

**DEKALB PATH ACADEMY**  
**DeKalb County, Georgia**

**START-UP CHARTER PETITION REQUIREMENTS**

***MISSION***

The mission of DeKalb PATH Academy is to create a safe and nurturing learning environment in which refugee, immigrant and local children from the Chamblee, Doraville and Clarkston areas in DeKalb County, Georgia can develop the knowledge, skills, and character needed to succeed in top-quality high schools, colleges, and the competitive world beyond regardless of their socio-economic and linguistic barriers.

DeKalb PATH Academy believes that its mission has supported the legislative intent to “increase student achievement through academic and organizational innovation...” because the annual school report cards have showed that our individual students have made continuous progress in their academic achievement.

***SCHOOL NAME***

**PATH** stands for **P**erseverance, **A**ccomplishment, **T**riumph, and **H**onor.

**STATEMENT OF PURPOSE**

DeKalb PATH Academy hereby petitions the DeKalb County Board of Education for approval of the two year renewal of the school charter from August 2008 to July 2010, according to the Charter School Act of 1998, O.C.G.A. 20-2-2060 et seq. (“Act”) as amended from time to time including the A+ Education Reform Act of 2000. Any amendments to the Act with retroactive effect shall be deemed to amend the respective terms of the charter petition.

***WAIVERS REQUESTED OF DEKALB COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION***

DeKalb PATH Academy will not utilize the broad flexibility from law, rule, and regulation listed in O.C.G.A. § 20-2-2065 (a). The following exemptions from State and Local Regulations are requested:

The following exemptions are requested:

- DeKalb PATH Academy reserves the right to choose textbooks not on the State approved list. Other instructional materials may be purchased with funds previously allocated only for textbooks. Because PATH has a sizeable number of English language learners whose needs in updated materials must be met properly and promptly. New materials for this group of students are products of constant new research. Some materials might not be on the state adopted material list but used widely in other countries with great success. PATH needs this flexibility to explore materials beyond the state adopted list so that its students will benefit from them.

DeKalb PATH Academy will determine which textbooks, if any, are needed for a course. Therefore, DeKalb PATH Academy seeks exemption from O. C. G. A. § 20-2-1010-1014 regarding textbooks.

- DeKalb PATH Academy will not utilize a local school council, as provided for in O. C. G. A. § 20-2-85, but instead will use another similar board, a Board of Directors that shall be subject to provision of O.C.G.A. § 50-14-1 et. Seq (Open and Public Meeting) and O.C.G. A. § 50-18-70 et seq. (Inspection of Public records).
- In light of DeKalb PATH Academy's core value and its status as a non profit corporation governed by its Board of Directors, DeKalb PATH Academy seeks exemption from provision of O.C.G. A. § 20-2-940-47 regarding teacher contract and termination.
- In light of DeKalb PATH Academy's core value and its high expectations of personal commitment, PATH has mandatory longer school days, a two week mandatory summer school program, and enrichment and remedial Saturday school program for students who need extra help. DeKalb PATH Academy seeks exemption from provision Georgia State Board of Education rules 160-5-1.-01 concerning school year and 160-5-1.-02 concerning school day.

The request for waivers does not suggest that DeKalb PATH Academy will not follow the regulations, nor their intent, but rather it reserves the ability to make changes necessary to accommodate the particular needs of its students. Furthermore, DeKalb PATH Academy has complied and shall continue to comply with all the requirements of the Single Statewide Accountability System (O.C.G.A. § 20-14-30 through 20-4-41).

## **GOALS OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM**

In order to understand why our educational goals and objectives are of public interest one must understand the academic, cultural, and linguistic background of the majority of the students we have served and shall serve.

## ***NEEDS ASSESMENT***

Since 1990 thousands of refugees and immigrants have arrived in DeKalb County. According to the preliminary data from the 2000 Census, the Hispanic population of DeKalb County increased from 15,619 in 1990 to 52,542 in 2000. This is an increase of 236.4 percent between 1990 and 2000. Hispanics comprise 7.9% of DeKalb County's population. Asian and Pacific Islanders (including Native Hawaiians) increased 66.3 percent from 16,266 in 1990 to 27,047 in 2000, or from 3.9 percent to 4.1 percent of the DeKalb population.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [www.co.DeKalb.ga.us/census](http://www.co.DeKalb.ga.us/census)

These international children bring with them not only their unique culture and language, but also the physical and mental wounds inflicted by wars, political oppression, and poverty. Two immediate problems that these students encounter upon entering American schools are English language proficiency and the level of education they received in their homeland. Most of these children know little or no English. Some students have some formal education, some none. In regular classrooms, it is difficult for teachers to provide necessary and adequate remedial education and other needed social services for these students due to the standard requirements of the curriculum, restraint of time, and class size. Thus, these students have difficulties catching up with their American peers. Without the acquisition of basic and fundamental skills, these students fall farther behind each year.<sup>2</sup> These difficulties are compounded by their parents' struggle for economic survival. Without any realistic academic and social assistance, these children will become "at-risk" students who will likely drop out of school.

Many other low-income children in the area are likewise children of violence, suffering from racism, poverty, unsafe environments, and lack of adult supervision. Like refugee and immigrant children, they are in need of extra academic and social support.<sup>3</sup>

**TARGET STUDENT POPULATION**

DeKalb PATH Academy will serve up to 310 fifth to eighth grade students. The students are between 10-14 years old. The increase of the number of students from 280 in the 2005-2008 charter application to 310 in this application is an increase of 10.7 % in enrollment. The increase of enrollment is a response to meet the increase of applications from students who reside in the Lithonia and Stone Mountain areas. The increase of the enrollment will not affect the class size.

***DEMOGRAPHICS OF STUDENT POPULATION***

DeKalb County School System reported that students from 168 countries speaking 144 languages are being educated in DeKalb's public schools. The following demographic statistics show the ethnic breakdown of international students in DeKalb County schools:<sup>4</sup>

Total students	101,079	(as of September 2006)
Asian	3,336	3.3%
Black	76,315	75.5%
Hispanic	8,491	8.4%
White	10,209	10.1%
Other	2,528	2.5%

These refugees and immigrants tend to settle mostly in two areas of the county: Chamblee/Doraville and Clarkston. A large number of refugees and immigrants, especially Mexican immigrants, have settled in the cities of Chamblee and Doraville along Buford

<sup>2</sup> International School Charter Application, page 2

<sup>3</sup> International School Charter Application, page 2

<sup>4</sup> DeKalb County International Center report for 2006-07 school year

Highway. The children of these refugees and immigrants attend public school. Therefore, the number of students whose first language is not English in elementary and middle schools in the Chamblee/Doraville areas runs between 75.8 % and 93.8 % and Clarkston area runs between 33.8 and 39%. In many schools in these area almost half of the student population is English language learners, who is served in the ESOL program because of their limited English proficiency. According to the Georgia Department of Education's annual report cards, students at these schools scored lower than the county and state average in almost all subject areas except mathematics.<sup>5</sup> These students need more time and a more rigorous curriculum to help them catch up with their American peers. PATH Academy's curriculum and instruction are directed toward meeting the academic needs of these children.

DeKalb PATH Academy's vision is to prepare students with the academic skills, intellectual habits and character traits necessary to achieve success throughout their academic years and into life. The goals of DeKalb PATH Academy are for all students to:

- master the knowledge and skills needed in secondary school and college
- become life-long learners
- exercise initiative in applying thinking skills critically and creatively to make sound decisions and solve complex problems
- respect the views, values, traditions, and culture of other individuals and their own
- have a sense of personal commitment to action and service
- have integrity, honesty, and a sense of fairness and justice
- become good responsible citizens of the world

These goals will be achieved through short-term, intermediate, and long-term plans. The short-term plan is simply to provide a meaningful and pertinent educational experience: one that impresses upon students their own academic success in a single year of dedicated hard work, and the level to which they can enhance their self-confidence through perseverance and accomplishment

The intermediate plan is to help students carry this sense of academic commitment and accomplishment through middle school and into high school.

The long-term plan is to instill in our students the belief that they should and will be able to attend college, and through this process, provide them the tools to do so.

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<sup>5</sup>2005- 2006 School Report Cards, State of Georgia Department of Education

## OUTCOMES AND MEASUREMENT

PATH Academy will give all State mandated assessment test to its students in accordance with State and Federal law. PATH Academy will measure the success of students and cohort group longitudinally. Students' academic progress will be tracked individually and as a part of a cohort. Students' whose academic progress lags behind their peers in their cohort will receive extra help through the after school tutorial program and Saturday school program. PATH Academy accepts new students in both fifth and sixth grades. Therefore, students will be divided into two cohorts. The students who enrolled in fifth grade will have the fifth grade CRCT as their baseline performance scores. The students who enter PATH Academy in their sixth grade will have their sixth grade CRCT scores as their baseline performance scores. PATH Academy aims to achieve the following academic goals:

- Every year and for each cohort, the percentage of students not meeting expectations on the math section of the CRCT will decrease by 8%.
- Every year and for each cohort the percentage of students not meeting expectations on reading section of the CRCT will decrease by 8%.
- Every year and for each cohort, the percentage of students not meeting expectations on the ELA section of the CRCT will decrease by 8 %.
- Every year and for each cohort, the percentage of students not meeting expectations on the science section of the CRCT will decrease by 8 %.
- Every year and for each cohort, the percentage of students not meeting expectations on the social studies section of the CRCT will decrease by 8 %.
- For students whose scores in norm-referenced tests are available, the annual increase of their composite scores will be at least one grade level.
- English language learners will increase their language proficiency in ACCESS test by increasing their composite scores by 10 points on the same tier or move up to the next tier.
- English language learners will exit the ESOL program at PATH Academy within 3-4 years.

## ACADEMIC DESIGN AND EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

### *CORE VALUE*

PATH Academy's mission derives from four basic education reform principles of The No Child Left Behind Act, which holds schools accountable for academic achievement. These four principles are:

1. **Strong Accountability for Result.** DeKalb PATH Academy has set academic standards in each content area for what students should know and be able to do. PATH has specific high expectations of student achievement, that are upheld by faculty and staff, students, and parents through its mutual written agreement form, **The PATH to Excellence. (Appendix A)**

2. **Increased Flexibility.** The principal has more flexibility in control over appropriation of funding, selection and evaluation of staff. Faculty and staff have more freedom to choose the best methods and materials suitable for the students.
3. **Expanded Option for Parents.** As a charter school, DeKalb PATH Academy is a school of choice. Parents in DeKalb County are not required to send their children to attend DeKalb PATH Academy. They choose the school because they believe that DeKalb PATH Academy can meet their students' needs.
4. **Proven Successful Methods.** Teachers at DeKalb PATH Academy are well-prepared and updated in proven teaching methods and implementations that best meet the need of our students.

## ***CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION***

It is the intention of PATH Academy to use its curriculum that is correlated with Georgia Performance Standards as the benchmark for student learning outcomes. (**Appendix B**) The content of the PATH Academy curriculum will focus on the necessary remediation of basic skills coupled with emphasis on higher order thinking processes in all content areas. In accordance with state regulation, PATH Academy will provide the basic age-appropriate curriculum for reading, writing, math, science, social studies, health/P.E., and fine arts, at each grade level. Foreign language classes will be provided to eighth grade students who are interested in taking them. These courses will be supplemented by enrichment classes, which will provide extra time for critical thinking skills and reading for pleasure, as well as developing hobbies. PATH Academy teachers have been working on creating a specific scope and sequence based on Georgia Performance Standards and those of the ITBS. The revision of the curriculum will be an ongoing process that involves all the teachers and a thorough assessment of individual students.

The program of PATH Academy is designed to ensure that all children succeed. Based on the demographics of our target population, we are expecting and are prepared for the challenge of getting students on grade level and beyond. Our approach is comprehensive and revolves around our four principles. In effort to educate the students, PATH Academy cooperates with several higher educational institutes and non-profit organizations to promote productive school atmosphere. Presently the school is chosen by CLASE (Center for Latino Achievement and Success in Education) of the University of Georgia as a site for training teachers and implementing several extra programs for students and parents. Oglethorpe University and PATH have been in partnership. Other non-profit organizations such as Bridging the Gap Program, PAN Asian Community, and the New Comer Center for Refugees and Immigrants have worked closely with the school.

### **English Language Learners**

Because of the school's locality, PATH Academy anticipates a large number of "English Language Learners" (ELLs) will attend the school. All ELLs will receive instruction in a mainstream environment as well as individualized instruction by ESOL (English to the Speakers of Other Languages) certified teachers. ELLs will not be assigned to classes for the disabled because of their language needs, nor will they be excluded from regular school

activities. ESOL services will be provided to all students in need of service according to the federal and state guidelines.

ELLs at PATH Academy will participate in a program that combines a structured English immersion model and a pull out model with bilingual tutorial sessions. In this program an ESOL teacher will team-teach with a core subject teacher in a classroom where English-speaking students are included. In this setting, ELLs students will have an opportunity to interact with English speaking peers, who also model English usage. The four aspects of language learning: speaking, listening, reading, and writing will be integrated with the subject matter. The students will also receive immediate assistance from the ESOL teacher whenever they have difficulty with the language or the content. Later in an ESOL pull out class, the ESOL teacher will teach English to ELLs using modified materials of the same subject matter taught in the previous class with an emphasis on language learning.

PATH Academy will employ highly qualified certified teachers to assist ELLs students. Because PATH Academy has after school program, ELLs who need extra help will have an opportunity to attend a tutorial session at the end of the day. During this time they will work with a bilingual teacher or paraprofessional who will assist them in their native language to make certain that they understand the materials they have studied in all the classes clearly. Teachers will monitor the ELLs' progress throughout the year through informal and formal methods. All classroom teachers will be trained to modify their lessons and teaching strategies to meet any student's individual needs. In addition, PATH Academy teachers will receive the materials and the professional development necessary to effectively meet the needs of ESOL students. Furthermore, PATH Academy will work closely with Center for Latino Achievement and Success in Education (CLASE) at The University of Georgia, International Center in DeKalb County, and schools in DeKalb County and around the state to find best school practices and to ensure usage of the most effective evaluative strategies and standards. PATH Academy will treat ELLs in accordance with all applicable federal and Georgia laws and regulations. ELLs will be given appropriate support based on demonstration of a lack of familiarity with English. Students whose English proficiency is below level 5 of stated adopted WIDA ACCESS Placement Test (W-APT) will be eligible for language assistance services. They will to be served in ESOL program. ESOL teachers will monitor ELLs' English proficiency progress closely. Annually ELLs will be assessed by stated adopted test, ACCESS. ELLs who score at or above proficiency level 5 on ACCESS (tier C) and at or above proficiency on state assessment of reading comprehension will be considered English proficient and do not need language assistance service. However, the teachers will continue to monitor these students for two year to make sure that they are successful in a regular classroom.

### **Students with Disabilities**

PATH Academy will use the inclusion model of special education in which students with special needs will participate in all regular classrooms. PATH Academy will comply with all regulatory special education requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and Title 11 of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Should DeKalb County School System currently hold an

Individualized Education Plan for any student who will attend PATH Academy, they will provide said plan to the principal of PATH Academy by July 1 of each year.

Currently PATH Academy has a certified special education coordinator/teacher who will be responsible for individual case management of all special education students and for arranging provision of services required by their Individualized Education Programs

The Special Education Coordinator will:

- ensure that all aspects of the IEP are followed
- arrange for the teacher of the child to attend the team meetings
- communicate with parents progress made toward attaining the goals stated on the child's IEP and inform them of due process procedures and rights
- consult quarterly with principal to ensure that the students with IEP objectives and goals are being met
- complete the requisite paperwork, updating and filing of necessary information for initial referrals, triennial evaluations and ongoing monitoring of student progress appropriate provision of any/all test modifications as stipulated on the IEP
- maintain a central file with all special education evaluation material and IEPs in accordance with FERPA and IDEA guidelines
- provide quarterly and year-end assessment of student progress.

The school will collect and maintain the following information on students with disabilities as required by IDEA:

- the count of all school-age students with disabilities being provided special education services by age, grade, category of disability and the number of students with disabilities who are Limited English Proficient
- the number of students provided with test modifications and the types and the number of students exempted from state assessments
- the settings in which students with disabilities receive their services, specifically the portion of the school day they receive services with non-disabled peers including time out of the regular classroom
- the number of students with disabilities suspended "in-school" and out of school, organized by disability, and length of suspensions
- the basis of exit of students with disabilities from DeKalb PATH Academy(i.e. attainment of diploma and type, declassified, moved, etc.)

PATH Academy hereby provides the following assurances:

- Each special education child shall have an IEP and be served by an appropriately certified special education teacher.
- Each child requiring special education services shall have an Individual Education Plan (IEP). PATH Academy shall involve the DeKalb County Department of Support Services in the initial evaluation, IEP development and IEP review.

- Send a list of special education students enrolled at the charter school to the contact charter school liaison to coordinate IEP activities.
- Send a list of the certified special education teacher(s) at the charter school to the contact charter school liaison
- If PATH Academy does not have a certified special education teacher, the charter administrator/governing board must employ a substitute teacher until a qualified teacher is found. The child must receive services according to the IEP.
- PATH Academy will identify a Student Support Team (SST) team in accordance with state guidelines.
- DeKalb County Department of Support Services shall provide training for the SST team.
- A DeKalb County psychologist will attend each SST meeting according to established schedule.
- DeKalb County Department of Support Services will provide SST referral forms for use by charter school SST team.
- Psychological testing may be requested only by SST according to guidelines from the Team or IEP Committee.
- School social work services shall be provided as needed in accordance to DeKalb County School System guidelines.
- All PATH Academy Special education teachers will be invited to participate in workshops, in-service programs and/or training offered by the Department of Support Services.
- Itinerant services for students with speech/language disorders, as identified in their IEP, shall be provided by the DeKalb County Department of Support Services. December 1 federal count earnings and category three FTE earnings by the charter school for speech students shall be retained by DCSS.
- Students whose IEP list services in the areas of vision impaired, legally blind, deaf/hard of hearing (hearing impaired), or orthopedically impaired may receive services from an itinerant DCSS teacher for up to one hour per day. Students identified with those disabilities who require more intensive services will be served at the appropriate location in the DeKalb County School System. In this case, PATH Academy will contact Ms. Nancy Buice.
- Medicaid earnings generated by the provision of special education and related services shall be retained by DCSS.
- Discipline issues regarding special education students and 504 students shall be handled in accordance with state rules and federal regulations.
- DeKalb County School System will provide guidance to assist the charter school with their obligation to comply with state rules and federal regulations.
- PATH Academy staff shall have access to the Jim Cherry Teacher Center for available services and loan of materials and equipment.
- The federal Title VI B funds, FTE earnings for speech and Medicaid billing for special education and related services shall be retained by DCSS to be applied toward the cost of the identified services.

- PATH Academy will send all documentation and correspondence to the contact charter school liaison, Department of Support Service, East DeKalb Campus, 5839 Memorial Drive, Stone Mountain, GA 30083.

### **Ancillary Services**

All students attending DeKalb PATH Academy will be required to have records of immunizations on file. Students will undergo required vision, hearing, scoliosis and nutritional screening. Staff will provide referrals for any perceived health problems.

PATH Academy also plans to partner with local health organizations to receive yearly services on campus, such as annual immunizations conducted by local hospitals' mobile clinics. When further diagnostic or psychological testing is needed to provide support and services for a student at PATH Academy, the school will contract with a local agency (through DeKalb County or a private source) to perform the tests. Following the tests, the agency will counsel the school and family. In cases where the diagnostic or psychological tests conclude that the child needs additional services, PATH Academy will follow state reporting and IDEA procedures to arrange for the service, working hand-in-hand with the family. Once again, PATH Academy will contract out with DeKalb County or private organizations to provide the quality service necessary to help the child and his/her family.

PATH Academy would like to participate in any DeKalb County School System district-wide health services plans. It is PATH Academy's intent to ensure every child has the opportunity to receive health related services such as vision, hearing and scoliosis screening and necessary immunizations at the school site.

### **Methods of Instruction**

PATH Academy has recruited and employed highly qualified teachers as defined by the Georgia Standards Commissions. These teachers also have extensive experience working with international students and/or minority students. All students will be taught to become successful life-long learners. They will acquire the knowledge and skills needed to achieve academic success and the ability to apply, evaluate, and expand upon this knowledge independently. Students who are identified as gifted and talented will receive instruction from certified teachers for the gifted. They will participate in enrichment programs including academic competitions and foreign language lessons. Students who need academic assistance will receive supplemental educational services and remediation in smaller classes with tutors throughout the school day. They will also receive help in the after school and Saturday programs as needs arise. However, all students at PATH will learn how to think critically and analytically. PATH Academy has not limited itself to only one practice because there are many educational theories and practices proven to be effective in the classroom. Teachers have been consistently encouraged to implement successful practices and strategies that are most appropriate to the needs and ability of each student.

Strategies that have been employed in PATH Academy's classrooms include:

- direct whole-class instruction
- indirect whole-class instruction
- instruction incorporating various learning modalities
- instruction adapted to multiple intelligences
- teacher-directed small group instruction
- one-on-one teacher instruction
- cooperative learning
- computer activities
- educational and motivational field lessons
- whole body multi-sensory instruction
- whole-language instruction
- project-based learning

## **Support for Learning**

### ***Parental Involvement***

PATH Academy operates under the belief that the teachers, parents, and students must work together as partners to provide the atmosphere and potential for a quality education. Parents are a vital part of this partnership, and the PATH to Excellence outlines the ways in which PATH academy expects and needs the parents to support the educational mission of the school. The PATH to Excellence, which requires parental support, includes making sure that their child attends school every day, helping with homework and ensuring that it is complete each night; reading with their child each night; assisting their child in contacting the teacher, and being available to meet with the teachers at home or at school if the need arises.

### ***Faculty Involvement***

The faculty and staff will bridge the gap between school and community by setting up meetings at various community centers so that parents who have no transportation will be able to attend meetings and conferences.

### ***Community Involvement***

Months prior to the opening of the school in 2002, the founding principal, Suttiwan Cox met with parents, refugee consultants, educators, business, political and non-profit organization leaders to gain support, advice and feedback for PATH Academy and help recruit potential parents. (**Appendix C**) Two parents, Mercedes Martinez and Sue Chaisaengsukul have been an integral part of the start-up planning process and the development of the charter petition. (**Appendix D**)

PATH Academy has established a volunteer program which recruits individuals who are dedicated to helping students obtain their academic goals. Our volunteer program is made up of community members, college students, high school students, and parents. Volunteers have performed several duties, including small group tutorials, office assistance, and serving as readers during our after school program. PATH Academy's health curriculum

also includes various community-based organizations that help students understand nutrition, hygiene, puberty, drug and alcohol abuse, gangs, and family crisis management. The following organizations have been great supporters of our school:

- Oglethorpe University
- Department of Education, Mercer University
- Center for Latino Achievement and Success in Education (CLASE), The University of Georgia
- Dunwoody Woman's Club
- Brookhaven Home Owners and Neighborhood Business Alliance
- PAN ASIAN
- Newcomer Center
- AWARE
- Boys and Girls Club

### ***School Organization and Culture***

PATH academy teachers will provide their students with cellular phone numbers so that students can contact teachers after school for assistance with homework or in the case of an emergency. PATH Academy wants to foster a supportive family environment inside the classroom and throughout the school and community. We want the students to have pride in themselves, their school, their heritage, their family, and their community. PATH Academy has established an outreach program that provides parents translation assistance and information concerning health care and education within the county and in the state.

### ***STUDENT ASSESSMENT PLAN***

The goal of PATH Academy will ensure that all assessments, standards, and curriculum used at PATH Academy are aligned with those of the Georgia Performance Standards.

#### ***Assessment Tools***

PATH Academy will measure the impact and success of its academic programs utilizing several forms of evaluation and assessment. Evaluation and assessment will be conducted on an annual, quarterly, weekly, and daily basis in all curriculum areas. The evaluation and assessment instruments to be used will include but not limited to:

- Criterion Referenced Competency Tests (CRCT) as the state testing schedule demands
- State Assessments as required in law and the DeKalb County Testing Program
- State performance-based assessments for writing, if applicable
- WIDA ACCESS Placement Test (W-APT) and CACCESS for ELLs
- grade reporting and weekly progress reports to parents
- student folders
- student writing portfolio;
- student journals
- daily subject area monitoring
- unit tests

- projects
- parent surveys when applicable
- class attendance

The frequency of these evaluation tools will enable the principal, assistant principals, and teachers to monitor and assess each student’s progress and need. New instructional approaches, goals, and expectations to better serve these students will be revised accordingly.

PATH Academy will use the annual data from all state mandated assessments to refine curriculum and classroom practice and to ensure that the school can respond to the needs of individual students. Where these assessments reveal that students are not performing at appropriate levels (information will vary based on assessments used), modifications to curriculum and individual students’ programs will be made. In any case, PATH Academy will work consistently toward ensuring that all students meet or exceed the state’s learning

standards for their grade, as reported in achievement measures consistent with output of each assessment tool, whether norm-referenced or criterion-referenced. Supplemental and remediation education services will be provided to the students who need them in accordance to SBOE Rule 160-4—5 .03 and SBOE Rule 160-4—5 .01.

These services will be conducted during after school program, Saturday program and summer school program as needs arise.

***Baseline Academic Profile***

In order for the teachers to plan lessons that consistently accelerate the academic performance of the students, annual academic profiles of the students will be established at the beginning of the school year. The profiles of PATH Academy students will be determined according to scores on the prior year’s administration of the Criterion Referenced Competency Tests (CRCT) and norm-referenced tests as well as other test scores posted in students’ permanent records. International students whose first language is not English, and whose former educational records cannot be located will be assessed both formally and informally so that the school can obtain a profile for each student.

PATH Academy will use both norm referenced and criterion-referenced instruments to assess the students in the following areas:

- English language skills
- Mathematics skills and reasoning ability
- native language level, both oral and written when appropriate
- General knowledge in other subject areas

**Curriculum Coordination**

***Horizontal and Vertical Planning***

Outside of the classroom, teachers will also employ strategies to enhance student learning. There will be continuous horizontal and vertical curriculum planning to ensure consistency between the grade and cross-curricular developments in each grade. Each school year teachers will have at least 2 weeks of staff development that emphasizes curriculum

improvement. During the year teachers will have coordinated departmental planning periods, mandatory grade-level meetings, and periodic after school planning sessions. The staff will develop and refine benchmarks, units, and lessons that correlate to the Georgia Performance Standards. Furthermore, teachers at PATH Academy will work together to refine, share, and develop effective teaching strategies.

## **DEKALB PATH ACADEMY ACADEMIC YEAR**

### **Structure of the School Day and Year**

DeKalb PATH Academy's school calendar will comply with DeKalb County schools and state requirements. (**Appendix E**). Students and teachers will spend more time in PATH Academy classrooms than most other schools in DeKalb County because of the extended school days and summer school program.

#### DeKalb PATH Academy Extended Day at a Glance

PATH Academy students attend school Monday through Thursday from 7:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. and on Friday from 7:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

#### **7:00 a.m. – 7:30 a.m.**

Students arrive for breakfast and enter their classrooms. Students will work on reading and mathematics.

#### **7:30 a.m. – 7:35 (Morning Circle )**

Students recite their purpose of attending the school and the importance of education, pledge their allegiance to the flag, observe a brief period of quiet reflection, and listen to morning announcement if applicable.

#### **7:40 a.m. – 2:45 p.m. (Core Academic and Elective Subjects, )**

Students are engaged in the standard curriculum areas of language arts, math, science, social studies, art/music, thinking skills, current events, technology, physical education, Spanish for native speakers and non-native speakers.

#### **2:45 p.m. – 3:30 p.m. (Tutorial/Enrichment)**

Students attend an Enrichment Period in which they receive a daily snack, and have the option of working on homework, participating in enrichment program, such as academic bowl preparation and foreign language clubs, or receiving individualized tutoring from teachers, or participating in group projects.

#### **Saturday Classes**

Academic enrichment and/or supplemental lessons will be provided during Saturday School program between 8:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. to students who need academic assistance.

### **Summer School**

Our summer school session provides students, parents, and teachers with a head start in preparing for the upcoming academic year.

### **Extra-curricular Activities: Local and Out-of-State Field Lessons**

PATH Academy believes in involving its students in out-door field lessons. Therefore, local fieldtrips and out-of-state fieldtrips will be provided to the students whenever applicable. The local field lessons will expose students to the educational wonders of Georgia from Stone Mountain to Savannah. Our end-of-the-year field lessons, which will serve as culminating activities, must be earned by each student through his/her hard work, good behavior, and academic standing. Our out-of state field trips in the past included trips to New York City, Washington D.C., and Philadelphia.

### **Class Size**

DeKalb PATH Academy shall follow Georgia State Board of Education rule 160-5-1-.08 concerning class size.

### **ACCOUNTABILITY**

DeKalb PATH Academy will not waive the accountability provision of O.C.G.A.20-14-30 through 20-14-41 and federal accountability requirements. It will use the same testing program to measure student progress. PATH Academy adheres to Georgia's and DeKalb County's testing program. PATH Academy will continue to develop local assessments aligned with Georgia Performance Standards.

PATH Academy's testing schedule is as follows:

	CRCT	NRT-ITBS	Georgia Writing Assessment	8th Grade End of Course Test
Grade 5	X	X	X	
Grade 6	X			
Grade 7	X	X		
Grade 8	X	X	X	Eligible 8 <sup>th</sup> grade students

PATH Academy will use the data from these tests, as well as general parent and student satisfaction, to drive its school improvement plan and to determine areas of weakness that might need remediation. All ELLs will take ACCESS as required by Georgia State Department of Education.

## **SCHOOL OPERATIONS**

### **Attendance Zone, Transportation, Recruitment and Federal Meal Program**

The attendance zone will be comprised of three tiers. First priority will be given to children of families living in Tier 1, the Buford Highway Corridor, which is defined by Interstate 85 as the southeast boundary, the Fulton-DeKalb County line as the west boundary, the Gwinnett-DeKalb County line as the north boundary, and a line one-half mile to the northwest and parallel to Peachtree Street/Peachtree Industrial Boulevard as the northwest boundary. If space allows, priority will be given to children of families living in Tier 2, which is the Clarkston, Stone Mountain, Lithonia area defined by the following zip codes – 30021, 30032, 30034, 30035, 30083, and 30088. Remaining spaces may be filled with children of families living in the DeKalb County School District but not within Tiers 1 or 2.

Additionally, students not residing in DeKalb County are ineligible to attend the charter school. PATH Academy will not charge tuition fees and will not discriminate against any student on the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, gender or disability. PATH Academy shall be a public, nonsectarian, nonreligious, nonprofit school organized and operated under the laws of the state of Georgia.

PATH Academy has reported and shall report daily attendance to the DeKalb County School System (DCSS) using the prevailing method of data collection with data ultimately residing on the AS400 central database. DCSS will provide the necessary software and training for the AS400 connections while the charter school will provide hardware and the necessary Internet service connection. The DCSS Student Information System is to be used for the collection of all data and information required by O.C.G.A. § 20-2-320 for mandatory reporting to the State Department of Education (SDOE) and federal agencies. The method of data collection will be that which is currently in use by the DCSS and may be changed from time to time based on technology currently in use. Presently this will include but is not limited to the AS400, SmartWeb/Grade Book, and other software that may be developed and implemented in the future. Existing periodic and end-of-year checklists provided by DCSS will be used to define when progress reports, report cards and other verifications are to be produced. PATH Academy will explore as many avenues of outreach as possible to guarantee a broad spectrum of exposure. The staff will publicize the school as follows:

- home visits in local school areas
- referrals from our students and their and families
- neighborhood flyers
- speaking at church and prayer meetings
- speaking at civic organizations
- speaking at community based organizations
- local newspaper and community association newsletter advertisements
- teacher and counselor referrals from other campuses.

In the past five years PATH Academy has provided transportation to students who reside within the attendance zone and will continue to do so. The transportation program which is provided by Transportation Department of DeKalb County School System will comply with applicable law. PATH Academy has participated in the federal school meal program and will continue to do so.

### **Safety, Order, and Student Discipline**

Safety, order and student discipline will be fundamental to learning at PATH Academy. While students need a challenging curriculum, dedicated teachers and proper materials, they must also have a secure learning environment where they feel safe. PATH Academy will adhere to the PATH to Excellence and DeKalb County School System Code of Student Conduct as a guideline for in-class disciplinary action, suspension or expulsion of students. In-class disciplinary actions will include, but are not limited to:

- additional assignments to be completed at home and/or at school
- detention after school
- mandatory homework study hall after school
- time-out
- loss of incentives and school trips

PATH Academy students will be required to wear the PATH Academy uniform every Monday through Friday. Student dress code will be strictly enforced.

### **Student Admissions and Dismissal Procedures**

Admission to PATH Academy will be a cooperative decision between students, parents, and teachers. Students and parents must choose to enroll in PATH Academy instead of remaining at their zoned public school. The school encourages and motivates the students and their families to view an intense academic commitment as their key to the future. Students, parents, and teachers will be expected to sign PATH Academy's PATH to Excellence. This document addresses the areas of attendance, homework, behavior, and academics. In accordance with all federal laws and Georgia Charter School Act no student will be denied admission to PATH Academy based on race, ethnicity, national origin, gender, or disability.

Students will be able to withdraw from PATH Academy at any point in time and return to their local zoned public school or any other school to which they can gain admissions.

### ***Suspension and Expulsion***

All suspensions, expulsions, and alternative instruction must be in accordance with DeKalb County School Board Rules, the State School Safety Plan, Federal Law (PL94-142) and 34 C.F.R. Part 300. DeKalb PATH Academy will follow the rules and regulations stated in DeKalb County School System Code of Student Conduct. (Appendix A) and all due process established by the DeKalb County School System will be followed.

## **Insurance Coverage**

It should be noted that pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 20-2-2065(b)(5), PATH Academy any insurance policy shall contain a statement that the DeKalb County Board of Education be included as an additional insured. Copies of each policy shall be provided to the CSRO. DeKalb County Board of Education shall be included as an additional insured. PATH Academy shall hold harmless and indemnify the DeKalb County School District, the board of education, its members, officers and employees from every liability, claim or demand upon the DeKalb PATH Academy. PATH Academy agrees to defend and indemnify the DeKalb County Board of Education in any action from the charter school's activities. DeKalb PATH Academy's school insurance plan is as follows:

a. General Liability	\$2,000,000
b. Errors or Omissions	\$1,000,000
c. Property/Lease Insurance	100% of replacement cost
d. Auto Liability	\$1,000,000
e. Worker's Compensation	(based on payroll)
f. Theft	\$500,000
g. Student Accident and Catastrophic Accident	\$5,000,000
h. Umbrella Coverage for all insurance policies	\$5,000,000
i. Unemployment insurance	Based on payroll

## **EMPLOYMENT PROCEDURES AND POLICIES**

### ***Hiring Policies***

PATH Academy will not discriminate against employees on the basis of disability, race, creed, color, gender, national origin, religion, ancestry, marital status, and sexual orientation. PATH academy will have the freedom to employ its own teachers and staff members. The terms in the contract and compensation package for all employees will be determined by DeKalb PATH Academy, Inc. The payment of compensation, including salaries and benefits, will be the sole responsibility of DeKalb PATH Academy. All eligible employees will participate in Teacher Retirement System of Georgia and Social Security System. Teachers and non-instructional staff will be paid based primarily on the DeKalb County School System's salary schedule. (**Appendix G**) PATH Academy will also pay stipends to the teachers for time spent with the students beyond the regular hours during the week. Though the normal term of employment is for one academic year, PATH Academy reserves the right to terminate the employment of any teachers or members of staff at any time in accordance with the content of each individual contact. In addition, PATH Academy reserves the right to terminate the employment of any employees at any time for the following serious reasons:

- Use of drugs or alcohol on campus
- Conviction of a felony crime
- Theft of any property
- Willful destruction of school property
- Reporting to work under the influence of any alcoholic or illegal substance

- Possession of firearms or other illegal weapons on school premises
- Deliberately making or using false records, material requisitions, passes, etc.

All employees will agree to the Code of Ethics for Educators as prepared by the Georgia Professional Standards Commission. By agreeing to the Code, the employees are committed to:

- abiding by federal, state, and local laws and statutes
- maintaining a professional relationship with all students
- refraining from the abuse of alcohol or drugs during the course of professional practice
- exemplifying honor and integrity in the course of professional practice particularly in the use of public funds and property
- complying with state, federal, and local laws regarding the confidentiality of student records
- fulfilling the terms and obligations detailed in the DeKalb PATH Academy contract
- filing necessary reports of child abuse
- maintaining a high level of professional conduct
- In addition to the Code of Ethics, all personnel will be in compliance with the Drug Free Public Work Force Act of 1990.

### ***Staff Positions, Responsibilities, Ratio***

The following proposed positions will be hired as needs and funds dictate:

1. CEO – will lead the planning and implementation of the project. Absent the hiring of a CEO, the Principal will inherit the authority and responsibility of the CEO. The CEO will work with community leaders and business leaders, Public Schools, the Georgia Department of Education, and other relevant state and local agencies. He or she will assist with fundraising. He or she will hire the staff, working in collaboration with the principal. He or she will be accountable to the PATH Academy Board for the successful implementation of the charter, including its business plan and will serve as the school’s Chief Financial Officer.
2. Principal – will serve as an instructional leader and manage the day-to-day operations of the school.
3. Assistant Principal – will assist the Principal in day-to-day operations.
4. Director of Administrative Services – will handle financial matters such as accounting, recordkeeping, purchasing, payroll, inventory, insurance, etc.
5. Office Manager /Student Data Manager – will support the CEO and Principal, coordinate student data, manage the administrative office, handle account receivable, financial data entry (lunch and after school program)
6. Guidance Counselor(s) – will provide academic, career and personal counseling services. Will also make referrals to other agencies when appropriate (see budget for projected number of positions).
7. Media/Technology Specialist – will manage media center and certain technology areas.
8. Teachers – will provide classroom instruction and work with individual students (see budget for projected number of positions).

## ***Employee Recruitment***

PATH Academy employee recruitment procedures are as follows:

- Word of mouth.
- Posting the vacancies on school website.
- Advertising through news media.
- Advertising through educational organizations, teachers recruitment organizations and colleges of education in the state of Georgia and around the country.
- Participating in job fair organized by leaders of charter schools in Georgia.

The hiring practices of PATH Academy are as follows:

- Outstanding teaching faculty and staff with diverse background and middle school training and experience will be recruited from teacher recruitment organizations, business, and military. However, field certificate will be priority.
- PATH Academy will hire teachers who are highly qualified and certified according to the certification rules and regulations mandated by the Georgia Professional Standards Commission.
- Content knowledge of the teachers will be the priority of recruiting of teachers.
- All personnel assigned to PATH Academy will have a criminal record check and be fingerprinted.
- Teacher and paraprofessional candidates will be interviewed on-site. The principal will have full authority over selection of and recommendation to hire all faculty and staff.
- After the interview, prospective teachers will be asked to spend a day at the school and teach at least one class under the observation of the principal and one teacher.
- Staff performance will be evaluated with the use of school evaluation model that incorporates the mission and values of the school. Such evaluation is common to the corporate settings. The evaluation may include a 360-degree format that includes student achievement, observation, student evaluation, etc.
- The Board of Directors will make the final decision regarding hiring and dismissal of personnel based upon the recommendation of the principal.
- Staff members are subject to finger printing and background check.

## **FACILITY**

PATH Academy is located on Oglethorpe University campus. The school building is the former Jim Cherry Elementary School of DeKalb County School System. The address is 3007 Hermance Drive, Atlanta, GA 300319. (**Appendix H.1**) The building has been continuously renovated and maintained since the beginning of our lease in June of 2003. Upon moving into the building the school obtained documentation regarding asbestos removal and management program from the previous occupants. The asbestos was completely removed in the summer of 2007. (**Appendix H.2**) PATH Academy has extended the second term lease to June 30, 2013.

PATH Academy follows DeKalb County School System's emergency safety plan in accordance with O.C.G.A. § 20-2-1185. The plan has been submitted to the system annually since the start of our charter. (Appendix H.3) In the past five years PATH Academy has observed a brief period of quiet reflection in compliance with O.C.G.A. § 20-2-1050 and will continue to do so. Furthermore, PATH Academy is subject to all laws relating to unlawful conduct in or near a public school.

## **FISCAL FEASIBILITY AND CONTROLS**

PATH Academy has had and will have full autonomy on its budget and expenditures. PATH Academy has been conducting proper financial practices in budgeting, internal controls, and auditing. DeKalb PATH Academy, Inc. is a non-profit educational institution incorporated in Georgia. The school prepares its financial statements in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles in the United States of America, which are audited annually, following its fiscal year end of June 30. There are four people responsible for the financial management of the school, the Treasurer, who is a member of the Board of Directors, the Director of Administrative Services, the Office Manager, and the CEO/Principal. The financial responsibilities of the latter three persons are as follows:

- Director of Administrative Services: accounts payable, payroll, general ledger, reconciliation of accounts, production of financial statements, preparations for audits, etc.
- Office Manager: accounts receivable, financial data entry (lunch and after-school programs, etc.)
- CEO/Principal: approval of purchases, signing of checks, budget planning and overall financial responsibility.

The following financial policies and procedures are implemented to insure sound fiscal practice:

1. An annual budget will be drawn up by the school CEO/Principal with the assistance of the Director of Administrative Services and submitted to Treasurer and the Board of Directors for approval by June 1 of each year.
2. The Board of Directors is updated monthly of the financial and operational condition of the school through reports and other methods. The Board of Directors also has access to all financial information at all time.
3. The principal and the Treasurer of the Board of Directors will have authorization to sign all school checks. Items over \$10,000 will require both signatures, as outlined in the PATH Academy Bylaws.
4. The school has established appropriate financial policies and procedures such as generally accepted accounting procedures, a checking account held in financial institution acceptable in Georgia, adequate payroll procedures, procedures for the creation and review of monthly and quarterly financial statements, and establishment of liability insurance.

An independent audit will occur within 90 days of the end of each fiscal year, and the audit will be made available to all entities that have provided DeKalb PATH Academy funds to operate the school. As required by state law, unaudited financial statements for the fiscal year ending on June 30 will be provided in the annual report no later than October 1 of each year, with audited statements forwarded to the local board and state board upon completion.

PATH Academy has had a sound financial management. The sound financial management of the school derives from the fact that the CEO/Principal, who serves as the school chief financial officer, has received formal and informal training in financial aspects of school operations (**Appendix I**). PATH Academy's funding sources will be diverse. The per pupil payments from local and state sources and federal school funding programs will be combined with other grants and donations, as well as capital financing based on a final facility plan. PATH Academy will comply with the federal monitoring requirements for school receiving funds. PATH Academy has also called upon local business for fundraising efforts and in-kind donations. PATH Academy has already secured several grants from several organizations for the past five years.

The expenses for the school balance the different needs of the school while maintaining a positive net income. Expenses are allocated among salaries and benefits, direct instructional materials, occupancy and facility costs, administrative expenses, and general contracted services. The allocation of these funds provides PATH Academy with a full staff, an adequate supply of materials and equipment, and all of the supporting services and infrastructure required by successful schools. A positive balance will be maintained each year throughout this charter. Appendix J contains the five-year projected budget for PATH Academy, balance sheet and cash flow. The per pupil funding is estimated at \$7,000.

### ***Student Recruitment***

The following methods have been employed:

- post flyers and notices in local supermarkets, churches, community centers, and apartment complexes
- visit local organizations in each neighborhood
- visit and explain to prospective students and their families the purpose of PATH Academy
- conduct parental information sessions to elaborate on the commitment involved with attending PATH Academy
- canvass neighborhoods to further reach interested families

Formal recruitment of incoming students will begin in January of each calendar year for the following school year. In January, PATH Academy staff and parents will advertise open enrollment for 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> graders. After this point, interested families will be able to meet with the PATH Academy staff and review the expectations of the school. The open enrollment will be closed on April 15. If the number of applicants exceeds capacity, a random selection process, or lottery, for admission will be used, with first preference given to siblings of students already enrolled at PATH Academy and the students who reside in

the attendance zone tier 1. If a lottery is required, it will be held in an open forum at a time and place listed in the letters to the parents. After filling all seats, a waiting pool will be established. In the event that a space opens up, random selection from the waiting pool will be conducted to fill the space. After the waiting pool is exhausted any vacant spaces during the year will be filled on first come first serve basis in accordance with enrollment numbers.

***Statement of Annual Report***

PATH Academy shall, by October 1, submit an annual report complying with all requirements set out in O.C.G.A. § 20-2-2067.1(c)(1)-(6).

**DESCRIPTION OF GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE**

This section outlines the existing governance structure of PATH Academy, as it pertains to the charter operation. PATH Academy’s principal in the absence of a CEO will serve as the CEO and President of DeKalb PATH Academy, Inc. In this capacity, the CEO/principal will serve as the charter contact between PATH academy and the DeKalb County School Board. The Board of Directors may elect or hire an attorney to handle all legal correspondence. The PATH Academy Officers and Board of Directors are charged with ensuring that the charter school adheres to DeKalb County Code and meets their own respective accountability measures.

**DeKalb PATH Academy Board of Directors for 2006-07 School Year**

Name	Position	Background
Dalise Robinson	President	Parent
Patricia Ireland	Vice President	Retired educator
Judy Dodge	Secretary	Liaison of Dunwoody Women’s Club
Elias Mangeas	Treasurer	Consulting Engineer
Hank Edelson	Member	Business Owner
Mitch Paull	Member	Senior Vice President, Aaron Rents
Kathleen Stagdon	Member	Teacher
Kimberly Vaughn	Member	Parents

***Administrative Management Structure***

PATH Academy will be run by a Board of Directors, which will establish policies, and a CEO, who will implement and enforce the policies. The DeKalb PATH Academy Board will meet monthly with the CEO/Principal presiding over the meetings as President of DeKalb PATH Academy, Inc.

### ***Selection of The Board Of Directors***

Please refer to Appendix J for the Bylaws of DeKalb PATH Academy, Inc. pertaining to Board election. The initial Board of Directors will vote to add the remaining Members of the Board, ensuring that the requirements in the Georgia Charter School Act are followed.

### ***Roles and Responsibilities of Governing Board***

The DeKalb PATH Academy Board of Directors is empowered to:

- establish general policies of PATH Academy and monitor the implementation of these policies by the CEO/Principal and/or duly constituted committees
- evaluate the performance of the principal by using the mission and goals of the school as the guidelines
- ensure that the school adheres to the mission and goals outlined in this charter, as well as state guidelines
- approve, adopt and monitor the school's annual budget
- provide support to the school for additional fund-raising, marketing and other services as needs arise
- co-sign any checks written over \$10,000
- perform other responsibilities provided in the articles of Incorporation Bylaws of this charter
- resolve teacher, parent, and student grievances and other conflicts. In the circumstance that the parents are not satisfied with the decision of DeKalb PATH Academy Board, they shall follow the due process of DeKalb County School System.

The DeKalb PATH Academy CEO/Principal is empowered to:

- approve employment and termination of all instructional and non-instructional personnel
- submit all personnel recommendations to the DeKalb PATH Academy Board of Directors
- manage and evaluate instructional and non-instructional staff
- develop and maintain school budget records
- write and sign all school checks under \$10,000

The DeKalb PATH Academy Parents will be empowered to:

- join and participate in both PATH Parent Association (PPA)
- attend PPA meetings,
- elect five members to serve on the PPA Board; the PPA Board will lead parental concerns in the areas of recruitment, dress code, fund-raising, student and family crises, and family involvement on the campus, and
- have a presence on the DeKalb PATH Academy Board of Directors.

- DeKalb PATH Academy, in accordance with state rules, agrees to the Open Meetings and Public Records laws.

DeKalb PATH Academy will not be controlled by a management group. DeKalb PATH Academy will use mediation to resolve any differences with the DeKalb County Board of Education. DeKalb PATH Academy governing board shall be subject to the control and management of the local board.