

DEKALB PATH ACADEMY

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT POLICY

PROCEDURES AND EXPECTATIONS

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 shown that our individual students have made continuous progress in their academic achievement.

CHARTER SCHOOL OF CHOICE

PATH Academy is a charter school of choice. The mission of PATH Academy derived 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**.
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.

SAFETY, ORDER, AND STUDENT DISCIPLINE

Safety, order, and student discipline is the fundamental and non-negotiable necessity to student learning and academic achievement at DeKalb PATH Academy. While students

need a challenging and rigorous curriculum, dedicated teachers, and proper materials, they must also have a secure learning environment where they feel safe and nurtured. PATH Academy will adhere to the PATH to Excellence guideline and DeKalb County School System's Code of Student Conduct for in-class disciplinary action, suspension, or expulsion. Students and parents receive and sign for The Code of Student Conduct, which contains the disciplinary rules and regulations of DeKalb County School System. Students are taught the content of Code of Student Conduct and must pass the test.

In order for the school, students and parents to meet the high expectations and academic accountability, a system of rewards and consequences has been developed and implemented along with in-school rules and regulations.

Paychecks

PATH Academy has a unique reward system for students who uphold their commitment on a daily basis. Paychecks are used to monitor students' behavior and completion of assignments daily. Teachers reinforce the importance of the paychecks by taking off the appropriate dollar amounts for various infractions (see discipline code). Paychecks are totaled weekly. These totals are used to determine which students are able to attend local field trips or receive rewards throughout the year, as well as the end of the year field trip.

Disciplinary actions will include, but are not limited to:

- additional assignments to be completed at home and/or at school
- detention after school
- time-out
- loss of incentives and school trips
- in-school suspension
- out-of –school suspension

Teachers and administrative team reserve the right to give appropriate consequences to students.

Dress Code

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

Hall Courtesy

Students are asked to help follow these guidelines when passing through the halls:

- Keep halls open to traffic by walking to the right. Do not block traffic by standing in groups.
- Pass through halls quietly. Be considerate of others in the halls and classrooms.
- Keep the school clean by picking up paper from the floors.

School Bus Procedures and Regulations

Riding a school bus is a privilege and should be treated as such. Students are responsible for orderly conduct and are expected to behave in a manner which will make the ride safe and pleasant for passengers and driver, and which will enable the bus to operate on schedule.

DeKalb County School System does not allow the use of electronic devices including I-Pod or MP3 on the bus.

Students are expected to ride their assigned bus only. Permission will not be granted to students by the school to ride a different bus without a signed request that can be verified.

STUDENT ADMISSIONS AND DISMISSAL PROCEDURES

Admission to DeKalb PATH Academy will be a cooperative decision between students, parents, and teachers. Students and parents must choose to enroll in DeKalb 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 DeKalb PATH Academy based on race, ethnicity, national origin, gender, or disability.

Students will be able to withdraw from DeKalb 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.

Fair and Equitable Treatment of Employees and Students

DeKalb PATH Academy will not discriminate against students or employees on the basis of disability, race, creed, color, gender, national origin, religion, ancestry, marital status, or for special educational services.

OUR SCHOOL YEAR AND ACTIVITIES

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. Students and teachers will spend more time in DeKalb PATH Academy classrooms than most other schools in DeKalb County because of the extended school days and the summer school program.

DeKalb PATH Academy Extended Day at a Glance

DeKalb 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. The schedule for a typical day at the school is as follows:

7:00 a.m. – 7:30 a.m.

Students arrive for breakfast and enter their classrooms. Students will read or work on math skills.

7:34. – 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, and physical education.

2:45 p.m. – 3:30 p.m. (Tutorial)

Students attend an Enrichment Period in which they receive a daily snack, and have the option of working on homework, receiving individualized tutoring from teachers, or participating in group projects.

Saturday School

Students who need extra help can attend Saturday schools. Transportation will not be provided.

Summer School

Our mandatory two-week summer school session provides students, parents, and teachers with a head start in preparing for the upcoming academic year. During this time, teachers, students, and parents become acquainted with the procedures and expectations demanded throughout the year. After assessing each student's individual strengths and weaknesses, teachers emphasize the basics of reading, writing, math, science, and social studies. The summer session is also a time when the process of team building begins. Students are introduced to the concepts, challenges, strengths, and rewards of working as a team. Once the summer session has ended, teachers continue their preparation by designing a curriculum for the fall that will address the specific needs and interests of the students.

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

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.

COMMON PROCEDURES

Change of Address or Phone Number

A change in your address or telephone number must be reported to the main office within three (3) days of the change. We need to be able to reach parents in case of an emergency. Please help us by keeping all records up to date.

School Trips

DeKalb PATH Academy offers students the opportunity to participate in various trips during the school year. In order to participate, students must demonstrate acceptable behavior throughout the school year. A student with an unsatisfactory discipline record who does not earn enough money on his/her paycheck may be excluded from school trips. Grades and attendance are also examined for eligibility. This policy helps ensure the protection and safety of all students.

In order to insure the safety of all students during field trips, the following procedures are in effect:

- All school rules are in effect.
- No glass bottles, Walkmans, electronic games, beepers, CD Players, cell phones, gum and/or candy will be allowed on any field trip.
- Students must dress appropriately.
- A reasonable amount of spending money is acceptable.
- No valuables should be brought on any trip.

Attendance

Parents are responsible for having their children attend school on a regular basis. The school day is from 7:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Monday through Thursday and 7:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. on Friday. It is imperative that students attend school unless they are ill; students cannot achieve academic success without good attendance. If a student will be absent, please call the school to report the absence. All students returning from an absence must submit a written excuse from their parent or guardian. When an absence is due to a communicable/infectious disease, a note of re-admission from a physician is required. Students are responsible for making up all missed schoolwork. The Board-approved attendance policy is as follows:

Excused Absences

Only the following reasons will be accepted as “legally excused absences”:

1. personal illness

2. death in the family
3. religious holidays
4. absences mandated by order of governmental agencies
5. instances which attendance could be hazardous as determined by the DeKalb County School System
6. serving as a page in the General Assembly
7. up to five (5) days of excused absences for students whose parents are in the armed forces who are called to duty or home on leave from overseas deployment in a combat zone as provided by Georgia law.

Absence Verification

Parents/guardians are expected to call the school to inform office personnel of the absence. However, telephone calls to our office will not be considered a valid verification of absence from school. After each absence, upon returning to school, students are required to furnish a note from the parent and/or physician or the student will not be allowed to go to classes. The note must contain the following information:

1. the specific reason the student was absent
2. the number of days and dates of the absence(s)
3. the student's first and last name
4. the parent's or physician's signature
5. the telephone number of parent or physician

All other absences are considered unexcused.

Parent/Guardian Notification and Disciplinary Action

PATH Academy has had excellent student daily attendance records for the past 6 years. The average annual attendance is 98.5-99.5%. Our administrative team and teachers are diligent in making sure that all students attend school daily. Parents will be called if their children are absent in the first day. The counselor and an administrator will visit the family of students whose unexcused absences exceed five days and whose parents or guardian fail to attend a conference concerning the absences. After ten days of unexcused absences DeKalb County School System will transfer the information to Department of Family and Children Services (DFACS).

Excessive Lateness

Excessive lateness to school and classes will be treated as a serious discipline problem. See pages 24 of DeKalb County School System Code of Student Conduct 2008-09.

Student Checking-In/-Out

Parents or guardians must check their children in, if they are late to school. Only adults whose names are on file are allowed to check the students out. Identification will be checked with no exception.

Administration of Medications

Upon receiving a request from the parent, guardian, or physician related to a student's need for medication during school hours, the school nurse shall contact the parent, guardian, or physician to discuss whether the medication should be taken before, during, and/or after school.

Any student required to take medications prescribed by a licensed practitioner shall be supervised in taking medication by the school nurse who is responsible for administering the medication.

If a school nurse is not available the following options for implementation will apply:

The administrator or trained designee may assist students in taking required medications by making medications available to the student as needed; this staff member will observe the student as he/she takes his/her medication.

Medications are administered at school once the following is in place:

A written statement from a licensed practitioner is on file in the student's health record that includes:

1. the student's name
2. name and signature of licensed practitioner, business and emergency numbers;
3. the name and dosage of medication
4. the frequency and time of medication or assistance
5. the date of the order
6. a diagnosis and other medical conditions requiring medications without breaching confidentiality of student or parent/guardian
7. specific recommendations for administration of medication
8. side effects, contraindications and adverse reactions to medications that should be observed
9. the name of each medication to be administered

The school principal shall ensure a written authorization from the parent/guardian is on file in the student's health record that includes:

1. The parent/guardian's name and signature and a home and emergency phone number
2. A list of all medications the student is currently receiving provided it does not create a breach of confidence
3. Approval to have the school nurse, administrator, or trained designee administer the medication or assist the student in taking medication or provide medical assistance
4. Person to be notified in case of medication emergency in addition to the parent/guardian and licensed practitioner

Prescribed inject-able medication shall be administered by registered nurse or qualified others.

The school nurse shall develop a system of documenting observations by nurse and or school personnel and communicating observations relating to prescriptions, medication's effectiveness, and adverse reactions or harmful effects to the parent/guardian or licensed practitioner.

- Non-prescription medications shall be given only with the written request and permission of the parent/guardian.
- Directions from the label for administering non-prescription medication shall be strictly followed.
- School nurse or designee shall ask the student if he/she has taken other medications before giving non-prescription medication.
- School nurse or designee who administered medication shall document event in school log.

SCHOOL-PARENT COMMUNICATION

At PATH Academy our belief in the success of our students is founded on the co-operation between home and school in each child's best interest. Good communication is critical at our school where more than 60% of the student population is non-native English speakers. PATH Academy has established a variety of options in home-school communication both informally and formally. The home-school communication can be divided into two categories: general communication and mandatory communication.

General Communication

Telephone and Conference

Teacher and staff members at PATH are very prompt in communicating and requesting face-to-face conferences. Several teachers speak Spanish, which makes communication more effective. However, bilingual school social workers and a bilingual secretary are always available to translate in the meetings. Teachers and administrators are also encouraged to do home visits.

Meetings with Teachers/School Staff

Typically, the principal, teachers, counselor, social workers, and other school staff members are available before and after school to provide special assistance, answer questions, and help resolve concerns. The school recommends that parents make appointments with school staff when possible either by telephone or notes sent with students. Teachers and school staff are also available at Open House, and other school events.

Voice mail/Teacher Cell Phones

Parents can leave messages on school voice mail after operation hours. A unique feature at PATH is that all content area teachers and social workers can be contacted through their cell phones. Students and parents are encouraged to call the teachers until 9:00 P.M. Monday through Thursday and Friday to Saturday between 1:00-3:00 P.M. for homework help or any other questions or concerns.

Messages Left at the School Office

Teachers and other staff members have mailboxes at the school where messages may be left. The school office can also take messages for teachers and staff members.

Internet Information and Electronic Mail

Parents can check important information on the school website: www.pathacademy.org. Parents can also communicate with teachers through electronic mail.

Parent Meetings, School Events, and in Classroom Activities

PATH has an open-door policy. We encourage parents to visit their children's classrooms any day with an advanced 24-hour notice to the teachers. The school welcomes parent volunteers and participation in PTO.

There are at least 8 formal meetings a years that parents can participate in. In the 2008-09 school year the following meetings and fun activities are planned:

- Open House
- PTA Meetings
- Title I Parent Involvement Activities. In the 2008-09 school year the following sessions will be offered:
 - Supporting your Child's Learning
 - Reading with Your Child
 - Anti-bullying/Gangs
 - Classroom Assessment and Evaluation
 - Understanding Student Performance Data
 - Understanding your rights under No Child Left Behind Act
 - Parenting Ideas and strategies
- Fun activities, such as Talent Show, International Potluck, Music Festival, Art Show, and Science Fair are also planned throughout the year, either during the

day, evening, or Saturday so that parents will be able to participate at least in one event.

Mandatory Communication

Progress Reports

Parents will receive their children's progress reports at four and one half week intervals throughout the year. Teachers also issue informal weekly or bi-weekly progress reports to help parents keep up with their children's progress.

The dates for issuing progress reports are set by the district. However, teachers must contact parents of the students whose progress is not satisfactory immediately prior to issuing of the progress reports. This helps eliminate complaints from parents when their children fail any subjects and the results are officially reported.

Incident Report

An immediate telephone call accompanied by a written report of an incident, either an accident or unacceptable conduct, is mandatory.

Teacher-Parent Conference

PATH teachers are very consistent in communicating and meeting with parents regarding their student's academic progress and behavior on the preventive basis, and most parents' concerns are addressed on a regular basis.

Resolving Difficult Situations

PATH encourages parents to resolve conflicts at the parent-teacher level because we believe that problems are likely to be resolved when parents get a chance to talk to the teacher directly. Therefore, we have set a procedure for resolving situations. We request that parents first request a conference with the teacher involved. If the concerns are not satisfied at this level, parents may request a meeting with the principal and teacher. If the parents are still not satisfied with the resolution at this level, they may write a letter of appeal to the CEO of the school and the chair of the PATH Board of Directors. The chair will hold a meeting with the parents to resolve the problems. Ultimately if the parents are not satisfied with the decision, they can contact DeKalb County School System Governmental Relations and Special Projects at 678-676-0713 for further assistance. PATH will not respond to attempts that do not follow this order of procedure.

Parent Code of Ethics

Adopted at PATH Academy

(from *The Peaceful School: Models that Work*, by Hetty Van Gurp)

I will demonstrate constructive attitudes toward school and its programs by supporting and co-operating with the teaching staff and the school board to the fullest extent.

I will make no criticism of the school without ensuring that I have accurate and first-hand information.

I will encourage a positive attitude on the part of my child and will refrain from criticism of the teachers or school in her/his presence.