

About Accreditation: Frequently Asked Questions

Palm Acres Charter High School is committed to providing students and families with clear and accurate information about accreditation, our status as a Florida public charter school, and the requirements for earning a standard high school diploma.

Is Palm Acres Charter High School currently accredited?

No. Palm Acres Charter High School is not currently accredited by an institutional accrediting organization.

Accreditation is a voluntary external review process conducted by independent accrediting organizations. It is separate from Palm Acres Charter High School's authorization and status as a Florida public charter school.

Our current accreditation status is also disclosed separately in our official **Accreditation Status Notice**, consistent with the School's charter requirements. The charter contract specifically requires the school's accreditation status to be made publicly available on its website.

If Palm Acres is not accredited, is it still a Florida public school?

Yes.

Palm Acres Charter High School is a Florida public charter high school authorized by **The School Board of Lee County, Florida**.

Florida law expressly provides:

"All charter schools in Florida are public schools and shall be part of the state's program of public education." **Fla. Stat. §1002.33(1)**

Palm Acres' original charter contract likewise recognizes the School Board of Lee County's authority under **§1002.33** to grant the charter and establishes the charter contract as the authority under which the school operates.

Does accreditation determine whether a Palm Acres student can earn a Florida standard high school diploma?

No. Florida law establishes the requirements a student must satisfy to earn a standard high school diploma.

For Florida public-school students, standard diploma requirements are governed by applicable Florida law, including **Fla. Stat. §1003.4282** and, for students using the 18-credit ACCEL option **Fla. Stat. §1002.3105(5)**.

Florida law provides that a student who earns the required cumulative **2.0 GPA on a 4.0 scale** and meets the applicable requirements of §1003.4282 or §1002.3105(5) “**shall be awarded a standard high school diploma.**” Fla. Stat. §1003.4282(5)(a).

Students must therefore satisfy all graduation requirements applicable to their individual graduation plan, including required credits, courses, statewide assessment requirements, GPA requirements, and applicable Sponsor requirements.

Does Palm Acres issue a different type of diploma because the school is not accredited?

No. A student’s graduation eligibility is determined by satisfaction of the applicable requirements for a Florida standard high school diploma.

Palm Acres’ institutional accreditation status does not create a separate category of diploma under Florida’s public-school graduation framework. Florida law establishes the requirements for the **standard high school diploma**, and Palm Acres students must satisfy those applicable requirements before being awarded one.

Was Palm Acres modeled after an accredited school?

Yes. This history is documented in Palm Acres’ original charter application.

Palm Acres Charter High School was developed using the educational model of **City of Palms Charter High School**, an alternative charter high school that was already operating in Lee County.

The Palm Acres charter application described City of Palms as an “**identically focused alternative charter high school**” and explained that it had been operating in Lee County for seven years when Palm Acres application was submitted. The application also documented that City of Palms was accredited at that time.

Palm Acres was therefore developed from an established public-charter educational model. However, Palm Acres is its **own charter school**, and City of Palms’ historical accreditation did not constitute institutional accreditation of Palm Acres.

We make that distinction clear so families receive accurate information about both the history of our educational model and Palm Acres’ own accreditation status.

Has Palm Acres always intended to provide students with a recognized high school diploma?

Yes. That purpose is documented in the school’s original charter materials.

From its inception, Palm Acres’ approved charter application described its educational mission in terms of helping students complete high school and earn a **state-recognized diploma**. The

school's educational model focuses particularly on students who are behind on credits, have previously struggled in a traditional high-school environment, or need an alternative pathway for completing their secondary education.

What is the difference between accreditation and charter authorization?

They serve different purposes.

Charter authorization establishes Palm Acres as a Florida public charter school operating under its charter and applicable Florida law. The School Board of Lee County serves as Palm Acres' Sponsor/Authorizer.

Institutional accreditation is an external review or recognition provided by an independent accrediting organization.

One does not transform into the other. Palm Acres is transparent that it is **not currently institutionally accredited**, while it continues to operate as an authorized Florida public charter school.

Who determines whether a Palm Acres student has met graduation requirements?

The school must determine whether each student has satisfied the graduation requirements applicable to that student.

Florida charter-school statute specifically requires a secondary charter school's charter to provide a method for determining whether a student has satisfied applicable graduation requirements under §1002.3105(5), §1003.4281, or §1003.4282.

Palm Acres also operates subject to its charter obligations and applicable Sponsor requirements.

That is why students' individual records, credits, GPA, assessment results, transfer credits, and other applicable graduation requirements are reviewed before graduation.

Does Palm Acres offer the same graduation pathway to every student?

Palm Acres currently offers students the **24-credit standard diploma program** and the **18-credit ACCEL option**, when applicable to the student's individual graduation plan.

The requirements differ between these pathways, and requirements can also depend on factors such as the year the student entered Grade 9, transfer history, assessment history and individual circumstances.

Students and families should work with the school's counselor or registrar to confirm the requirements applicable to their individual graduation plan.

Will every college, employer, military program, or other organization accept Palm Acres diploma?

No school should promise universal acceptance by every third party.

Colleges and universities, employers, military programs, scholarship providers, licensing organizations, athletic organizations, and other third parties may establish their own admission, transfer-credit, eligibility, documentation, or accreditation-related policies.

For that reason, students considering a particular college, career program, military pathway, scholarship, license, or other postsecondary opportunity should verify that organization's requirements directly.

The school **can** provide academic records and information about the student's educational program to assist families with that process.

Does being unaccredited mean Palm Acres is an unregulated private diploma program? No.

Palm Acres is a **Florida public charter school**, not an independent private diploma provider.

Florida law expressly places charter schools within the state's program of public education. Charter schools operate under their charters and remain subject to statutes specifically applicable to charter schools, as well as specified public-school requirements including Florida's student assessment and school accountability framework. Fla. Stat. §1002.33(1), (16).

This distinction is important when evaluating information online about "unaccredited schools," because information concerning private schools, homeschool diploma providers, or other private educational organizations may involve a different legal framework than the one governing a Florida public charter school.

What should families take away from Palm Acres' accreditation status?

We believe transparency is important.

Palm Acres Charter High School is not currently institutionally accredited. Palm Acres is an authorized Florida public charter high school sponsored by The School Board of Lee County, Florida.

Students earn a standard high school diploma by satisfying the applicable Florida statutory graduation requirements and applicable Sponsor requirements – not merely by attending the school. Florida law establishes the requirements governing the standard diploma.

Families with questions about an individual student's graduation plan should contact the school counselor or registrar. Families with questions about whether a particular college, employer, military program, scholarship licensing organization, or other third party has its own accreditation-related eligibility requirements should contact that organization directly.