activity or conduct that furthers a legal and legitimate objective.

Charter high school students found to be engaged in hazing will be subject to Polk State Rule 4.16.

HS.7 Leaving School Grounds (State Statute 1003.31)

State Statute states that each student is to be under the control and direction of the principal (director) or designee during the time he or she is in school or is otherwise in route to or from school (if on school bus) or is presumed by law to be attending school. For this reason, each charter high school student is to be on the assigned Polk State campus unless a release form is on file in the school's administrative office.

An approved release form allows a student to come to campus outside the designated time in order to accommodate scheduled classes. Once a student exercises the early release and leaves campus on a given day, he or she is expected to remain off campus the remainder of the school day.

A student who must leave campus during the school day and who does not have an early release form on file to address the specific time to be off campus, must sign-out in the school's administrative office.

HS.8 Withdrawal

Every effort will be made to assure student success at either of the charter high schools. However, a student will be withdrawn if remaining at a charter high school puts the student's high school graduation in jeopardy, and/or the student demonstrates an inability to be successful in a college environment.

HS.9 Discipline Appeals (State Statute 1006.09)

If a parent does not agree with the disciplinary action imposed by the director or designee, the parent may appeal as follows:

- The written notice of disciplinary action shall inform the parent of the right to an appeal to be conducted by the director within five days of the notice if requested by the parent.
- If the parent does not request a hearing or appear at a scheduled hearing, it shall be assumed that the parent is in agreement with the disciplinary action imposed.
- The student and parent must attend the hearing and may have one person in attendance at the hearing to represent them. Any witness directly involved in the incident may also be present at the hearing or may submit a written statement with the permission of his or her parent.