



Excelsior Handbook

2025-2026

*"Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young,
but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love,
in faith, and in purity." 1 Timothy 4:12*

Physical Location

New Heights Church, 5501 Broad River Road; Columbia, South Carolina, 29212. Please do not contact New Heights regarding questions related to Excelsior.

The Excelsior entrance is always locked and monitored by security. Visitors must register to gain access to the building.

Mailing Address

Excelsior Academy
POB 3116
Irmo, SC 29063

Contact Information

- Email: excelsioracademyedu@gmail.com
- Telephone: (803) 743-311

Excelsior Leadership

- Ashlee Vickery, Director, (803) 269-4582, excelsioracademyedu@gmail.com
- Gail Lingerfelt, Assistant Director, (803) 467-7654, excelsioracademyedu@gmail.com

Our Director's Note

We are thankful that you are considering homeschooling your student and we trust that the Lord will guide you to the right decision for your family and to the right program. Excelsior has meant a great deal to me and my family over the years. All three of my girls have not only excelled in their academics here, but have also created life-long friendships, and more importantly, grown in their faith and understanding of God's word and the world around them. We want Excelsior to be a blessing to everyone that attends and our main goal is to: "Glorify God in all that we do." We hope to come alongside you and your family on your educational journey.

Many blessings,

Ashlee Vickery

Director of Excelsior Academy

About Excelsior

Excelsior Academy has a long-standing history of excellence as an educational option for homeschooling families in the Midlands. Excelsior first began as Masters Academy in 1997 under the direction of Zan Tyler. As the leader of the homeschooling movement in South Carolina, Zan pioneered the legislation to enable families to choose homeschooling as an educational option for their children. Although Zan was almost arrested for fighting for the right to school her children as she deemed fit, she continued to trail-blaze a path so that we have the option to homeschool. In addition to Excelsior, Zan and her husband, Joe, founded SCAIHS - the South Carolina Association of Independent Home Schools, which serves as one of the accountability options for homeschool families today.

This godly woman was then awarded the highest civilian honor in South Carolina, "The Order of the Palmetto." Zan continues her work in the homeschool community by serving as an ambassador with BJU Press Homeschool and by participating in a weekly podcast about various topics regarding homeschooling. Zan and her husband travel internationally participating in and speaking at homeschooling conferences. We are thankful that both Zan and Joe remain board members at Excelsior and bring their expertise and knowledge to this program.

Why Choose Excelsior?

As one of the oldest homeschool resource centers in the state, Excelsior Academy has stood the test of time through consistently meeting the ever-changing needs of its families and the greater community. What began as Fine Arts Academy has morphed into a full academy for grades K4-12. What sets Excelsior apart from other programs is that the parent remains at the forefront of their children's education. Parents may choose to send their child for two days a week and get taught every core class they need, or parents may choose to enroll students in a class by class basis based on their age and grade level. At Excelsior Academy, we hold with the tenet that parents have the right to choose what is best for their children and we hope that we are that choice.

Who We Are

Excelsior is a family-oriented resource used in tandem with homeschooling. We offer classes from four-year old to high school seniors. It is a resource center, *not a school*. The primary teaching responsibility of each student remains with the parent. However, we do not offer only strong academic instruction, we also have times for your student to build relationships inside and outside of the classroom. Excelsior is not a third option support group and satisfies no

requirements for legal accountability. You must register with either your school district, SCAIHS, or a third option support group by the 10th day of your district's start date to legally homeschool.

What We Offer

The Academy classes, ages 4-13, will develop an effective biblical worldview as we study literature, history, and the fine arts based on various time periods. All our High School offerings are college-preparatory classes with honors options. Family socials and monthly field trips for all ages are available each semester. High school students can take part in socials and service projects.

Mission Statement

Our goal as Christian parents is to raise children who love Christ and know how to apply the principles of their faith to the world around them. We must intentionally and faithfully pass on to our children the mission of reclaiming and redeeming the culture for the glory of God. This dominion mandate was first given in Genesis and is reconfirmed by Paul as he tells us we must learn "to bring every thought captive to Christ." We believe, and must affirm daily to our children, that all things (from the physical to the academic) hold together in Christ.

Statement of Faith

We believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord; Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost; born of the Virgin Mary; suffered under Pontius Pilate; was crucified, dead, and buried; He descended into hell. The third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven and sits on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead. We believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy apostolic church, the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting.

Admissions Policy

Excelsior Academy admits students of any race, color, national, and ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. It does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national, and ethnic origin in administration of its educational policies and school-administered programs.

Statement on Human Sexuality and Marriage

Excelsior Academy is guided by a long-standing traditional, biblical worldview which reflects the understanding that human sexuality is a gift from God, and that: sex assigned at birth is a person's God-given, objective gender, whether or not it differs from their internal sense of "gender identity" (Genesis 1:27; Leviticus 18:22; Matthew 19:4; Romans 1:26-27; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10); sexual relations are for the purpose of the procreation of human life and the uniting and strengthening of the marital bond in self-giving love, purposes that are to be achieved solely through heterosexual relationships in marriage (Genesis 1:28; 2:24; Exodus 20:14; Proverbs 5:15-23; Matthew 19:5; 1 Corinthians 6:12-20, 7:2-5; 1 Thessalonians 4:3). Misuses of God's gift of human sexuality will be understood to include, but not be limited to gender expression inconsistent with sex assigned at birth (transgender), gender transition, sexual abuse, sexual harassment, sexual assault, heterosexual misconduct, homosexual conduct, or possession of pornographic materials. In addition, Excelsior Academy considers indiscreet public display of affection as inappropriate behavior. Employees and students at Excelsior Academy are expected to conduct themselves at all times in accordance with the highest standards of Christian morality. It is particularly important to Excelsior Academy that high standards of sexual morality be observed among its employees and students. Toward this end, Excelsior Academy may subject to disciplinary action, any employee or student who engages in or encourages: 1. Gender expression inconsistent with sex assigned at birth; 2. Gender transition; 3. Sexual relations with a person other than his/her spouse; 4. Sexual relations with a person of the same sex; 5. Touching, caressing, and other physical conduct of a sexual nature with a person of the same sex; 6. Touching, caressing, and other physical conduct of a sexual nature with a person of the opposite sex that is inappropriate to the time and place in which it occurs. Disciplinary action may include disciplinary termination or dismissal.

Parent Commitment

With the enrollment of your student, you are committing to participate in the life of our school. Your participation in your student's education remains invaluable! As such, you will continue to serve as your student's teacher with the support and guidance of our outstanding staff. Whether your child is enrolled in the one-day or two-day-a-week program, your student will receive all tasks and assignments tailored to and dependent on their classroom teaching. You will come alongside your student and facilitate their learning in your home as an extension of what they learned in the classroom. As your student grows and matures, you will be amazed at the responsibility and independence they acquire to take responsibility for their work and assignments. You must first, however, help teach and reinforce those habits at home.

Parent Volunteering

Parents are encouraged to be as involved as possible in their student's educational journey. Also, to keep tuition prices affordable, we ask one parent from each family to volunteer "1 credit" (about 3-4 hours) per student enrolled, each school year. Families will be notified when the volunteer sign ups are available. Once sign ups are available, please sign up by the end of August to avoid being automatically charged the opt out fee plus a \$25 penalty for not signing up by the deadline. There are a plethora of volunteering options, and we greatly appreciate our helping hands! If a family, however, is unable to fulfill this volunteering commitment, we then ask when enrolling with a FACTS payment plan to choose an "opt-out fee" payment plan. If a family chooses to opt out after the payment plan has begun, a \$25 late fee will also be charged. Volunteering is vital to operating smoothly and if a volunteer is a "no show" a \$25 "no show" fee will be charged unless, of course, an emergency occurred. All communication regarding parent volunteering should be directed to: volunteer.coordinator@excelsioracademy.org

Student Code of Conduct

Our goal is to pursue excellence in all we do so our Lord may be glorified. In order to maintain a productive, educational environment the instructors and staff will require proper and respectful behavior from all students.

1. Students should treat instructors and staff with respect by the way they respond and react to those in authority. Students should not talk or interrupt the teacher while they are talking.
2. Students should treat other students with respect- keep hands and feet to themselves, not talk while someone else is talking, and speak kindly to and of others. Bullying will NOT be tolerated.
3. Students should treat the property of New Heights with respect by only staying in assigned areas and not crossing boundaries set by those in authority. No rough play will be permitted as it poses a safety hazard. *Students/parents must replace anything they waste, damage, or break.*
4. Only water bottles are allowed in the classrooms.
5. Students must clean up after themselves after each class. Trash, food, etc. should be thrown away after lunch without being asked.
6. Students may not bring any electronic devices or toys to school unless asked for by their instructor.
7. For high school students who have cell phones, they must be put up and away during class time. If they are seen with them out, the phone will be taken up and their parents will be notified. If parents or students need to contact the other, we would ask that they use the Excelsior phone, which is: (803) 743-3118.
8. Students are not allowed to have visitors. If you are not enrolled at Excelsior, you are not permitted on campus.

High School Attendance and Assignments Policy

Excelsior desires to prepare our students for college and future endeavors through academic achievement and personal growth. As a result, we expect students to attend all classes. Each high school course has a syllabus which must be followed and completed. Students are expected to turn in ALL assignments on time. Any assignment turned in late will receive a deduction in points for each day the assignment is late which could eventually result in a "0." Deadline extension for a special circumstance may be granted at the teacher's discretion, only after discussing with the parent. More than one deadline extension will need to be granted by a Director. Books for classes are expected to be purchased ahead of time so student progress is not impeded. **If a student will be taking a class for Honors, it must be declared with enrollment** so any summer work can be sent out in a timely manner. With honors, students will have papers, projects, and presentations (as decided by their teacher) graded on a more strenuous scale in addition to their regular class-load. Students who declare honors will pay an extra fee directly to the teacher due to extra planning and grading on their part.

Sick Policy

Please do not bring your child to school sick. If your child is complaining of not feeling well or is exhibiting symptoms such as a sore throat or stomachache, and/or is vomiting, having diarrhea, or is running a temperature of 100.0 degrees or above without medication, they are not allowed to attend school that week. If your child has had any of these symptoms within the last 48 hours, please do not bring them to school. You know your child better than anyone, so please be proactive in watching for signs and symptoms of sickness. If we see a child who does not look like they are feeling well, we reserve the right to call a parent to come pick them up. Although we hope that everyone stays as well as possible, we abide by our motto: "If in doubt, keep them out!"

Disciplinary Action

First offense-the student will be reminded by the teacher on how to behave. If asked multiple times throughout the class period, the student will speak with a Director and the parent will be notified via email. Second offense- a phone call will be made to a parent about the unacceptable behavior. Third offense- a meeting will be made with a parent, teacher, and Director where further action will be discussed such as expulsion from the class in question. If this is to occur, parents will still be required to pay for the class according to their financial commitment made previously at the beginning of the year.

Excelsior Dress Code

Our desire is to bring glory to God in everything we say, think, and do- including our appearance! We have set a dress code with a goal that our appearance will not be a distraction to others during our class time at Excelsior.

1. Skirts, dresses, and shorts may be worn if the length is past the tips of the fingers.
2. Clothing that does not fit properly is prohibited (too tight or too loose.) Pants may not be too large that they drag on the floor. They must be pulled up properly so that no underwear is visible.
3. No tank tops, shirts with spaghetti straps, or halter tops allowed. ABSOLUTELY no shirts will be allowed that show cleavage and/or midriff.
4. No clothing that represents an offensive lifestyle or message is allowed.
5. No hats are to be worn during class.
6. No pocket-knives, weapons, etc. are allowed on the campus of Excelsior.

Excelsior will notify parents of any student who is inappropriately dressed and will require parents to pick up their student.

Orientation

A mandatory Orientation will be held at the beginning of the school year in August at New Heights Church. The purpose of this meeting is to introduce the teachers, review policies, and verify that registration/tuition fees have been paid through FACTS. We look forward to forming relationships with our families as the school year progresses.

Tuition Payment

All registration fees are required to be paid when you submit your application using our school management system called FACTS. **Tuition payment plans must be set up in FACTS with enrollment. All tuition must be paid through FACTS either in full or via a tuition installment plan.** Our tuition installment plan divides your tuition bill into 10 installments beginning in August and ending in May. When setting up your FACTS payment plan, you will also have the option of adding the "Opt Out of Volunteering" to the plan of your choice. If you do not choose the "Opt Out of Volunteering" at this time but choose after school has begun to opt out of volunteering, you will be charged an additional \$50 late fee in addition to the \$100 per student opt out fee.

Withdrawal & Refunds Policy

Once your child is enrolled, if you wish to withdraw your child from enrollment at Excelsior, then you must email Excelsior the child you are withdrawing and the reason(s) why.

Our refund policy is as follows:

- If a child is withdrawn before June 15th tuition will not be charged.
- If a child is withdrawn between June 15th and July 31st the family will be billed and held responsible for 50% of the tuition fee.
- If a child is withdrawn on or after August 1st the family will be responsible for 100% of the tuition payment.

No refunds of student tuition or release from remaining student tuition bills will be given except for the following reasons:

- Death of a parent
- Loss of a job (parent)
- Moving out-of-state or beyond a 50-mile radius

Excelsior Education Expectations

All students must come prepared for class, which includes:

1. Books, pencils, and other supplies needed for class (supplied by parents)
2. Homework assignments given by the teacher are meant to give the student a full week's worth of study material for that subject. The parents should review the assigned work and assist the student if needed. Parents should also help set a daily study schedule so that the work will be completed for the following class.
3. All students should complete and turn in all assignments on time. If a student misses class due to sickness or traveling, the student is responsible for contacting their teacher to receive copies of course notes or any hand-outs that were given.
4. Parents have the primary responsibility for the education of their student/students. Parents must take an active role in making sure that their student's work is completed, and the subject matter is understood and mastered.

Grading Scale and Report Cards

Academy classes, ages 4 to 8, will be given two semester evaluation forms. These will range from unsatisfactory to excellent and will have notes from their teacher included.

Academy classes, ages 9 to 13, will be given two semester grade reports along with any comments from their teacher.

High school students will be given two semester report cards. The grading scale being enforced is the same used by SCAIHS (<https://www.scaihs.org/>)

90-100	A
80-89	B
70-79	C
60-69	D
0-59	F

Students must have a final grade of a C or higher before being allowed to enroll in a higher course.

Weather Delays & Cancellations

As hazardous weather conditions appear, Excelsior will look to Lexington Richland School District 5 for guidance on delays and cancellations. All announcements will be sent via email. When weather conditions are suspect, parents need to check emails frequently for notifications. Although Excelsior looks to Lexington Richland School District 5 for guidance on weather related delays and closures, we may at our discretion open or close. Please note, we do NOT follow Lexington Richland School District 5's calendar.