DARLINGTON COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT
PATE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

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Child Early Reading and Development Education Program (CERDEP) Parent and Guardian Handbook

2025-2026

The district does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, veteran status, or disability in admission to, treatment in, or employment in its programs and activities. Inquiries regarding the nondiscrimination policies should be made to the [insert contact information]. For further information on federal non-discrimination regulations, including Title IX, contact the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights at OCR.DC@ed.gov or call 1-800-421-3481.

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History of CERDEP from 2006–07 to Act 284 to Present

Section 59-156-110
The South Carolina Child Development Education "Pilot" Program (CDEPP) began under Proviso 1.75 of the 2006–07 Appropriations Act for the trial and plaintiff districts in the *Abbeville v. State of South Carolina* lawsuit. Since that time, the South Carolina General Assembly has expanded the authorization and funding for many of the state's at-risk 4-year-olds to have an opportunity to attend a full-day educational program.

Appropriations Act-Statute	Provisos-Statute	Expansion
2009–10	1.62	Poverty 90% or higher
2013–14	1.83 and 1A.34	Poverty 75% or higher
2014–15	1.78 and 1A.33	Poverty 70% or higher
Act 284 of 2014	S.C. Code § 59-156-120(A)(3)	With any funds remaining after *Abbeville* and 90% poverty districts, the program must be expanded statewide, with priority set in proviso.
2020-21	1.56	Poverty 60% or higher (schools in nonCERDEP districts)
2022-23	1.55	Poverty 60% or higher (schools in nonCERDEP districts)
2023-24	1.48	Eligibility to all districts (based on school level poverty)
2024-25	1.47	Eligibility to all districts (based on school level poverty)

The annual CERDEP proviso language was codified with the approval of the Read to Succeed legislation, Act 284, as the South Carolina Child Early Reading Development and Education Program (CERDEP),[1] which was signed into law by the Governor on June 11, 2014. The CERDEP districts and the years in which they became eligible are listed in Appendix B.

Section 59-156-110 mandates that in CERDEP classrooms districts will provide (1) a comprehensive, systemic approach to reading that follows the State Reading Proficiency Plan and the district's comprehensive annual reading proficiency plan, (2) successful administration of the readiness assessment; (3) the developmental and learning support that children must have to be ready for school; (4) parenting education, including educating the parents as to methods that may assist the child; and (5) identification of community and civic organizations that can support early literacy efforts.

[1] This Handbook will continue to use the abbreviation CERDEP since most programs developed using it.

Program Goal of the Child Early Reading and Development Education Program

The goal of the CERDEP is to provide children and their families with quality preschool experiences necessary for school success. Each program will incorporate the following:

- Provide a healthy, safe and nurturing environment;
- Provide an environment that encourages early literacy, emotional, social, physical and intellectual development;
- Encourage the development of a positive self-image;
- Make learning fun so that children will develop a desire to be lifelong learners;
- Encourage language development, creativity, and an appreciation of fine arts and music;
- Encourage children to interact successfully with other children and adults and to live and work together in a cooperative environment which promotes decision making, peaceful resolution of conflicts and respect for others; and
- Form a cooperative partnership with parents so we can work together to meet the needs of each child and ensure his or her success.

DCSD Vision: The Darlington County Community will grow and prosper economically and culturally as the school district fosters an environment that produces well-educated, productive citizens.

DCSD Mission: Educate, empower, and prepare all for an ever-changing world.

DCSD Beliefs

We believe...

- Excellence is achievable and always worth the investment.
- Education is the shared responsibility of the home, school and community.
- All students can learn and perform at a higher level.
- The quality of a child's education depends on the quality of the teacher.
- All decisions are made in the best interest of the education, safety, and well-being of students to create successful schools and strong communities.

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Pate Elementary School
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Requirements for Eligibility for CERDEP Enrollment

Residency
Pursuant to statute, priority for participation in CERDEP had been given to eligible children residing in the school districts participating in the *Abbeville* lawsuit and participating since 2006–07. The statute directs that each year's appropriations bill set forth the priority schedule for other districts in the state.

Parent(s)/guardian(s) of age- and income-eligible children must provide documentation of the children's legal residency within a CERDEP school district.

Age Eligibility
To be eligible a child must be four years of age on or before September 1of the current school year based on acceptable documentation, such as a birth certificate or official document from other countries. Proof-of-age eligibility must be on file no later than the day the child begins CERDEP.

Family Income Eligibility
Family income eligibility must be shown for enrollment: an annual family income of 185 percent or less of the federal poverty guidelines as promulgated annually by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; or Medicaid eligibility. Acceptable forms of verification include the following: notification letter to parent/guardian confirming household eligibility for free or reduced meal benefits (not applicable for Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) schools) or a copy of current Medicaid card. Verification of family income may include pay stubs, tax returns, or W-2 forms.

Immunization
Documentation of the child's immunization must be provided at enrollment.

Application Process
The parent enrolling a child must complete and submit a CERDEP application online. The application must be accompanied by a copy of the child's proof of age eligibility, documentation of the family income eligibility, proof of residency, and immunization documentation.

Screening
All children will be screened prior to the time of enrollment using the Developmental Indicators of Assessment of Learning (DIAL-4).

Anti-Discrimination Statement
Approved CERDEP schools must comply with constitutional provisions and all federal and state laws prohibiting discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, age, sex, or disability in admission to, treatment in its programs and activities or need for special education services. For further information on federal non-discrimination regulations, including Title IX, contact the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights at ocr@ed.gov or call 1-800-421-3481.

Operating Policies & Procedures

Attendance
Regular attendance is crucial to your child's success. Each parent/family must agree to send their child to the Child Development Education Program (CERDEP) for 6.5 hours of instructional time, five days per week, 180 days a year. Exclusions from the 180 days of attendance would include school district closures due to dangerous weather situations. A child who is chronically tardy or absent may be released from the program.

CERDEP Hours
School Begins at 7:30 a.m.
School Ends at 2:15 p.m.

District/School Calendar
The CERDEP follows the traditional 180 day school year. A copy of the school calendar is included in Appendix C of this handbook. However, 4K CERDEP students begin school on a staggered schedule. You will receive notification indicating your child's assigned start date.

Tuition
No parent is required to pay tuition or fees solely for the purpose of enrolling in or attending CERDEP. Tuition or fees may be charged for Extended-Care or Wrap-Around Care provided when it is not part of a state-funded expansion program.

CERDEP Summer program/Extended Care/Wrap Around Care
If your district offers summer program or CERDEP extended day, your child may qualify. These options may include an extended day that is longer than a 6.5 hour day or it may include additional days past the expected 180 days of school. You will need to ask your child's school about these possible opportunities. If this option is not available through the school, then you may want to consider the SC Voucher Program.

Transportation
Public school transportation services will be provided by the district. Districts shall not be responsible for the transportation of any student living outside their resident attendance zone. Please notify the school immediately of any changes in transportation arrangements. **Only authorized people with proper identification will be allowed to pick up your child.**

CERDEP Daily Schedule
Opportunity for a brief rest time will be incorporated into each instructional day. Rest time may not exceed one hour per day, except as necessary to address the specific individual needs of children. Children unable to sleep during the rest period shall be allowed to read or participate in another quiet activity. A copy of the daily classroom schedule is included in Appendix D of this handbook.

Confidentiality
Confidentiality of information about the child and family will be maintained at all times. Enrollment forms and all other information concerning the child and family will be accessible to the parent/guardian, principal, teaching staff, and licensing agency. Information concerning the

child will not be made available to anyone else by any means, without the expressed written consent of the parent/guardian.

Discipline and Guidance Policy
Providers will make use of developmentally appropriate guidance techniques and may not allow the use of corporal punishment or severe discipline. In accordance with nonregulatory federal guidance, exclusionary practices should not be used to reduce unwanted behavior. Resources on appropriate strategies to reduce unwanted and teach desired behavior can be found here: http://www.pyramidmodel.org/.

Early childhood experts believe that good discipline is a learning process that involves compassion, caring, sensitivity, and guidance. The goal of good discipline is to help the child develop self-control, responsibility, and problem solving skills, characteristics that are foundational to a student's meeting the *Profile of the South Carolina Graduate*.[2] There are many ways that the teachers will encourage good discipline practices:

- A well-planned physical environment and curriculum;
- Acting as role models for the children;
- Setting reasonable and positive expectations;
- Respecting feelings;
- Trusting each child to succeed;
- Offering good, reasonable choices;
- Calmly talking about problems; and
- Always reinforcing good behavior.

Punishment or harsh treatment does not encourage the goals of good discipline. This includes, but is not limited to, spanking; belittling; shaming; shaking; depriving food, water, naps, outside time, or bathroom facilities; unsupervised isolation, or improperly restricting the movement of the child.

With groups of children interacting, there will be conflicts. The teachers will implement proven healthy strategies that are appropriate to the situation. Some guidance techniques that staff may use include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Conflict Resolution – Teachers help children learn skills and language to work out disagreement with their peers;
- Redirecting the Child – Quite often, children need to be given concrete alternative suggestions for behavior to focus their energy in a positive way;
- Positive Encouragement – Teachers praise the appropriate behavior, being careful not to give much attention to the negative behavior;
- Natural Consequences – For example, by helping a child realize that arriving late for group time activities will result in missing their turn; or
- Removing the Child from the Group – This is handled in a calm manner without unnecessary stress to allow the child regain self-control.

[2] https://ed.sc.gov/about/profile-of-sc-graduate/

Each child has different needs and requirements to develop self-control, judgment, and problem-solving skills. Teachers and administrators will work individually with each child and his/her parents to establish a positive interactions.

Educational Policies

Curriculum
All aspects of the learning environment, including equipment and materials, classroom environment, outdoor environment, staff child interactions, teaching strategies, learning center provisions, etc. must be founded on current early childhood research and focus on the developmental and academic needs of four year old children. The curriculum that will be implemented is High Scope.

High Scope is an approach where adult-child interactions are very important, both in small groups and individually. Large group time should be meaningful to the children and limited to a small amount of time in the daily schedule. Children plan their learning, do or interact with the learning in small groups or individually, then come back to group time to review what they did and learned that day. For more information, visit www.highscope.org.

Assessing Student Learning
Your child's teacher will administer a readiness assessment, as required by state law. The assessment will provide information for the teacher on your child's literacy skills and will be used only to meet your child's individual learning needs. The teacher will additionally conduct ongoing student assessments to gather information about each child's growth and skill development, as well as to inform instruction. Your child's progress will be assessed using a developmental child assessment instrument approved by the South Carolina Department of Education. The assessment will replace traditional report cards and standardized tests with a system that helps teachers observe your child, assess your child's work, and document your child's achievement with the following:

- Portfolios: Collections of your child's work that show progress and demonstrates special interests and talents as well as areas in need of development; and
- Developmental Guidelines and Checklists: Lists of age or grade level expectations that are used for guiding teachers observations about your child's achievements in school.

The benefits of developmental child assessments are the following:

- Your child's strengths and needs are clearly identified for you, your child, and the teacher.
- Teachers focus on your child as an individual and set specific goals for him or her.
- Your child is observed and evaluated using a developmental checklist that is based on the most current knowledge about how children develop and learn.
- The process of evaluating your child is connected to what happens in the classroom.

Documentation from the assessment will be sent home three times per year, after approximately the 60th and 120th day of school and at the end of the year.

Health, Wellness & Safety

Health Records

A health record for each child shall be maintained in the school. Each health record shall include all of the following information:

- A current copy of the child's immunization record signed by a physician or other health official. This record should indicate that all required immunizations are complete as recommended by the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC), or that the appropriate official has provided written proof that the child meets either medical or religious exemption requirements; and
- Other health information deemed necessary by the program director and/or by the parent(s)/guardian(s).

Please consult the district policy regarding illness, medication, minor injuries, and emergencies at https://boardpolicyonline.com/?b=darlington, under Policy JLCE.

Reporting of Abuse or Neglect

All schools are mandated by law to report suspicion of child abuse or neglect; the law requires reporting the following:

- Any physical injury, sexual or emotional abuse inflicted on a child other than by accidental means by those responsible for his/her care, custody and control (with the exception of discipline including spanking administered in a reasonable manner) shall be construed to be abuse.
- Failure to provide by those responsible for the care, custody and control of the child, the proper or necessary support, education as required by law, medical, surgical or any other care necessary for his/her well-being shall be classified as neglect.

Parent/Family Involvement

The district's early childhood program recognizes that parents and families are their child's first teachers. We want parents and families to be actively involved in their child's education this school year and for many school years to come.

Parent/Family Workshops

A series of Parent/Family workshops and/or Parenting Programs on various topics will be offered throughout the school year. Families are strongly encouraged to attend these.

Parent-Teacher Conferences

Schools will report at least quarterly to the parent(s)/guardian(s) on his/her child's progress. This reporting will include the following:

- An orientation to CERDEP (ex: Back to School Night, home visits, etc.) will be conducted as the first of these quarterly contacts to complete the Parent Orientation Checklist.
- Two of the quarterly contacts will include parent-teacher conferences during the school year. Conferences will be a time for parents to learn about their child's experiences and developmental progress. Documentation of your child's progress, curriculum

developmental checklists, and portfolios will be shared with during the conference and at regular reporting times during the school year.
- The final review of your child's progress will be provided at the end of the school year as the concluding parent contact.

Other conferences may be scheduled at the request of either the teaching staff or parents.

Communication
Each CERDEP believes in building a partnership with all families of the children enrolled. Open communication is the most important characteristic of this partnership and is considered the most beneficial to the children's learning and development. Parents are encouraged to share information that would be helpful in the staff's caring of their children. The teaching staff will also share information with parents about their children and about the program using various modes of communication:

- regular newsletters;
- face-to-face conservations;
- phone calls;
- e-mails; and
- written notes.

Classroom Visits
All parents are encouraged to visit their child's class to observe or participate in class activities. There is always room for parents and grandparents alike to spend some time with the children or to share talents, hobbies, and interests with all children.

Parent/Guardian-Teacher Agreement
The schools that are participating in CERDEP truly believe that parents are their child's first and most important teachers. The selected schools see their role as that of a partner. The Parent/Guardian-Teacher agreement outlines how parents and teachers can share the responsibility for the success of each child. Please sign the copy of this agreement, which is at the end of this handbook, and return to your child's teacher.

References

Act 284 S.C. Code § 59-155-110 et seq. (2014). (South Carolina Read to Succeed Act).

Act 284 S.C. Code § 59-156-110 et seq. (2014). (Child Early Reading Development and Education Program).

Appendix A: Parent/Guardian and Teacher Agreement

Pate Elementary School
1010 Indian Branch Road
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Website: https://pes.dcsdschools.org/

Parent/Guardian and Teacher Agreement

The schools that are participating in Child Early Reading Development Education Program (CERDEP) truly believe that parents are their child's first and most important teachers. The selected schools see their role as that of a partner. The Parent/Guardian and Teacher agreement symbolizes this partnership. It is a document that outlines how parents and teachers can share the responsibility for the success of each child.

As a parent/guardian, I, _____ will strive to:

- Believe my child can learn;
- Demonstrate that I value education and that school is important;
- Ensure my child attends school regularly and is on time;
- Set aside time each day to talk with my child about his or her learning;
- Read to my child daily and allow my child to see me read daily;
- Provide a home environment that encourages my child to do his/her best;
- Provide structured sleeping and eating habits; and
- Attend parent/guardian and teacher conferences.

As a teacher, I, , will strive to:

- Believe that each child can learn and demonstrate a "growth mindset";
- Respect and value the uniqueness of each child and his or her family;
- Provide a safe environment that promotes active hands-on learning;
- Provide frequent communication with newsletters, reports, and telephone calls;
- Seek ways to involve parents in the school program;
- Schedule parent-teacher conferences to accommodate parents' schedules; and
- Welcome the participation of parents and guardians in the classroom and their support in helping their children succeed.

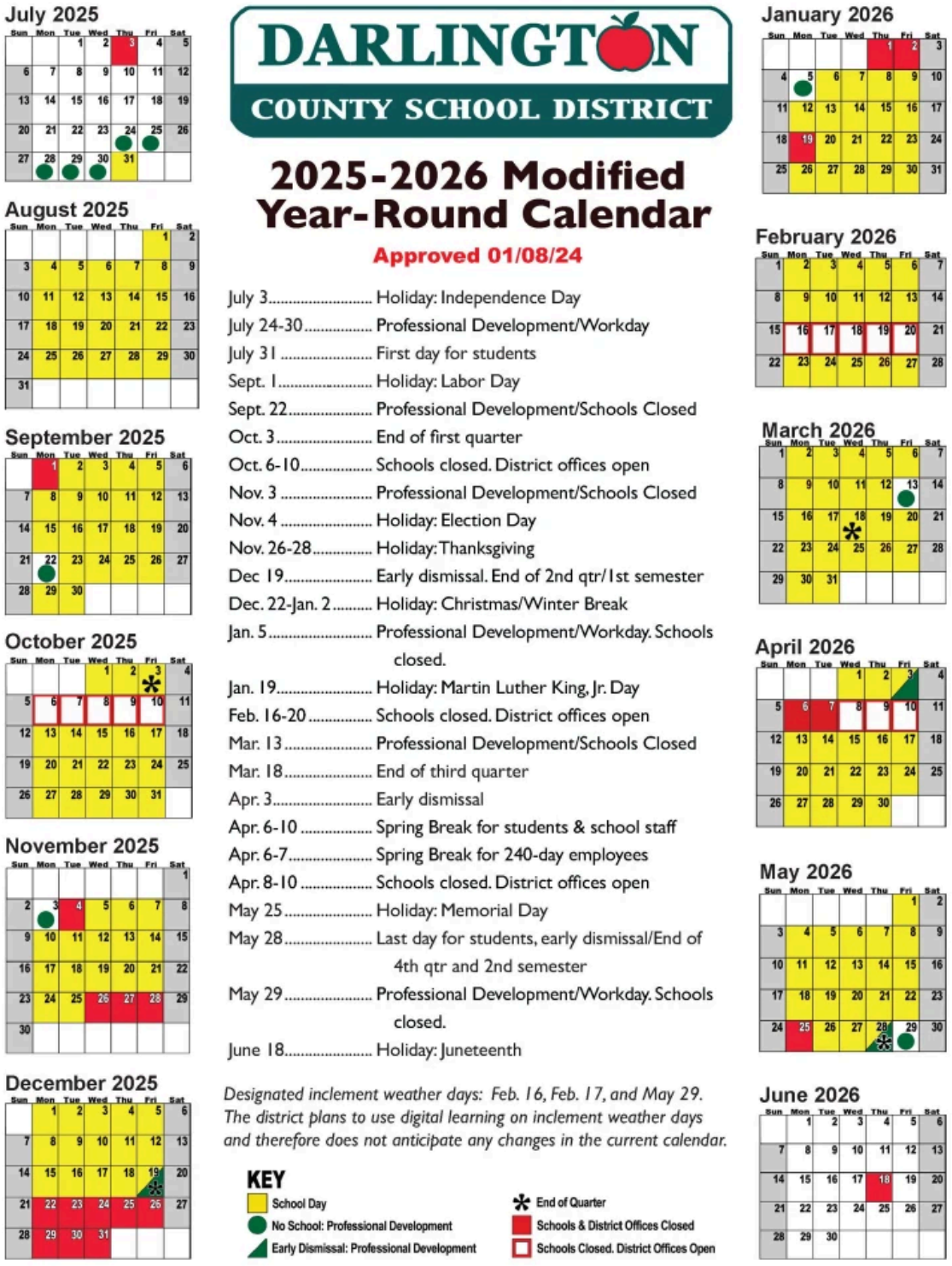
Parent/guardian signature _____

Date _____

Appendix B: List of CERDEP Participating Districts (by year of initial participation)

2006-2007	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2019-2020	2021-2022	2022-2023	2025-2026
Abbeville	Calhoun	Aiken	Anderson 2	Kershaw	Anderson 1	Anderson 4	Beaufort
Allendale	Cherokee	Anderson 3	Anderson 5		Charleston	Charter Institute at Erskine	Horry
Bamberg	Chester	Edgefield	Barnwell 45		Dorchester 2	Spartanburg 1	York 2
Barnwell 48	Colleton	Greenwood 50	Greenwood 52		Lancaster	Union	
Berkeley	Darlington	Horry (Academy of Hope Charter)			Lexington 1	York 4	
Chesterfield	Dorchester 4	Lexington 2			Lexington-Richland 5		
Clarendon	Fairfield	Oconee			Pickens		
Dillon 3	Georgetown	Spartanburg 3			Richland 2		
Dillon 4	Greenwood 51	Spartanburg 4			Spartanburg 2		
Florence 1	Lexington 3	Spartanburg 6			Spartanburg 5		
Florence 2	Newberry	York 1			York 3		
Florence 3	Richland 1						
Florence 5	Spartanburg 7						
Hampton	Sumter						
Jasper							
Laurens 55							
Laurens 56							
Lee							
Lexington 4							
Marion							
Marlboro							
McCormick							
Orangeburg							
Saluda							
Williamsburg							

Appendix C: Darlington County School District Calendar for 2025-2026



Appendix D: Daily Classroom Schedule

Pate Elementary School 4K Schedule
2025-2026

7:15-7:40	Arrival/Unpack
7:40-8:00	Greeting/Morning Meeting
8:00-8:10	Planning Time
8:10-9:10	Work Time
9:10-9:20	Clean Up
9:20-9:30	Recall Time
9:30-10:00	Small Group
10:00-10:15	Bathroom/Wash Hands
10:15-10:40	Lunch
10:40-11:10	Recess
11:10-11:25	Large Group TIme
11:25-12:30	Rest Time
12:30-12:50	Snack and Wake-Up Transition
12:50-1:10	Story Time/Read Aloud
1:10-1:40	Choice Time/Interest Area
1:40-1:50	Closing Circle
1:50-2:10	Dimissal