



Petition for Charter Renewal



Charter School Renewal Application

For Schools Seeking Renewal
from Both DeKalb County
School District and the State
Board of Education
to
Operate in SY25-26

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7.	Attach a completed Locally-Approved Charter School Partners Roles and Responsibilities chart. This chart shows the balance of authority between the charter school's Board and management, as well as the autonomy of the charter school from the district.	110
8.	Attach a copy of any admissions (pre-lottery) application the charter school proposes to use. Pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 20-2-2066 and SBOE Rule 160-4-9-.05, any admissions application must conform to the open enrollment requirement. Therefore, admissions applications should be limited to a student's name, contact information, home address for the purpose of verifying the student's residence within the school's attendance zone, grade level, and information required for any enrollment preference, such as identifying a sibling already enrolled at the charter school. If the charter school proposes to utilize a weighted lottery for educationally disadvantaged students, the admissions application may also include questions tailored to the subgroup(s) the school will offer an increased chance of admission according to the weighted lottery guidance available on GaDOE's website.	115
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17.	Attach a copy of any intended education service provider contracts or arrangements for the provision of education management or support services, including with any EMO, CMO, ESO, etc. Such contracts shall describe the specific services for which the contracting organization is responsible. Such contracts should clearly delineate the respective roles and responsibilities of the management organization and the governing Board in the management and operation of the charter school. Such contracts must also include the fee structure.	621
18.	Attach a copy of any agreements with your local school district or Board of Education. (Exhibit 18 – DCSD Assurances and Required Statements)	640
19.	Attach a copy of any Letters of Intent and/or agreements detailing any proposed partnerships, including agreements with other local schools/systems for the charter school students' participation in extracurricular activities such as interscholastic sports and clubs.	651
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23.	Complete and attach the budget template located on the Charter Schools Division's website: Please note that the budget template includes:	709/718
	23a. A monthly cash flow projection detailing revenues and expenditures for the charter school's first two (2) years of operation;	
	23b. A spreadsheet projecting cash flow, revenue estimates, budgets, and expenditures on an annual basis for each of the five (5) years of the initial charter term.	
	23c. Back-up documentation proving the legal reality of additional sources of revenue included in the budget template, including any funds other than state and local funding, including bank statements and/or signed grant award letters.	
24.	Attach the résumé for the charter school's Chief Financial Officer.	720
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DeKalb PATH Academy

26.	Attach the charter school's signed and notarized.	726
27.	Attach the charter school's signed Local Board of Education Resolution approving the charter school's application.	727
28.	Attach the charter school's signed Governing Board Resolution approving the charter school's application. This will serve as the formal petition to the SBOE.	728

GADOE & DCSD CHARTER APPLICATION PACKAGE CHECKLIST

The Charter Application Package must comply with the following submission procedures.

An Application Package includes original and 2 copies of the following items:

- APPLICATION COVER PAGE** (Use the form on page 10 of this application; the form may not be altered in any way.)
- CHARTER APPLICATION** (Answers to the questions posed on pages 11-14 of this application.)
 - The Application is limited to 75 double-spaced pages using an 11-point Times New Roman font and one-inch margins with a header showing the school's name and a footer showing consecutive page numbers.
 - The original must be signed in blue ink. Stamped signatures will not be accepted.
- ASSURANCES FORMS, SIGNATURE SHEETS, AND AFFIDAVIT** (Use the Assurances Forms, Signature Sheets, and Affidavit on pages 17-20 of this application; the forms and sheets may not be altered in any way.)
 - The original must be signed in blue ink; stamped signatures will not be accepted. Electronic copy of assurances must be signed. Blank copies will not be accepted.

~~**DOCUMENTATION OF VOTE – FOR CONVERSIONS ONLY** (Use the form on page 21/Exhibit 29) The original must be signed in blue ink; stamped signatures will not be accepted.~~

- EXHIBITS** (See list of required Exhibits on pages 15-16 of this application.) Required Exhibits should be as limited in size as possible.
 - All Exhibits must be tabbed with a header showing the school's name and a footer showing consecutive page numbers.

The Application Package must be submitted electronically to charterschools@dekalbschoolsga.org via

DropBox. The Application Package must include a:

- Microsoft Word version of the Application Cover Page (page 10)
- Microsoft Word versions of the Application and Exhibits
- PDF Version of the Complete Application Packet in the following order: Cover Sheet, Application, signed Assurances Form(s), Affidavit, and Exhibits (including Exhibit 18 - DCSD Assurances and Required Statements). Exhibit 18 – DCSD Assurances and Required Statements may not be altered in any way.
- PDF version of the Locally-Approved Charter School Partners Roles and Responsibilities Chart
- Excel version of the completed Budget Templates

DeKalb PATH Academy

- Faxed or emailed copies will not be accepted. Only complete applications that comply with these guidelines will be evaluated.

SIGNATURES REQUIRED UPON DELIVERY. COMPLETE APPLICATION MUST BE RECEIVED BY 12:00 P.M. ON THURSDAY, October 17, 2024 IN ORDER TO BE IN THE 2024 REVIEW CYCLE FOR OPERATING IN 2025-2026.

Petition for (Name of School): DeKalb PATH Charter Academy
Delivered by (Charter School Representative): Bonnie Z Binell
Received by (DCSD Representative): _____ Date and Time: _____

CHARTER SCHOOL RENEWAL APPLICATION COVER PAGE

Check One: Start-up Renewal

When was the original charter term start date? July 1, 2002

How many charter terms has the school been in existence? 5

Name of Charter School: DeKalb PATH Charter Academy

Name of the Georgia nonprofit corporation that currently holds the charter:

DeKalb PATH Academy, Inc.

Local school system in which charter school is physically located:

DeKalb County School District

Contact Information for the Governing Board Chair

Contact Person (Name and Title): Bonnie L Birrell, Board Chair

Contact Address: _____

Telephone Number: _____

Fax Number: _____

E-mail Address: bbirrell@pathacademy.org

Contact Information for the Person Filling out this Application

Contact Person: Morgan Felts Consultant
Name Title

Contact Address: _____

Telephone Number: _____

Fax Number: _____

E-mail Address: morgan.felts@21cobalt.com

CHARTER SCHOOL RENEWAL APPLICATION

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Name of Charter School: DeKalb PATH Charter Academy

Proposed Charter Term Length: 5 Years

Current Grade Range: 5th-8th

Grade range at the end of the charter term: 5th-8th

Expected enrollment at the end of the charter term: 368

This application was approved by DeKalb County Local Board of Education on _____, 2024

For each year of the NEW charter term, indicate the number of students the charter school plans to serve.

	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Total
Year 1						87	94	94	93					368
Year 2						93	87	94	94					368
Year 3						94	93	87	94					368
Year 4						94	94	93	87					368
Year 5						87	94	94	93					368

1. State the charter school's mission and describe why this initiative is important to the community it serves. Also provide a brief description of any defining features of the school. Include how stakeholders were involved in the petition process and how they will continue participating. (350 words or less)

PATH's *mission* is to provide a safe, nurturing, and challenging learning environment that supports local immigrant and refugee families by equipping students with the tools they need to pursue a life passion while enriching their community. Since its inception in 2002, Dekalb PATH Academy (PATH) has offered a high-quality school option for middle school students in Dekalb County which supports and enhances DCSD's vision to inspire a community of learners to achieve educational excellence. Upon graduating students at PATH will be able to:

- Reflect a high level of positive engagement in their school community
- Understand their unique talents, how to develop those talents into strengths and how to use those strengths to be a good community steward
- Reflect a graduating class of which 40 to 50% of students are accepted to competitive schools with a focus on students being able to choose which competitive school they attend by obtaining more than one acceptance.

PATH's *vision* is to create an engaging learning environment that fosters community stewardship and success by:

- Employing and developing top talent
- Collaborating to develop creative, engaging, standards-based curricula and experiences
- Seeking out the natural talent in our people and developing those talents into strengths

To accomplish this mission, PATH implements a rigorous, standards-based, teacher-created curriculum. Innovative features contributing to PATH's success include: A longer school day; tutoring; flexible grouping; Saturday school; and summer school.

The charter renewal process included Board members, administrators, teachers, parents and community members. Community is integral at PATH and our stakeholders will remain involved through existing mechanisms.

2. Describe the charter school's academic program, specifically focusing on why it is innovative in your school district(s). Include mention of any waivers of state law and SBOE rule that are needed to implement the academic program. Be sure to describe any special characteristics of your charter school, such as a special population or some other feature or features which enhance educational opportunities. (350 words or less)

PATH's academic program is distinct from current offerings in the district due to the focus on flexible grouping, teacher-created curriculum and extended school day and year. One of PATH's greatest innovations is the teacher-created curriculum. PATH teachers create rigorous content based on the Georgia Standards of Excellence. This allows each teacher to maximize their strengths as an instructional leader in the classroom. When teachers plan, create, implement and reflect on the curriculum in this way, it increases teacher buy-in, which positively impacts student achievement.

Students at PATH are flexibly grouped to allow remediation, acceleration, and support. Groupings are data-driven to ensure students are grouped appropriately. PATH uses a Professional Learning Community (PLC) structure to analyze student performance and make on-going placement decisions. Groupings are based on MAP scores and prior socio-academic history. A PLC team may determine that the student is not keeping up with the work and change the placement to a different pacing with more support. Conversely, students can be moved to more advanced pacing as determined by the data and teacher input. This strategic grouping of students promotes differentiation, not just at the classroom level, but also structurally at the school level.

Since the beginning, PATH's mission has been to provide a superior educational experience for

economically disadvantaged immigrant and refugee students. The school maintains a strong contingent of immigrants as well as native-born second and third generation students. The program caters to the needs of immigrants as well as native-born students in a manner that is unique within the school system. Faculty and staff culturally affirm learning experiences that better prepare students for high school performance and beyond. On average, forty-five percent of students enter highly regarded private, college preparatory high schools in most cases with a full or partial scholarship.

PATH utilizes waivers to extend and structure the school day and year, hire top talent, and waive district policies on promotion and retention.

3. Describe the charter school's organizational structure, specifically focusing on its innovation and need for flexibility, its general partnership structure with an educational service provider (ESP) if any, and the school's community interest and need. (350 words or less)

PATH's organizational structure is streamlined and effective allowing for the maximum investment in instruction. The leadership team collaborates on a range of strategic decisions and is comprised of a Principal/Chief Executive Officer, Chief Financial Officer, Chief Operations Officer, and Assistant Principal.

This level of efficiency at the administrative level allows PATH to remain competitive in terms of staff salaries. Financial and organizational flexibility are needed to maintain this structure and have the autonomy to allocate funds according to student needs. One of the benefits teachers enjoy is a flexible teaching schedule for employees who are parents. Many school-based educators sacrifice a significant amount of their own family time to care for the students they serve. This includes flexible scheduling for new parents once they return to work after having a new child. At PATH, faculty and staff are given the opportunity to strike a better work home balance, which makes them

more effective in the classroom.

At every level of the organization, PATH employees receive the Gallup's Strengths assessment, which reveals their true talents and skills that can then be leveraged to increase student achievement and organizational effectiveness.

PATH does not currently work with an education service provider and has no plans to do so in the next charter term.

Demand continues to be high for the PATH educational experience. The average waitlist during the last charter term was 500 students. Community engagement and parent support levels were high during the charter term, further indicating demand. Parents at PATH, particularly those who are in the immigrant community, have unique needs. PATH's broad flexibility allows them to provide support that would not otherwise be available to their community. Supports include regular parent meetings to discuss expectations and provide strategies so that parents can support their students throughout the learning process. Community partner engagement is also on the rise at PATH.

PAST PERFORMANCE

- 1) Complete and attach as Exhibit 5 the Accountability Report available on the GaDOE's Charter Schools Division website to show the school's performance during each year of your current charter term and include with your charter school renewal application. This Accountability Report will be presented to the State Board of Education with your charter petition, so please ensure it is accurate.

The Accountability Report is attached as Exhibit 5.

- 2) Provide a narrative describing how the charter school performed in meeting the academic and organizational goals set forth in its current charter contract. In your narrative: Address the school's performance in each year of your current charter term.
 - a) You are urged to include any supporting charts, tables, or graphs that provide quantitative data.
 - b) If your charter school did not meet all of the goals in its charter contract, explain any mitigating factors to which this can be attributed, and explain how the school plans to address them in the upcoming charter renewal term requested.

PATH exercises the autonomy and full flexibility provided by its broad waiver of Title 20 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, as well as many rules and regulations of the State Board of Education and DeKalb County School District. This flexibility allows PATH to deliver vital academic programming not available elsewhere in the district including flexible grouping, teacher-created curriculum, and an extended school day and year. PATH's teacher-created curriculum allows educators to develop rigorous content aligned with the Georgia Standards of Excellence while meeting the unique needs of our student population. This approach empowers teachers to utilize their strengths as instructional leaders.

Students at PATH are grouped flexibly to provide remediation, acceleration, and support, with placements driven by data to ensure appropriate groupings. PATH employs a Professional Learning Community (PLC) structure to analyze student performance and make ongoing placement adjustments based on MAP scores and socio-academic history. PLC teams may adjust a student's pacing to offer more support or advance them to more challenging levels, promoting differentiation not only at the classroom level but also across the school.

PATH is dedicated to providing a superior educational experience for economically disadvantaged immigrant and refugee students. Faculty and staff offer culturally affirming learning experiences that prepare students for high school and beyond, with approximately 45% of students advancing

to prestigious private, college-preparatory high schools, often with scholarships and with several offers to choose between. PATH also prides itself on its high percentage of students who receive PATH’s school culture fosters a sense of community and extended family, reinforced by morning meetings, the House System, Restorative Circles, Strengths Finder assessments, and the presence of emotional support dogs.

Performance in Essential/Innovative Features

Goal 7: The Charter School shall implement all Essential and Innovative Features, as defined in Section 5 of the charter in all material respects

Figure 1. PATH Essential or Innovative Features Implementation

Innovative Feature	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025 (Current Year)
Longer School Day	✓	✓	✓	✓	On Track
Tutoring	✓	✓	✓	✓	On Track
Flexible Grouping	✓	✓	✓	✓	On Track
Saturday School	✓	✓	✓	✓	On Track
Summer School	✓	✓	✓	✓	On Track

Longer School Day

Our current school schedule runs from 8:10 AM to 4:10 PM. Extended school days deepen students’ understanding of core subjects while critically remediating the learning loss incurred by students during the COVID-19 pandemic. Extended school programming allows for individualized and small-group instruction, which particularly allows for targeted interventions that address specific learning gaps, enabling students to progress at their own pace and ultimately achieve better academic outcomes.

Tutoring

PATH’s in-school tutoring enhances academic success by providing personalized, targeted support during the school day. With this feature, teachers can reinforce classroom learning while

addressing gaps in understanding. This tailored approach helps boost confidence, motivation, and overall academic performance. In-school tutoring also ensures equitable access to extra help, particularly for students who may not have resources or support at home.

Flexible Grouping

PATH's approach to flexible grouping provides two-pronged benefits: opportunities for accelerated learning and targeted support for students in need of remediation. Due to smaller class sizes, smaller school environment, flexible grouping, and a data-driven practice, teachers and staff members can accurately identify students who lag behind their peers in each subject area. Teachers also work as a team to implement the Response to Interventions (RTI) process in their teaching. Data is reviewed frequently and adjustments to flexible groups are made to provide additional challenge and/or remediation as needed. ELL students particularly benefit from flexible grouping as teachers can closely monitor their ELL and core subject progress, even after exit from the ESOL program. Additionally, gifted and advanced students in middle grade environments can leverage the flexible grouping structure to experience advanced course offerings.

Saturday School & Summer School

Our longer school year currently includes Saturday school, which runs from 10 AM to 2 PM on every Saturday in the month of March, as well as PATH Summer Programs, which currently run for the last 2 weeks of June, also from 10 AM to 2 PM. Like other interventions, this structure creates more opportunities for targeted support while reducing learning loss over the summer. Additionally, in spreading the curriculum over a longer period, students experience reduced pressure and a more balanced pace, which enhances understanding and retention.

Emotional Support Dog Program

Studies indicate that students in classes with emotional support dogs demonstrate an increased interest in school and positive attitudes towards school. Classrooms with emotional support dogs see a decrease in aggressive behavior, increase in calming or self-soothing behaviors, and better attention to the teacher. One study with third graders showed an increase in reading fluency and comprehension with consistent therapy dog access. These results show the unique benefits emotional support dogs can provide. For PATH students, who are majority minority and low-income, having emotional support dogs at schools allows them to experience consistency that they may not get in their communities. Additionally, for struggling learners, emotional support dogs allow them to build confidence with task completion and success related to caring for the dogs.

PATH currently has 7 therapy dog teams in training at the school, which make up the PATH Emotional Support Dog Programs. The dogs currently function to soothe students who have behavioral concerns, emotional needs, or just benefit positively from their interaction with them. They act as an incentive for all students and are loved throughout the school by students and staff alike. Students require parental permission to interact with the dogs and parents have the option of granting permission for their child to schedule a playdate in our school dog run, located on the side of the back field. The playdates are always supervised and during recess so that instructional time is not compromised.

During playdates, students have the choice to play ball or participate in tethered dog walks around the school. During tethered dog walks, the dog is double tethered with two leashes on their harness. The human member of the therapy dog team holds the second leash to ensure the safety of both the dog and student. The presence of our dogs has had a very positive effect on our entire community, including students, staff and families.

Academic Performance

Academic Goal 1 Overview

Academic Goal 1 contains 3 separate “Looks” at academic performance with each Look utilizing its own unique measures.

First Look: The “First Look - School Performance Gap Closure” outlines the following measures:

First Look – School Performance Gap Closure. The primary academic outcome Georgia seeks from its local charter schools is that they *increase their College and Career Readiness Performance Index (CCRPI) score each year until they reach 100*. The performance standards that measure CCRPI progress include growth in CCRPI itself and in its two major academic components, Content Mastery and Progress Score. Our “First Look” at annual charter school performance is to see if the school has met the standard for any of the following three CCRPI gap-closing measures. Meeting any one of these standards constitutes having achieved Goal 1 for a given year

Figures 2 and 3, below, show PATH’s performance on this measure and the disaggregated Content Mastery data available for 2021.

Figure 2. First Look - PATH CCRPI Performance Gap Closure Outcomes

Contract Terms and Performance Goals	Assessment	2020-2021 (FY21)	2021-2022 (FY22)	2022-2023 (FY23)
Measure 1: Increase its CCRPI score by at least 4% of the gap between 100 and the school’s previous year CCRPI score in each grade band served (elementary, middle, and/or high school)		Not Available	Not Available	Not Available
Measure 2: Increase its CCRPI Content Mastery score by at least 10% of the gap between 100 and its previous year CCRPI Content Mastery score in each grade band served (elementary, middle, and/or high school)	Elementary	Not Available	2019 score: 64.6 Target: 68.14 39.2	45.28 44.5
	Middle	Not Available	2019 score: 67.8 Target: 71.02 49.0	54.1 49.3
Measure 3: Increase its CCRPI Progress score by at least 10% of the gap between 100 and its previous year CCRPI Progress score in each grade band served (elementary, middle, and/or high school)	Elementary	Not Available	Not Available	2019 score: 94.5 Target: 95.05 63.3
	Middle	Not Available	Not Available	2019 score: 91.9 Target: 92.71 94.2

Figure 3. PATH 2021 CCRPI Content Mastery by Subject

School Year	School Name	Grade Configuration	Grade Clust	Reporting Label	Content Area	Participation Rate	Beginning Learner	Developing Learner	Proficient Learner	Distinguished Learner	Achievement Rate
2021	DeKalb PATH Academy Charter	05, 06, 07, 08	E	ALL Students	English	92.31	41.46	41.46	15.85	1.22	38.41
2021	DeKalb PATH Academy Charter	05, 06, 07, 08	E	ALL Students	Mathematics	91.21	69.14	28.40	2.47	0.00	16.67
2021	DeKalb PATH Academy Charter	05, 06, 07, 08	E	ALL Students	Science	91.21	56.79	25.93	16.05	1.23	30.86
2021	DeKalb PATH Academy Charter	05, 06, 07, 08	M	ALL Students	English	89.78	32.92	39.51	25.51	2.06	48.36
2021	DeKalb PATH Academy Charter	05, 06, 07, 08	M	ALL Students	Mathematics	86.57	39.92	40.33	17.28	2.47	41.15
2021	DeKalb PATH Academy Charter	05, 06, 07, 08	M	ALL Students	Science	78.26	68.06	30.56	1.39	0.00	16.67
2021	DeKalb PATH Academy Charter	05, 06, 07, 08	M	ALL Students	Social Studies	88.76	40.51	54.43	5.06	0.00	32.28

PATH did not “Meet” for either of the data reporting years in either Measure 2 or Measure 3 in the current charter term; however, PATH demonstrated significant progress on Measure 2 and met in Middle school for Measure 3.

Mitigating Factors & Response to Pandemic Impact

As noted, data for Measure 1 is not available. Given the impact of pandemic-related data limitations on state accountability systems, the U.S. Department of Education approved Georgia’s modifications to CCRPI which include no Summative Ratings (no overall 0-100 CCRPI or Single Score reported). Additionally, we are unable to report on summative Content Mastery or Progress scores data for the 2020 and 2021 school years due to COVID’s disruption of the Georgia Milestones and CCRPI data reporting. The U.S. Department of Education approved a waiver for the state regarding accountability, school identification, and related reporting requirements for the 2020-2021 school year, pursuant to the authority in section 8401 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA).

PATH Academy recognizes the great academic losses incurred during the COVID-19 Pandemic. Research finds that EL students particularly lacked sufficient access to educational services during school closures; the complex learning challenges of this service group meant that nearly 40% of ELs nationwide did not receive adequate support and services. ELs thus experienced greater

learning lags during this period.¹ Two of PATH's greatest innovations and strengths experienced the largest negative impacts from COVID-19: teacher-authored curriculum and an engaging school culture. PATH has instituted a targeted focus on repairing and reinforcing these features with the goal of returning student achievement to pre-pandemic levels.

Teacher-Authored Curriculum – Recovery Strategy

During two periods of teacher turnover, pre- and post-Pandemic, tenured teachers took with them long-held PATH curriculum. Staff transitions disproportionately affect PATH's programming. As an organization, PATH has historically struggled to memorialize old curriculum while quickly and effectively training new teachers to adapt and author their own curriculum maps. In its previous petition, PATH outlined two planning years designed to provide greater curriculum development training and support. Both years (SY19-20 and SY21-22) were engulfed by the Pandemic. PATH has instituted the interventions detailed below, the groundwork from which will show in the next charter term.

- **Administrative Support of Faculty:** The administration has provided support by maintaining a focus on one-on-one coaching for staff and offering personalized professional development. Bi-weekly departmental meetings allow departments extended time for collaborative planning.
- **Refining PLC Work at the Department Level:** Content departments meet bi-weekly to use data to refine and support teacher-authored curricula, aiming to positively impact both the bottom and top quartiles of the student body. Teachers utilize their professional learning time to collaboratively plan and share curriculum that included critical interventions and scaffolds for students in the bottom quartile,

¹ <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED624614.pdf>

as well as rigorous projects that challenged top quartile students to explore and engage with content at and above grade level.

- **Curricular Review:** During the current term, the administrative team has regularly reviewed and provided feedback on teacher-authored curricula in real time. Teachers share unit plans and assessments with administration and their respective departments every five to seven weeks. The administration reviews the curriculum and facilitates the departmental review and refinement of content.
- **New Teacher Induction/Support:** Along with a new Teacher Orientation Week, PATH has invested in a new teacher coach to support teachers in their first five years of teaching. This support helps new teachers acclimate to teaching, learning, and the school culture at PATH. New teachers also receive targeted assistance with writing and customizing curriculum to meet their students' needs and align with their unique teaching styles on curriculum development.

PATH Culture – Recovery Strategy

A dynamic, highly interpersonal school culture is a bedrock of PATH's academic program. Online learning stripped community practices and the student-teacher interaction vital for fostering student achievement. To retain and reinstate PATH culture during and following the Pandemic, PATH introduced an **After-School Program**; this program has extended the school day by one hour for five weeks in the first and second semesters of the school year. In the current school year, after offering three years of this intensive programming, PATH has transitioned to one week of extended school days for the first eight months of the school year.

During extended school hours, teachers have implemented **Restorative Circles**. This program creates smaller learning environments, allowing students to have greater access to teachers and

greater opportunity for teachers to promote student social emotional skills, identify areas of student needs, and build the relationships necessary for effective remediation efforts. PATH consistently implemented this program throughout COVID, and especially while classes were conducted virtually. This regular community-building time kept the PATH community strong and facilitated the transition to in-person instruction. Extended days also create additional opportunities for ELL students to engage in Instructional Conversations.

Additionally, PATH began implementing a **House System** in the 2023-2024 school year, which further groups students into smaller learning environments. PATH's House Leaders, Principal, and Vice Principal have been trained in this innovative programming at the Ron Clark Academy. Each house is composed of every child, teacher, and staff member in the school, which allows students to socialize with one another across grades and with positive adult role models beyond just the classroom setting. Regular contact with House peers and faculty promotes individualized student growth and sustained mentorship throughout a student's time at PATH.

Academic Improvement & Gains

CCRPI Content Mastery

Figure 4 demonstrates PATH's gains in CCRPI Content Mastery, which indicates whether students are achieving at the level necessary to be prepared for the next grade. From 2022 to 2023, PATH's Elementary score increased by 5.3 points while our middle school score increased by 0.3 points. These positive trends indicate that our recovery strategy and remediation efforts have positively impacted student growth towards pre-pandemic achievement levels.

Figure 4. PATH 2023 CCRPI Content Mastery Increase

	Elementary	Middle
2023 Score	44.5	49.3
Point Increase from Prior Year	+5.3	+0.3

Additionally, PATH saw Content Mastery gains in the majority of content areas across grade bands. For example, Figure 5 shows a 7.97 point increase in Elementary English Language Arts scores and a 4.9 point increase in the Mathematics Content Mastery scores from 2022-2023. Middle grade Mathematics scores also saw the greatest improvement with a 3.74 point increase from 2022 to 2023.

Figure 5. PATH 2023 CCRPI Content Mastery Scores by Content Area

Elementary		
Content Area	2023 Score	Point Change from Prior Year
English Language Arts	51.07	+7.97
Mathematics	39.37	+4.79
Science	39.9	-1.06
Middle		
Content Area	2023 Score	Point Change from Prior Year
English Language Arts	55.02	+2.95
Mathematics	50.38	+3.74
Science	40.59	+0.36
Social Studies	37.65	-18.11

Grade Band Performance

PATH's academic data also shows student growth between elementary and middle grade bands. The gap in student performance between grade bands is largely attributable to student achievement levels upon enrollment at PATH. Elementary students transferring from other elementary schools have often experienced poor instructional quality. Through the new Bridge to PATH Program, PATH works quickly to acclimate students to its rigorous learning environment and supportive school culture. This one-week 5th grade summer orientation program begins two weeks before the school year and introduces students to their teachers, PATH processes, and school expectations. PATH's smaller class sizes (on average, 24 students per class), departmentalized elementary classes, and small-group paraprofessional student groupings also facilitate early student growth. These interventions contribute to student gains seen longitudinally.

In the 2023-2024 school year, PATH boasted a 97.3% retention rate; this school year marked a 95% retention rate. Attendance is also one of our school's strengths. In the 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 school years, attendance was 95.5% and 96.21%, respectively. PATH's high retention and attendance rates facilitate student growth over time, which becomes most evident in our middle grade band scores. PATH middle grade students outperformed elementary students on CCRPI Content Mastery by 9.8 points in 2021-2022 and 4.8 points in the 2022-2023 school year. While the performance gap between grade bands is closing as elementary programming makes strides, this performance gap indicates that students who stay within PATH's ecosystem show great academic improvement.

Further, PATH's middle school programming prepares students for high school achievement. Due to flexible grouping throughout the middle school experience, gifted and advanced students take Coordinate Algebra and Physical Science in Middle School. This is a huge advantage for PATH

students, who come from very low performing elementary schools. For students, this means that they are already entering high school with an advantage when many of their peers are over age and behind credits by the end of their high school careers.

ELA Performance

PATH is increasing the number of Distinguished Learners and reducing Beginning Learners.

The tables below show PATH Elementary ELA Milestones performance scores available for the current charter term. These data particularly demonstrate student growth among vital target populations: the percentage of Economically Disadvantaged students in the “Beginning Learner” has decreased by 13.42 points and the percentage of ELL students in the “Beginning Learner” has decreased by 8.82 points.

Figure 6. PATH CCRPI Content Mastery by Subgroup - Elementary English 2022

Elementary School 2022 – English					
Subgroup	Participation Rate	Beginning Learner	Developing Learner	Proficient Learner	Distinguished Learner
All Students	100.0%	42.55%	30.85%	24.47%	2.13%
American Indian / Alaskan Native	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Asian / Pacific Islander	Too Few Students	Too Few Students	Too Few Students	Too Few Students	Too Few Students
Black	Too Few Students	Too Few Students	Too Few Students	Too Few Students	Too Few Students
Hispanic	100.0%	46.43%	30.95%	20.24%	2.38%
Multi-racial	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
White	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Economically Disadvantaged	100.0%	43.53%	31.76%	22.35%	2.35%
English Learners	100.0%	50%	25.64%	21.79%	2.56%
Students with Disability	Too Few Students	Too Few Students	Too Few Students	Too Few Students	Too Few Students

Figure 7. PATH CCRPI Content Mastery by Subgroup - Elementary English 2023

Elementary School 2023 -- English					
Subgroup	Participation Rate	Beginning Learner	Developing Learner	Proficient Learner	Distinguished Learner
All Students	100.00%	29.79%	42.55%	23.40%	4.26%
American Indian / Alaskan Native	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Asian / Pacific Islander	Too Few Students	Too Few Students	Too Few Students	Too Few Students	Too Few Students
Black	Too Few Students	Too Few Students	Too Few Students	Too Few Students	Too Few Students
Hispanic	100.00%	34.57%	45.68%	19.75%	0.00%
Multi-racial	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
White	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Economically Disadvantaged	100.00%	30.11%	43.01%	22.58%	4.30%
English Learners	100.00%	41.18%	39.71%	17.65%	1.47%
Students with Disability	Too Few Students	Too Few Students	Too Few Students	Too Few Students	Too Few Students

Among middle grade bands, students also made gains in the Proficient and Distinguished Learner categories according to Milestones results.

Figure 8. PATH CCRPI Content Mastery by Subgroup - Middle School English 2022

Middle School 2022 -- English					
Subgroup	Participation Rate	Beginning Learner	Developing Learner	Proficient Learner	Distinguished Learner
All Students	100.00%	29.96%	38.95%	28.09%	3.00%
American Indian / Alaskan Native	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Asian / Pacific Islander	Too Few Students	Too Few Students	Too Few Students	Too Few Students	Too Few Students
Black	100.00%	9.68%	38.71%	41.94%	9.68%
Hispanic	100.00%	34.68%	38.74%	25.23%	1.35%
Multi-racial	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
White	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Economically Disadvantaged	100.00%	31.07%	40.29%	25.73%	2.91%
English Learners	100.00%	38.67%	39.78%	20.99%	0.55%
Students with Disability	100.00%	57.14%	35.71%	7.14%	0.00%

Figure 9. PATH CCRPI Content Mastery by Subgroup - Middle School English 2023

Middle School 2023 -- English					
Subgroup	Participation Rate	Beginning Learner	Developing Learner	Proficient Learner	Distinguished Learner
All Students	99.63%	27.88%	39.41%	27.51%	5.20%
American Indian / Alaskan Native	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Asian / Pacific Islander	Too Few Students	Too Few Students	Too Few Students	Too Few Students	Too Few Students
Black	100.00%	11.11%	25.93%	59.26%	3.70%
Hispanic	99.57%	31.58%	41.23%	22.81%	4.39%
Multi-racial	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
White	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Economically Disadvantaged	99.62%	28.63%	38.93%	27.86%	4.58%
English Learners	99.51%	35.00%	40.00%	22.50%	2.50%
Students with Disability	100.00%	60.00%	28.00%	12.00%	0.00%

ELA Remediation Efforts

As a part of its Continuous School Improvement Plan (CSIP), PATH has implemented ELA remediation efforts. As outlined in Priority Area 1, PATH has implemented interventions designed to improve student literacy across all content areas through differentiated English instruction and cross-curricular reading instruction and practice. Differentiation efforts have included the purchase of new instructional resources for daily instruction, the use of paraprofessional one-on-one and group support, a targeted extended instruction program, and the deployment of the IXL program in language arts for individualized practice and regular formative assessment and data collection. ELA teachers meet biweekly as a Professional Learning Community to discuss and revise curricula, review and analyze student data, share research-based strategies for reading and writing, and work towards an annual department goal that is set during preplanning.

To engage students and families in these literacy efforts, PATH has instituted clubs each Friday that expose students to both academic skills and College and Career Readiness. Regular school

engagement nights, including school-wide literacy and language night for parents and students and four Fall curriculum nights, build vital connections between parents and teachers that inform ELA curriculum development and implementation. PATH's Bilingual Liaison and written, verbal and technological communication with parents in multiple languages provide additional access to the curriculum, ensure engagement from each family, and increase buy-in and alignment that facilitates at-home student growth.

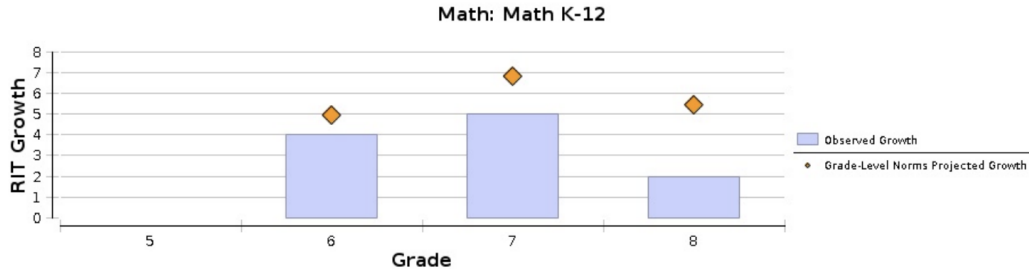
As a part of cross-curricular reading instruction and practice efforts, PATH has utilized Nearpod and Flocabulary software to deliver reading instruction. Cross-departmental content collaboration and school-wide affinity group events integrate literacy skills across the curriculum and increase student exposure to reading skills. To achieve these aims, Science and Social Studies teachers partner with the ELA and ESOL department twice a semester to train and collaborate on incorporating literacy and language development strategies into their curriculum. In addition to professional development training, the Principal and Assistant Principal conduct biweekly or monthly one-on-one coaching sessions with every teacher in the school to provide guidance on requested topics. Departments meet monthly to discuss classroom-level data and progress towards literacy goals, which the Principal ultimately reports to the Board.

Math Performance

When examining whole school data, there is work to be done in Mathematics. In 2021-2022, 78.8% of our students were Beginning or Developing Learners; in 2022-2023, 77% fell in that range. MAP data for 2023-2024 shows the least growth in 5th and 7th grades. Students in these grade levels were in the 24th percentile for growth, which was a 9-point drop from the prior year.

Figure 10. PATH Math MAP Data 2023-2024

DeKalb: Path Academy Charter School																
Math: Math K-12																
Grade (Fall 2024)	Total Number of Growth Events†	Comparison Periods						Growth Evaluated Against								
		Fall 2023			Fall 2024			Growth		Grade-Level Norms			Student Norms			
		Mean RIT Score	Standard Deviation	Achievement Percentile	Mean RIT Score	Standard Deviation	Achievement Percentile	Observed Growth	Observed Growth SE	Projected School Growth	School Conditional Growth Index	School Conditional Growth Percentile	Number of Students With Growth Projections	Number of Students Who Met Their Growth Projection	Percentage of Students Who Met Growth Projection	Student Median Conditional Growth Percentile
5	1	*			*			*					*			
6	84	203.6	14.2	23	207.8	14.2	19	4	0.7	5.0	-0.45	33	84	39	46	44
7	89	206.6	11.8	15	211.3	13.8	15	5	0.7	6.8	-1.22	11	89	30	34	32
8	83	211.3	14.4	15	213.3	17.0	12	2	0.7	5.4	-2.15	2	83	19	23	27



Despite these realities, Elementary Math scores have also shown great positive movement from the Beginning Learner to Developing Learner categories. Across all students, Beginning Learner designations dropped 19.14% from 2021-2022, the majority of which moved to the Developing Learner category. The percentage of Economically Disadvantaged students in the Beginning Learner category decreased by 22.67 points and the percentage of ELL students in the Beginning Learner has decreased by 15.57 points.

Figure 11. PATH CCRPI Content Mastery by Subgroup - Elementary Math 2022

Elementary School 2022 -- Math					
Subgroup	Participation Rate	Beginning Learner	Developing Learner	Proficient Learner	Distinguished Learner
All Students	100.00%	59.57%	18.09%	15.96%	6.38%
American Indian / Alaskan Native	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Asian / Pacific Islander	Too Few Students	Too Few Students	Too Few Students	Too Few Students	Too Few Students
Black	Too Few Students	Too Few Students	Too Few Students	Too Few Students	Too Few Students
Hispanic	100.00%	65.48%	17.86%	11.90%	4.76%
Multi-racial	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
White	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Economically Disadvantaged	100.00%	63.53%	15.29%	14.12%	7.09%
English Learners	100.00%	64.10%	15.38%	15.38%	5.13%
Students with Disability	Too Few Students	Too Few Students	Too Few Students	Too Few Students	Too Few Students

Figure 12. PATH CCRPI Content Mastery by Subgroup - Elementary Math 2023

Elementary School 2023 -- Math					
Subgroup	Participation Rate	Beginning Learner	Developing Learner	Proficient Learner	Distinguished Learner
All Students	100.00%	40.43%	42.55%	14.89%	2.13%
American Indian / Alaskan Native	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Asian / Pacific Islander	Too Few Students	Too Few Students	Too Few Students	Too Few Students	Too Few Students
Black	Too Few Students	Too Few Students	Too Few Students	Too Few Students	Too Few Students
Hispanic	100.00%	46.91%	43.21%	9.88%	0.00%
Multi-racial	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
White	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Economically Disadvantaged	100.00%	40.86%	41.94%	15.05%	2.15%
English Learners	100.00%	48.53%	39.71%	10.29%	1.47%
Students with Disability	Too Few Students	Too Few Students	Too Few Students	Too Few Students	Too Few Students

Middle grade band CCRPI Content Mastery scores also made gains in Math from 2022 to 2023. Beginning Learner designations dropped while combined Proficient and Distinguished Learners increased.

Figure 13. PATH CCRPI Content Mastery by Subgroup - Middle School Math 2022

Middle School 2022 -- Math					
Subgroup	Participation Rate	Beginning Learner	Developing Learner	Proficient Learner	Distinguished Learner
All Students	100.00%	33.71%	45.69%	14.23%	6.37%
American Indian / Alaskan Native	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Asian / Pacific Islander	Too Few Students	Too Few Students	Too Few Students	Too Few Students	Too Few Students
Black	100.00%	19.35%	51.61%	19.35%	9.68%
Hispanic	100.00%	36.94%	44.59%	13.06%	5.41%
Multi-racial	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
White	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Economically Disadvantaged	100.00%	33.01%	45.63%	14.56%	6.80%
English Learners	100.00%	37.57%	46.96%	11.05%	4.42%
Students with Disability	100.00%	64.29%	32.14%	3.57%	0.00%

Figure 14. PATH CCRPI Content Mastery by Subgroup - Middle School Math 2023

Middle School 2023 – Math					
Subgroup	Participation Rate	Beginning Learner	Developing Learner	Proficient Learner	Distinguished Learner
All Students	99.63%	29.74%	44.61%	20.82%	4.83%
American Indian / Alaskan Native	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Asian / Pacific Islander	Too Few Students	Too Few Students	Too Few Students	Too Few Students	Too Few Students
Black	100.00%	11.11%	55.56%	25.93%	7.41%
Hispanic	99.57%	32.89%	45.18%	17.11%	4.82%
Multi-racial	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
White	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Economically Disadvantaged	99.62%	30.15%	44.66%	20.23%	4.96%
English Learners	99.51%	33.50%	45.50%	17.50%	3.50%
Students with Disability	100.00%	64.00%	28.00%	8.00%	0.00%

Math Remediation Efforts

Teacher turnover/retention post-Pandemic is closely tied to these results. Our 5th grade team lead, who was largely responsible for introducing students to PATH culture, retired in the current charter term. Additional math teacher turnover in the 3rd and 4th years of the charter term meant little curricular continuity. 7th grade math similarly only retained the same math teacher for two consecutive years. Unlike 5th and 7th grades, 8th grade has benefited from retaining the same math teacher for the past 10 years, who has continuously delivered a refined self-authored curriculum. The recovery strategies discussed previously continue to be instrumental in our Math remediation efforts.

Additionally, as a part of its Continuous School Improvement Plan (CSIP), PATH has implemented several math remediation efforts. As outlined in Priority Area 2, these interventions are designed to improve math performance across all grade levels through differentiated math instruction and assessment standardization across grade levels. In addition to curricular and professional development initiatives, as outlined below, PATH has developed community events,

including a Math Bowl and Family Math Night, to galvanize student and family engagement and alignment with our math initiatives.

As a part of differentiation efforts, PATH has allocated daily paraprofessional support to 6th grade students in math programming. This additional support provides one-on-one and small group instruction to students underperforming in the content area. The IXL program in math provides further individualized support through instructional practice and progress tracking for each student. Constant formative assessments quickly and effectively identify student growth areas as students progress. Additionally, 8th grade accelerated students receive instruction in both 8th and 9th grade curriculum, nurturing individualized growth and preparing students for high school instruction. To implement these interventions with fidelity, the math department plans to attend at least 2 math training sessions (1 per semester) related to their grade level to learn, share and implement new strategies. PATH administration will conduct data workshops in August 2024, January 2025 and March 2025 to analyze fall and winter MAP data trends; from these results, departments will determine how they will differentiate for each learner.

Efforts to standardize math assessments across grade levels include adjustments to exams and homework assignments to more closely resemble the Milestones Assessment and additional teacher training to maximize online resource utilization. Improved collaboration efforts at every level involve monthly departmental meetings to discuss data and goal setting based on the goals of the CSIP, weekly grade-level meetings, and Principal-Board meetings to discuss data and goal progression. Taken together, these efforts represent greater vertical and horizontal alignment in math curriculum development and implementation.

Second Look: The “Second Look – School District Comparisons” outlines the following measures:

Second Look – School-District Comparisons. If a charter school does not achieve at least one of the “First Look” School Performance Gap Closure standards, it may still satisfy Goal 1 Academic Performance Standard requirements in a given year by achieving one of the “Second Look” School-District Comparison standards. The secondary academic outcome Georgia seeks from its local charter schools is that ***they do better than the district schools to which their students would otherwise attend.*** Performance standards include whether they exceeded the CCRPI single score of their district or of the schools to which the charter school’s students would otherwise be zoned, or whether they exceeded CCRPI, Content Mastery, or Progress in all grade bands of their district or of the schools to which the charter school’s students would otherwise be zoned. Meeting any one of the following Second Look standards constitutes having achieved Goal 1 for a given year.

Data for Measures 1 through 4 is not available. Given the impact of pandemic-related data limitations on state accountability systems, the U.S. Department of Education approved Georgia’s modifications to CCRPI which include no Summative Ratings (no overall 0-100 CCRPI or Single Score reported). Additionally, we are unable to report on Content Mastery scores data for the 2020 and 2021 school years or progress scores for the 2021-2022 or the 2022-2023 school years due to COVID’s disruption of the Georgia Milestones and CCRPI data reporting.

The charts below capture PATH’s performance on GADOE’s Accountability Report for Measure 5 and Measure 8. The comparison schools shown represent the district schools to which the charter school’s students would otherwise be zoned; schools that would capture less than 3% of PATH students are not shown.

Figure 15. Second Look - Measure 5 PATH CCRPI Content Mastery School Comparison

Subgroup		% Zoned	2021-2022 Content Mastery Score	2022-2023 Content Mastery Score
Elementary	PATH	--	39.2	44.5
	John R. Lewis	45.1%	33.4	30.6
	Montclair	15.9%	28.6	37.1
	Oakcliff	12.4%	52.4	54.2
	Woodward	12.4%	40.0	47.4
	Dresden	5.3%	21.0	27.1
	Doraville United	3.5%	35.1	35.5
Middle	PATH	--	49.0	49.3
	Seqouyah	85%	34.6	35.7
	Peachtree MS	3.3%	64.0	63.4

Figure 16. Second Look – Measure 8 PATH CCRPI Progress School Comparison

Subgroup		% Zoned	2022-2023 Progress Score
Elementary	PATH	--	63.3
	John R. Lewis	45.1%	73.2
	Montclair	15.9%	90.3
	Oakcliff	12.4%	99.4
	Woodward	12.4%	96.3
	Dresden	5.3%	76.8
	Doraville United	3.5%	92.9
Middle	PATH	--	94.2
	Seqouyah	85%	75.8
	Peachtree MS	3.3%	63.4

Figure 15 shows PATH outpacing the Content Mastery scores of two thirds of its elementary comparison schools in each data year. PATH also exceeded one half of the Content Mastery scores of its middle grade comparison schools. Of particular note, the schools that PATH outperformed represent 61% and 85% of where PATH students would otherwise attend elementary and middle school, respectively. *For the majority of PATH students – and the vast majority of PATH’s middle school students, who represent 70% of the student body – PATH provides a better educational opportunity than students would otherwise receive at their traditional local public school.*

As Figure 16 shows, PATH’s middle grade performance outpaced comparison CCRPI Progress scores in the data year available. Conversely, while we can only report one year of Progress scores in the charter term, PATH’s Elementary Progress scores clearly lagged behind other district schools. As discussed above, achievement is rarely measurable in a student’s first year at PATH. The largest percentage of PATH elementary students are drawn from the lowest performing comparison school on this measure, John R. Lewis Elementary School. John R. Lewis reports a 100% economically disadvantaged student body with 88.6% of its student body designated as English Learners. Students pulled from disparate and underperforming school environments often take time to show growth at PATH.

Figures 17 and 18 below show district comparison outcomes for Content Mastery and Progress as tracked by Measure 6 and Measure 7. The same pattern emerges in these less granular outcomes: growth evidenced by improved outcomes in middle grade levels.

Figure 17. Second Look – Measure 6 PATH CCRPI Content Mastery District Comparison

Subgroup		2021-2022 Content Mastery Score	2022-2023 Content Mastery Score
Elementary	PATH	39.2	44.5
	DeKalb County School District	49.9	55.3
Middle	PATH	49.0	49.3
	DeKalb County School District	46.6	49.2

Figure 18. Second Look – Measure 7 PATH CCRPI Progress District Comparison

Subgroup		2021-2022 Progress Score
Elementary	PATH	63.3
	DeKalb County School District	90.4
Middle	PATH	94.2
	DeKalb County School District	81.7

- 3) Describe the school's current financial situation. In your description: Include an explanation of financial results.
 - a) Detail any financial successes or struggles the school experienced during the current charter term. Include any instances of fraudulent behavior or accusations of fraudulent behavior by school staff, governing Board members, or anyone else associated with the school.
 - b) Explain how the school will address any struggles discussed above as well as any outstanding debts. Explain how the school will allocate any surplus funds.

Financial Performance

DeKalb PATH had an unqualified audit every year of its charter term for which data is available. Audits were conducted by McKelvey and Russell, LLC and Bambo Sonaike CPA, LLC. Figure 19 below shows that PATH has met each financial standard in the measures and years for which data is available in the current charter term. All audits received an un-modified opinion with no material weaknesses or significant deficiencies identified. Year 1, Year 2 and Year 3 audits were completed and submitted to GaDOE in a timely manner by November 1st. Year 4 (FY24) is on track for submission prior to November 1st.

The budget for PATH is prepared by the Chief Financial Officer (CFO) and subsequently approved by the Board following two public hearings. The budget is developed based on fixed recurring costs, with additional consideration given to any variable costs that may fluctuate from year to year.

Annually, PATH spends about **68%** of its budget on student education including teacher salaries. PATH spends approximately **5%** on facilities costs through its arrangement with Oglethorpe University and allocates approximately **17%** of its budget to transportation, a critical service for the families it serves. Transportation costs have risen during the current charter term, and PATH secures these services through a contract with a third-party vendor (see Exhibit 17 for the

transportation agreement). PATH plans to pursue transportation at a reduced cost through a different vendor during the next charter term.

PATH operates with a lean administrative team, consisting of a Principal and an Assistant Principal, to ensure comprehensive student services, support, and high-quality instruction. The school maintains substantial days of cash on hand annually (average 305 days) due to a robust fund balance, enabling it to meet short-term financial obligations and plan for long-term priorities effectively and efficiently. PATH accurately projects enrollment each year, allowing for proper budgeting, and maintains a debt-to-asset ratio between **4% and 9%**. Throughout the first four years of the charter term, PATH has adhered to Generally Accepted Government Accounting Standards (GAGAS) and, as of year four of operations, has met all reporting requirements to the Department.

Figure 19. PATH Financial Performance Outcomes

School/System Name: DeKalb PATH Academy		Charter Term: July 1, 2020 - June 30, 2025											
Contract Terms and Performance Goals		Assessment		2020-2021 (FY21)		2021-2022 (FY22)		2022-2023 (FY23)		2023-2024 (FY24)		2024-2025 (Current Year)	
Financial Performance Goal 1: During each year of its charter contract term, the Charter School shall achieve all six of the following financial performance standards.													
Measure 1: Not be in default of loan or bond covenant(s) and/or is not delinquent with debt services payments.				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	TBD	
Measure 2: Achieve a Current Ratio (Working Capital Ratio) that is greater than 1.0 or greater and one-year trend is positive.				1.0+	9.2	1.0+	175.5	1.0+	31.2	1.0+	54.4	1.0+	TBD
Measure 3: Possess a Debt to Asset Ratio that is less than 95 percent.				>95%	9%	>95%	8%	>95%	8%	>95%	4%	>95%	TBD
Measure 4: Unrestricted Days Cash (Total Expenses/365) is greater than 45 days and the one-year trend is positive.				45+	279	45+	336	45+	301	45+	239	45+	TBD
Measure 5: Financial Efficiency Rating is 4 Stars or above.				Not Available		Not Available		Not Available		Not Available		Not Available	
Measure 6: The Charter School received and submitted to GaDOE by November 1 an annual independent audit with an opinion of the auditor as regards the accuracy of the Charter School's accounting records, financial position, change in financial position, compliance with rules of various governing entities, including GAGAS (Generally Accepted Government Auditing Standards (the "Yellow Book") or, for those schools not yet converted to GAGAS, compliance with GAAP (Generally Accepted Accounting Principles) that includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An unmodified audit opinion; • An audit devoid of significant findings and conditions, material weaknesses, or significant internal control weaknesses; • An audit that does not include a going concern disclosure in the notes or an explanatory paragraph; and • No other adverse statement indicating noncompliance with applicable laws, rules, regulations, and provisions of the charter contract relating to financial management and oversight. 				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	TBD	

Figure 20. PATH's Economic Sustainability Metrics

Fiscal Year	EOY Operating Income	Ending Fund Balance	Ending Fund Balance as % of Expenses	Notes
2020-2021 (FY21)	\$275,933	\$3,325,492	76%	-
2021-2022 (FY22)	\$928,069	\$4,127,838	92%	PPP loan forgiveness, reduction of lease liability
2020-2023 (FY23)	\$273,718	\$4,267,496	83%	-
2023-2024 (FY24)	\$436,352	\$4,561,057	66%	-

Financial Struggles and Successes

PATH has not faced financial difficulties during the current charter term. PATH has consistently maintained positive financial measures since its inception, largely due to its lean administrative team and organizational efficiencies. The school leases its facility from Oglethorpe University for an average of \$139,538.18 per year, or \$11,628.18 per month: a cost that supports long-term financial viability.

Fraudulent Behavior

To date, there have been no instances of fraud at PATH. The school has implemented several safeguards to prevent fraud, including:

1. Maintaining petty cash under \$100;
2. Ensuring all checks are made payable to PATH Academy and deposited weekly;
3. Requiring dual signatures (from the principal, Board treasurer, or CFO) for checks over \$10,000;
4. Having mail opened by the operations manager or assistant principal before it is given to

the CFO.

Mitigating Challenges /Managing Outstanding Debts

During the current charter term, PATH encountered no financial challenges, aside from transportation costs. The pricing from the current vendor exceeded PATH's budgeted estimates. Nevertheless, understanding the significance of transportation for our families, PATH successfully provided this service by utilizing additional funds from reserves. The school does not have any outstanding debts and maintains a robust reserve.

Allocation of Surplus Funds

Surplus funds are allocated to a high yield investment account, which produces additional income for the school. The school also maintains adequate reserves with an average 289 days of cash on hand.

- 4) Provide a brief overview of the school's current governance structure. In your description, you must include: Specific examples of decisions the governing Board has made on behalf of the school;
 - a) Specific examples of decisions the school leader has made on behalf of the school;
 - b) How the governing Board holds the school leader, any charter partners (ESP/CMO/EMO), and any independent contractors accountable; and
 - c) The governing Board's training program for the current and proposed charter term. Attach as Exhibit 6 a copy of the Board's Governance Training Plan.

Governance Overview

DeKalb PATH's governing Board exercises substantive control over the school's finances, operations, and academic program. As outlined in the charter contract, the duties of the governing Board are to: (a) uphold the Charter school's mission and vision, (b) set policy for the school, (c) work collaboratively with school officials to ensure the school complies with the performance goals established in the charter contract (d) ensure effective organizational planning, and (e) ensure

the financial stability of the school. To achieve these directives, PATH's Governing Board exercises strong policy-making and oversight functions; through a strong relationship with PATH's school leader, the Board ensures proper implementation of Board policies and the effective management of the school.

Principal Decisions

The relationship between PATH's Governing Board and the Principal is vital to the success of the organization. The school's leadership team handles daily operations and policy implementation while ensuring school operations and instructional delivery models are consistent with the charter goals. The Principal is empowered to recommend personnel actions, curricular materials, adjustments to policies, school improvement plans, and financial plans. School administration also designs professional development programs for staff, makes recommendations to the Board regarding instructional program allocations, and analyzes school data and tracks student progress for the Board. The Principal makes all employment recommendations for ratification by the Board. The role of the Board is to govern the school and hold the Principal accountable for the effective management of the school. The Board does this through regular, formal collaboration with the Principal to examine data and strategies, problem-solve, and identify resources for the school leader. In accordance with State Board Rule 160-5-1.37, PATH implements the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (TKES) and the Leader Keys Effectiveness System (LKES) to evaluate the effectiveness of the school leader and school staff. To maintain a culture of continuous improvement, the Board conducts an annual evaluation of the Principal and the CFO using the LKES process. One member of our Board members is credentialed in using LKES at all times. This process holds the Principal accountable for goals in the areas of operations, finance, and organizational effectiveness. Additionally, this evaluation allows for regular and specific feedback

to be delivered to the Principal.

Figure 21. PATH Example Decisions

Category	Board	Leader
Finance	The Board oversees the audit process and selects the auditor. The Board approves the final operating budget each fiscal year and ensures that the budget hearing law is adhered to.	The leader works closely with the Board to develop and recommend a budget that allows her to implement the program with fidelity while increasing organizational effectiveness.
Resource Allocation	<p>A few examples of Board approvals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Construction of a new student Playscape ● Allocation of funds for a new accessibility lift ● Adjustment of teacher salaries in the budget to equal the Dekalb County pay scale. This has allowed PATH to attract and retain top teachers for its staff 	<p>The leader identifies areas of need and presents resource allocation requests to the Board. For example, the leader identified that the current Playscape was unsafe, gathered quotes for new instruction, and proposed the project be earmarked at the Board meeting.</p> <p>The leader created the Afterschool Program to generate additional school funds.</p>
Personnel	Each year, the Board ratifies all hiring decisions. The Board discusses or deliberates upon the appointment, employment, compensation, hiring, disciplinary action or dismissal, or periodic evaluation or rating of each public officer or employee.	Each year, the leader makes recommendations to hire, renew, or non-renew teacher contracts.
Curriculum & Instruction	The Board approved the development of new student programming, ensuring that they align with PATH’s mission, vision, and the school’s essential and innovative features.	The leader developed and implemented a refined Extended Day program, Restorative Circles, and a House System designed to build school community, mitigate learning loss, and meet students’ unique social emotional needs.
School Improvement	The Board reviews and approves school changes. For example, the Board voted to approve the new Path Sponsorship Program to assist students with uniforms/jersey’s, school sports fees, and choral music program via donations from	<p>The leader acquired and cultivated several partnerships with local organizations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Amigos de la Comunidad (acquired with help from Board member) ● The Bridge Between

	community and small business owners.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Free Coalition for Charter ● Path Sponsorship Program
School Operation	Board approved the hiring of a new CFO who reports directly to the Finance Committee and the Board as a whole.	Leader manages the daily operation of the school and implementation of Board decisions. See above examples.

In the current charter term, the Board and Principal have collaborated to meet community needs throughout the pandemic and make significant improvements to PATH’s programming and operations. As noted above, the governing Board has utilized its governance and oversight capabilities to further school growth. For example, the Board dedicated greater resources to staff salaries, attracting and retaining greater talent in the classroom, and directed funds for a new accessibility lift and safer playground equipment for students. PATH’s school leader has led improvement efforts at the school level, particularly creating greater student engagement opportunities. For example, the Principal collaborated with Ms. Simpson, PATH’s CFO, to kickstart the Path Sponsorship Program. With the help of community businesses and charitable individuals, this program generates funds for student events and trips.

The administration team’s insight at the school level, combined with the Governing Board’s oversight and resource allocation abilities, have propelled PATH improvement efforts. Alignment under the common mission to serve PATH’s unique population has made these joint efforts successful.

Governance Structure

The Board’s ability to exercise the broad flexibility granted in the charter contract is directly linked to the quality of the Board’s oversight and decision-making processes. The Board meets at least 7 times per year to ensure that board members receive regular updates from the school leader and administrative team and can make timely governance decisions. Each Board member is required

to regularly attend board meetings; PATH's Board retains the ability to remove those not actively engaging in governance duties. Board work is currently led by the Board Chair and Board Vice Chair and supported by a Secretary and a Treasurer. Officers are elected on a yearly basis. PATH does not engage with a EMO/CMO or other major contractor at this point, nor does it plan to.

While PATH's governing Board has historically operated successfully as a committee of the whole, it is currently transitioning to a committee structure. The three committees include: the Academic Committee, Finance Committee, and Governance Committee. The committee structure will allow for stronger and more detailed oversight into areas of finance, resource allocation, personnel, curriculum, school improvement, and school operations. PATH's Principal and administrative leadership, being regularly responsive to such committees, are held to the highest standard against the Governing Board's strategic objectives. Additionally, the committee structure, in combination with adherence to Open Meetings directives, allows for more transparent and effective Board meetings.

Academic Committee

The Academic Committee is responsible for oversight of PATH's academic achievement and for the evaluation of PATH leadership. At least one member of this committee will be trained and credentialed by the Georgia Board of Education to use the Leader Key Effectiveness System to evaluate the school leader(s). The committee will also assist the school leader(s) in identifying educational resources and grants to support teaching and learning.

Finance Committee

This committee will focus on budgeting, school spending, opportunities for additional income like fundraising and grants, and long-range financial planning. Committee members will work closely with the CEO and CFO. The treasurer will be the chair of the Finance Committee, which includes

two other selected members. The Finance Committee will be responsible for developing and reviewing fiscal procedures, fundraising plans, and the annual budget with staff and other board members. The Board must approve the budget, and all expenditures must be within budget. Any major change in the budget must be approved by the Board or the Executive Committee. Annual reports will be required to be submitted to the Board showing income, expenditures, and pending income. The financial records of the organization are public information and will also be made available to the membership, board members, and the public.

Governance Committee

The purpose of the Governance Committee is to ensure that the Board fulfills its legal, ethical, and functional responsibilities through adequate governance policy development, recruitment strategies, training programs, monitoring of board activities, and evaluation of board members' performance. This committee will particularly focus on board compliance with Georgia laws, particularly the Open Meetings Act and Open Records Act. The Governance Committee will ensure that the Board of Directors is able to govern the organization effectively through: creation of governance policies and procedures; recruiting and nominating suitable board members; providing orientation and training programs for board members, and evaluating the performance of individual members and the board as a whole. The Governance Committee will ensure that the board does not fall below the number of directors required by the bylaws and that any directors appointed to the board understand and agree with the mission of the organization and the code of ethics for directors.

Board Composition

PATH's Board of Directors is currently composed of seven members, not including the Principal who is an ex-officio member. The Board always consists of two parent representatives and one

faculty representative. Members represent various fields of expertise, including legal, finance, accounting, business, and education.

In adherence with Goal 6 of Appendix A of PATH’s charter contract, which outlines the school’s accountability requirements, PATH successfully maintains a Governing Board reflective of the socioeconomic diversity of its student community. It is PATH’s mission to provide a learning environment supportive of local immigrant and refugee families, which are prevalent in our attendance zones of Clarkston, Stone Mountain, Brookhaven, and Chamblee. Culturally responsive instruction begins with a governing board personally attuned to the lived experiences of the student body. As such, PATH’s Board recruitment and selection process is designed to pull members from a diverse range of personal and professional experiences and racial and ethnic backgrounds. Currently, **37.5%** of our Board members identify as Latina, **25%** of our Board members identify as Black, and **37.5%** of our Board members identify as White.

Figure 22. PATH Academy Governing Board Composition

Name	Role/Title	Term Start Date	Board Role Start Date	Identifies
Bonnie Birrell	Chair	March 2021	March 2021	Female, White
Michelle O’Neil	Vice Chair	February 2024	February 2024	Female, White
Marvia Bright	Secretary	March 2021	March 2021	Female, Black
Tim Kalbas	Voting Member	March 2021	March 2021	Male, White

David Morgan	Voting Member	January 2024	January 2024	Male, Black
Celenia Perdomo	Voting Member	February 2024	February 2024	Female, Latina
Aceli Zenil	Voting Member	October 2017	October 2017	Female, Latina
Crystal Felix-Clarke	Ex-Officio	August 2016	August 2016	Female, Latina

PATH’s Governing Board is subject to the Open and Public Meetings Act, O.C.G.A. § 50-14-1 et seq, which requires maximum transparency and proper communication with the public about scheduled meetings and Board actions. PATH has maintained Board information on its public website. PATH posts the time, place, dates, and agenda of board meetings one week in advance and a Summary of Action within two days of the meeting. Meeting minutes are published within 10 business days of board approval. Through streamlined publication processes and governance training with GCSA, the PATH Governing Board has made a concerted effort to improve its transparency and timely public posting of its meeting materials. The Board Chair is responsible for providing the Agenda for publication. Board Secretary, Marvia Bright, shares a draft of the Summary of Action and Meeting Minutes with the Board Chair, who sends it to the webmaster for publication to the website.

The Board is also subject to the Georgia Open Records Act, O.C.G.A. § 50-18-70 *et seq.*, and any subsequent amendment thereof. As such, in addition to meeting agendas and minutes, the

Governing Board maintains its adopted policies and budgets on its website for public inspection. In adherence with its charter contract, the PATH Board must also conduct regular meetings consistent with principles of transparency and the avoidance of conflicts of interest. The Governing Board follows a strict conflict of interest policy and requires board members to disclose all affiliations and sign a conflict-of-interest agreement annually. Before members can be voted onto the Board, they must sign a PATH Academy Policy, which is based on the State's model policy. Additionally, the Governing Board follows a strict Code of Ethics, which is also based on the State's model policy. Board members must sign this Code of Ethics before they can be voted onto the Board.

Governing Board Training Program

O.C.G.A. § 20-2-2072 and SBOE Rule 160-4-9-.06 require members of locally-approved charter school governing boards to participate in nine hours of annual training conducted by a State Board of Education (SBOE) approved provider. New governing board members must complete an additional six hours of training. Topics covered in training for new and existing Board members must conform to those defined by the Georgia Department of Education.

PATH Academy had successfully engaged with the Georgia Charter Schools Association and 21Cobalt to fulfill its governance training requirements, which are both SBOE-approved providers. The PATH Governing Board annually adopts a training program, and the Board Chair oversees this requirement. The Board Chair supports board members in completing annual training through the following:

- Frequent check-ins and reminders
- Providing online training options through GCSA
- Facilitating GCSA Conference admission for Board members

- Scheduling whole-group training through an SBOE-approved provider
- Investigating training providers for Spanish-speaking board members

During the current charter term, the PATH governing Board has received training in the following topic areas to build a strong, diverse Board poised for succession and growth:

- Required Financial Best Practices and Whole group training
- Board Chair Training
- Open Records training
- Induction, Orientation, and Mentoring New Board Members
- Varied topics at the GCSA Conference

A copy of the Governing Board training program is included as **Exhibit 6**.

- 5) Describe how the school provides state- and federally-mandated services to **students with disabilities**. Reciting the requirements of law and rule is insufficient. Your description must include the school's practices and procedures to:
- a) Evaluate and identify students with disabilities;
 - b) Develop, review, and revise Individualized Education Programs (IEPs);
 - c) Integrate special education into the general education program;
 - d) Ensure that the school facility meets the requirements of other related laws including the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504;
 - e) Address student discipline;
 - f) Handle programming disputes involving parents;
 - g) Ensure confidentiality of special education records;
 - h) Purchase services from special education vendors or to contract with your local district to provide a continuum of special education services and how this arrangement will work; and
 - i) Secure technical assistance and training.

Special Education Overview

PATH Academy is committed to providing an education that meets the unique educational and developmental needs of each student. In alignment with our mission, our special education services

(SPED) ensure that special education students receive the same tools as their peers for pursuing a life passion and enriching their communities. Most of PATH's SPED students receive services in a General Education setting, which promotes inclusivity. Our program pays particular attention to our SPED/ESOL population. Currently, 7.3% of PATH's population receives special education services. Of our 197 active ESOL students, 13% also qualify for SPED services. To promote strong educator collaboration in service delivery, each SPED teacher is dual-certified in a content area and each content area teacher is dual-certified in ESOL. Extended time and classrooms with multiple teachers facilitate comprehensive service delivery for each student. PATH adheres to all federal special education laws and regulations, including the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Efforts to comply with these laws and regulations are detailed in the sections below.

PATH's special education staff includes a Lead Teacher for Special Education (LTSE), one special education case manager, three certified special education teachers providing direct services to students according to their IEPs, and dual-certified teachers in each grade. As part of the DeKalb County School District, PATH utilizes the SPED services provided by the district. As a start-up charter school, these services include an LTSE, who oversees our special education program. The LTSE provides technical assistance to the special education teachers, regular teachers, and the chair of the Student Success Team (SST) on a weekly basis. Additionally, PATH receives funding for four special education teachers, one of whom serves as a case manager for all PATH special education students. The case manager is responsible for coordinating services, communicating with parents, and holding special education meetings. The remaining three special education teachers, along with dual-certified special education teachers in each grade, are responsible for

executing and delivering special education services.

This special education staffing structure ensures that special education teachers receive the support they need while adapting and delivering curriculum to meet students' needs. This structure also surrounds special education students with layers of support designed to provide regular opportunities for IEP adjustments and progress monitoring. Oversight of this unit by the Principal creates clear accountability for the implementation of services and student growth. Additionally, smaller class sizes, a smaller school environment, flexible grouping, and a data-driven practice allow teachers and staff members to accurately identify students who lag behind their peers in different subject areas. Teachers also work as a team to implement the Response to Interventions (RTI) process in their teaching.

Identification of Students for Special Education Services

Child Find mandates, as described in 34 C.F.R. § 300.111 and Georgia Rule 160-4-7-.03, require LEAs to implement policies and procedures designed to identify, locate, and evaluate all students within their jurisdiction suspected of having disabilities. Section 504 regulations require that LEAs provide a “free appropriate education” (FAPE) to such students, regardless of the nature or severity of the disability. PATH prioritizes the early identification of students with disabilities and implements comprehensive procedures to identify student needs and develop IEPs tailored to student needs.

PATH Academy does not discriminate against students with disabilities during the admission process and/or other aspects of school operations. PATH follows GADOE’s “Response to Intervention (RTI): Student Interventions” guidelines to identify and place students in the Special Education Program. The following timeline is usually implemented:

Tier 1: Four to 6 weeks of Standards Based Instruction —GPS, differentiation, grouping,

benchmarks.

Tier 2: Six weeks of Individual Needs Based Instruction—supplemental instruction with evidence-based interventions, monthly/bimonthly progress monitoring in deficit area

Identify the Problem

- a. Assess why the problem is occurring
- b. Select an intervention
- c. Select a desired goal
- d. Document progress using RTI forms at least 1 time weekly
- e. Conduct at least 2 parent conferences to discuss concerns and progress
- f. Consult with SST chair to request SST

If a student fails to make academic progress after Tier 1 and 2 interventions, the student will be referred to the SST chair as part of the Tier 3 interventions. The SST chair starts an SST process for the student. When the student goes through the SST process in Tier 3 and fails to make adequate academic progress, the student will be referred to special education evaluation (Tier 4).

During the special education evaluation, the student will be evaluated by a psychologist or evaluator(s) from DCSD. In accordance with Section 504, the parents or guardians will be given the general information containing a general description of the types of psychological evaluation. The psychologist or evaluator(s) will choose specific tests that are thought to be best for the student's age, grade, and physical growth. Parents will be given specific information on the tests used at the time the results are reviewed and at special education Individualized Education Program (IEP)/Placement meetings. Before testing can begin, parents must sign a parental consent to evaluation. Once this document is signed, the District has 60 days to evaluate the child for special

education. The student is always assessed in all areas of suspected disability.

Development, Review, and Revision of IEPs

PATH adheres to the IDEA in ensuring that each student receives individualized special education services and related services tailored to the unique needs of the child. Once the school district's psychologist conducts the special education evaluation, the school SST team along with the parent, school psychologist, general education, and special education teacher conduct an IEP eligibility meeting. At this meeting, the team determines whether the student qualifies for special education services. A district level special education employee is always invited to these meetings.

If the student is placed in the special education program, the student will receive the services according to his/her IEP, as developed by the IEP team. Incoming students with an IEP will receive their service according to their IEP as well. In accordance with the IDEA, each student's IEP will be reviewed and updated annually (or more if necessary) so that the student will receive the most appropriate and effective interventions and support he/she needs. At least once every three years a re-evaluation meeting is held to determine if continuation of Special Education Services is required.

Integration of Special Education into the General Education Program / Revisions to IEPs

In its SPED program delivery, PATH is committed to providing special education students the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). To achieve this, the Special Education Program at PATH Academy emphasizes co-teaching and inclusion models that provide appropriate intervention and support to the student in the content areas in the general education classroom. Special education students also receive extra tutorial services during the after-school tutorial program and Saturday School Program. Special education and regular education teachers monitor the students' academic progress closely through weekly and unit assessments. They meet weekly to discuss methods and

materials that they can use to improve students' academic progress.

On a quarterly basis, the teachers discuss the academic progress of each student to see whether the student meets the goals set forth in his/her IEP. If the student does not meet his/her goals, a more comprehensive plan of modification and intervention will be established. If the student meets or exceeds his/her goals, new goals may be added. At the end of the school year, academic progress of each student is evaluated and compared with that of his/her peers in a regular education program. This helps the teachers to revisit the delivery of the materials and the curriculum. Teachers might find that adjustments must be made to meet the needs of the students in the special education program.

The following arrangements for special education services are also implemented by DCSD:

- Itinerant services for students with speech/language disorders, as identified in their IEP, shall be provided by the DeKalb County Department of Support Services.
- 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 teacher of Students with Visual Impairments (TVI)

PATH participates in special education training through the district. As additional training needs are identified PATH works with the LTSE collaboratively to identify the correct training opportunity through the district.

Facility Compliance with ADA and Section 504

PATH Academy's facility complies with all federal regulations pertaining to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as well as the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). According to Section 504, the school facility cannot be a barrier to students with disabilities accessing programming available at the school. All necessary adjustments and/or modifications have been

made to meet all the needs as specified and required by Section 504 and ADA requirements. The PATH facility has ADA compliant restrooms as well as accessibility at the main and side entrances to the building.

Discipline for Special Education Students

PATH Academy is required to follow DeKalb County School District's Student Code of Conduct. This policy and the resulting procedures ensure that all students, regardless of disability status, are afforded due process in discipline matters. As such, students with special needs are not exempt from disciplinary actions should infractions arise that merit such consequences. School personnel may remove (suspend) a student with a disability from school if he/she violates the Code of Conduct. Should a suspension of more than 10 days or more be recommended by staff, the student is entitled to a Manifestation Determination Hearing. This hearing must be held within 10 days of the suspension. The 10 days of suspension are cumulative over the course of the school year.

During the hearing, the student's IEP team reviews all relevant information, including the IEP. In addition to determining the connection between the infraction and the disability, the hearing also serves to determine whether or not the services provided for in the IEP are fully implemented. If the behavior is determined to be a manifestation of the student's disability, a functional behavioral assessment must be conducted and a behavior intervention plan is either developed or revised according to the student's needs. In this case, the student immediately returns to school. In the event that the infraction is not a manifestation of the student's disability, the student will be referred to a disciplinary tribunal in accordance with the code of conduct and the student's due process rights. In this case, the disciplinary tribunal may determine additional consequences including expulsion from the school.

Resolving Disputes Involving Parents

While PATH encourages a culture of partnership with parents throughout the special education process, conflicts may arise between the school and parents. To resolve conflict, PATH Academy complies with all provisions under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). IDEA procedures allow formal and informal methods for resolving issues that arise. PATH's first course of action, the informal approach, may involve conducting an IEP meeting to discuss and revise the student's IEP. Parents are entitled to receive a copy of the Parent's Rights Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act before each meeting regarding their child's IEP.

IDEA provides three more formal ways to help parents and school systems resolve disagreements: mediation, formal complaints, and due process hearings.

Mediation

Parents have the right to ask for mediation if they disagree with the IEP and/or any related services. GaDOE will select a neutral third-party mediator at random. Mediation is free to both the parent and the school system. Either party can bring a lawyer or advisor to the table. All discussions during mediation are private. If the parties reach an agreement during mediation, the parties must sign a binding agreement in writing that can be enforced by a court of law.

Complaints

A parent or any citizen may file a formal complaint with the GaDOE if he or she believes the school system violated the IDEA. The formal complaint must state how PATH violated the requirements of the IDEA, with accompanying supporting documents and must be signed by the complainant. The violation in question must have happened less than one year before the date the complaint is filed. The school must provide a signed and written response to GADOE and the complainant. The parties may also mutually agree to resolve formal complaints through mediation instead. GADOE will provide a decision within 60 days and their decision is final and cannot be

appealed.

Due Process Hearing

Either a parent, school, or school system may ask for a due process hearing related to the student's identification, evaluation, educational placement, or receiving a free appropriate public education (FAPE). The school system must give parents a list of any free or low-cost legal services at the start of a due-process hearing. There is a statute of limitations dating back to two years when the parent knew (or should have known) about the complaint. However, the two-year time limit does not apply if the school incorrectly informed the parent that the problem was resolved and/or the school failed to properly inform the parent.

Confidentiality of Records

PATH Academy complies with all applicable federal and state privacy laws pertaining to students with disabilities' educational records, including FERPA and IDEA. Under IDEA provisions, parents have the right to keep their SPED student's records private. To achieve this aim, and to meet FERPA requirements, PATH institutes the following procedures:

1. Housing all SPED scholar's records in a locked, fireproof file cabinet, behind a locked door, in the SPED wing of the library of the school. PATH keeps a record of each individual who accesses these records. The school maintains a list of people who have access to records with personally identifiable information.
2. Only school employees or contractors for school services currently involved with the child receiving special education services may see the student's records. Likewise, confidentiality applies to discussions about students and student's records.
3. Ensuring that any correspondence, electronic or otherwise, referencing a specific scholar

includes the student's first name, last initial, and/or student identification number required.

Electronic documents are also password-protected.

4. Staff who have reason to interact with student records receive annual training on confidentiality requirements. PATH administrators have also completed required training on student records management.

Service Providers

PATH special education staff members attend all required DCSD training regarding services and procedures under IDEA and Section 504. The school commits to staffing special education positions with fully certified teachers who are certified in special education. DCSD provides technical assistance in their role as authorizer and LEA by providing guidance, support, and oversight as needed.

- 6) Describe how the charter school provides state- and federally-mandated services for English Learners (ELs). Reciting the requirements of law and rule is insufficient. Your description must include the diagnostic methods or instruments that are used to identify and assess those students, as well as the instructional program that is provided to ELs.

English Learner Overview

As part of PATH Academy's target population, English Language Learners (ELLs) are at the heart of our mission. In the current school year, 53.5% of students receive English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) services. As a result, ESOL plays a major role in our educational program. PATH Academy adheres to State Board Rule 160-4-5-.02 when identifying, placing, instructing, and assessing English Language Learners (ELLs).

Identification of English Learners

In identifying ELLs, PATH complies with Georgia Department of Education Guidelines,

which require administration of the Home Language Survey and, if applicable, the administration of the **WIDA Screener**. Upon enrollment to PATH Academy, students are identified as eligible for ESOL instruction through their permanent record file from a Georgia school system or through the Home Language Survey. All students whose parents have indicated that a language other than English is spoken at home or by the student take an English language proficiency test to determine eligibility for the English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) program. These scholars are assessed with the age-appropriate **WIDA Screener**, which assesses language proficiency in four domains: listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

Students qualifying for services are then placed in our ESOL program. PATH notifies parents of student qualification for ESOL services via letter, provided in the parent or guardians' home language. PATH follows DCSD protocol for families choosing to opt-out of direct ESOL services, at which time parents are sent a Parental Waiver of Direct ESOL Services.

PATH administers the ACCESS for ELLs test annually to ESOL students within the district's designated testing window to measure progress. Students who achieve the necessary passing score on the ACCESS assessment, as determined yearly by DCSD, become listed as EL-Monitored, ready to exit ESOL language program services. Following exit from the program, students are monitored for at least two years to ensure they receive ongoing support as they continue to work toward grade-level academic language performance and adapt academically, socially, and psychologically in the regular classroom. ELL students continue to receive support for their learning through flexible grouping that explicitly addresses their learning needs. They are monitored by their core subject teachers and the ESOL team to ensure sustained growth. Although PATH utilizes the DCSD yearly determined ACCESS score as the exit criteria for

ESOL, there is also the opportunity for students to be re-classified as EL-Monitored using DSCD's additional criteria for exit. This criteria involves considering all students who meet all the following reclassification criteria: Overall Composite Proficiency Level of 4.3 to 4.9; Literacy Score of 4.3 or above; and Comprehension Score of 4.3 or above.

The ESOL department chair and classroom teachers meet to determine whether students in this category should be exited from the ESOL Program. This process includes examination of ACCESS Scores, which measure English language proficiency, MAP scores, which assess academic growth, and GMAS Scores, which evaluate academic achievement. Parents are also included in this process to make sure that they understand the committee's recommendation and that they are comfortable with the decision

Services for English Learners

PATH's ESOL program structure contains three primary components: one designated full-time ESOL Coordinator, at least one ESOL teacher per grade, and content-area teachers trained in ELL instruction. In accordance with State Board Rule 160-4-5-0.2, the ESOL Coordinator and grade-level ESOL teachers hold the necessary ESOL certification from the Georgia Professional Standards Commission. PATH provides regular training to content-area teachers in methods and strategies for accommodation of lessons for ELLs. Over 70% of our teachers have been trained in Instructional Conversations pedagogy through courses at UGA. PATH's administration also has vast related experience, which aids in the effective implementation and oversight of our ESOL program.

PATH's ESOL program employs a Sheltered Content instructional model supported by co-teaching instruction; ESOL students receive academic language and content instruction in a classroom composed only of ELLs. In each grade level, EL students are grouped by modality into a single class accompanied by an ESOL teacher. Placement of EL students by modality provides

meaningful access to ability-appropriate core content; ESOL students have equal access to PATH's rigorous academic program and are able to work towards grade-level standards while attaining English language proficiency.

For core content classes, content area teachers trained in ESOL practices provide accommodation through modified and scaffolded lessons. For example, teachers may pre-teach vocabulary, provide background knowledge, use a high number of visual aids, review frequently, and employ a host of other research-based strategies for making content comprehensible to EL students. The curriculum for core content courses is based on the state-adopted WIDA and is aligned with the Georgia State Standards of Excellence. Small-group instruction and pull-out groups for some ELA classes facilitate close content delivery.

ESOL classes focus on building social and academic English language skills in the four domains of reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Students' progress is monitored throughout the year to ensure that EL students have the tools they need to excel in PATH's rigorous academic curriculum. In addition to ACCESS, the MAP assessment data along with student work is regularly reviewed to determine progress and appropriate flexible group placement.

- 7) Provide the number and percentage of students receiving In-School Suspensions, Out-of-School Suspensions, or Expulsions during the current charter term (e.g., the past 5 years). How does this discipline and dismissal data compare to the Office of Civil Rights data?

At the time of DeKalb PATH's charter renewal petition, data obtained from the Office of Civil Rights reflected its [most recent data year as 2020](#). While Figure 23 details this data, for comparison purposes, we have also included relevant discipline data for every year of PATH's current charter term (excluding the current school year). This updated data was retrieved from the [Governor's Office of Student Achievement K-12 Dashboard](#) and it summarizes PATH's discipline data over

the current charter term in comparison to discipline data from the DeKalb County School District as well as the state of Georgia.

Figure 23. 2020 OCR Discipline Data

OCR Student Discipline Data 2020			
	In-School Suspensions (Students without Disabilities)	More than One Out-of-School Suspensions (Students without Disabilities)	Expulsions (Students without Disabilities)
Ethnicity/Race			
Latino / Hispanic	20.5%	18.1%	20.2%
American Indian	1.3%	1.4%	1.0%
Asian / Pacific Islander	<1.0%	<1.0%	<1.0%
Black / African American	22.8%	26.7%	26.3%
White	49.6%	47.5%	46.6%
Two or More Races	4.8%	5.3%	4.8%

Figure 24. 2020 State, District, School Discipline Data Comparison

State of Georgia 2020			DeKalb County 2020			DeKalb PATH Academy 2020		
In-School Suspensions Rate	Out-Of-School Suspensions Rate	Expulsion Rate	In-School Suspensions Rate	Out-Of-School Suspensions Rate	Expulsion Rate	In-School Suspensions Rate	Out-Of-School Suspensions Rate	Expulsion Rate
6.7%	4.8%	0.1%	5.3%	6.5%	0.0%	6.6%	3.4%	0.0%
Ethnicity/Race	Percent of Disciplined Population VS. Percent of Overall Population		Ethnicity/Race	Percent of Disciplined Population VS. Percent of Overall Population		Ethnicity/Race	Percent of Disciplined Population VS. Percent of Overall Population	
Latino Hispanic	12.5%	16.7%	Latino Hispanic	13.5%	19.0%	Latino Hispanic	77.1%	79.6%
American Indian	0.2%	0.2%	American Indian	0.2%	0.4%	American Indian	0.0%	0.0%
Asian / Pacific Islander	0.2%	4.3%	Asian / Pacific Islander	1.3%	6.8%	Asian / Pacific Islander	0.0%	5.3%
Black / African American	55.9%	37.4%	Black / African American	79.6%	60.8%	Black / African American	22.9%	14.8%
White	26.4%	37.4%	White	3.8%	10.8%	White	0.0%	0.3%
Two or More Races	4.0%	4.0%	Two or More Races	1.5%	2.2%	Two or More Races	0.0%	0.0%
Total Population: 1,926,301			Total Population: 110,301			Total Population: 378		

Figure 25. 2021 State, District, School Discipline Data Comparison

DeKalb PATH Academy

State of Georgia 2021			DeKalb County 2021			DeKalb PATH Academy 2021					
In-School Suspensions Rate	Out-Of-School Suspensions Rate	Expulsion Rate	In-School Suspensions Rate	Out-Of-School Suspensions Rate	Expulsion Rate	In-School Suspensions Rate	Out-Of-School Suspensions Rate	Expulsion Rate			
3.3%	2.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.3%	0.0%			
Ethnicity/Race		Percent of Disciplined Population VS. Percent of Overall Population		Ethnicity/Race		Percent of Disciplined Population VS. Percent of Overall Population		Ethnicity/Race		Percent of Disciplined Population VS. Percent of Overall Population	
Latino Hispanic	13.5%	17.2%	Latino Hispanic	22.4%	19.8%	Latino Hispanic	100.0%	79.8%	American Indian	0.2%	0.2%
American Indian	0.2%	0.2%	American Indian	0.6%	0.4%	American Indian	0.0%	0.3%	Asian / Pacific Islander	1.0%	4.4%
Asian / Pacific Islander	1.0%	4.4%	Asian / Pacific Islander	0.6%	6.9%	Asian / Pacific Islander	0.0%	5.3%	Black / African American	39.8%	36.7%
Black / African American	39.8%	36.7%	Black / African American	68.3%	59.4%	Black / African American	0.0%	14.3%	American	40.8%	37.2%
American	40.8%	37.2%	American	7.4%	11.1%	American	0.0%	0.3%	White	4.9%	4.3%
White	4.9%	4.3%	White	0.6%	2.4%	White	0.0%	0.0%	Two or More Races	4.9%	4.3%
Two or More Races	4.9%	4.3%	Two or More Races	0.6%	2.4%	Two or More Races	0.0%	0.0%	Total Population:	1,870,308	101,045
Total Population:	1,870,308		Total Population:	101,045		Total Population:	377				

Figure 26. 2022 State, District, School Discipline Data Comparison

State of Georgia 2022			DeKalb County 2022			DeKalb PATH Academy 2022					
In-School Suspensions Rate	Out-Of-School Suspensions Rate	Expulsion Rate	In-School Suspensions Rate	Out-Of-School Suspensions Rate	Expulsion Rate	In-School Suspensions Rate	Out-Of-School Suspensions Rate	Expulsion Rate			
7.6%	6.3%	0.1%	4.4%	7.4%	0.0%	5.0%	5.5%	0.0%			
Ethnicity/Race		Percent of Disciplined Population VS. Percent of Overall Population		Ethnicity/Race		Percent of Disciplined Population VS. Percent of Overall Population		Ethnicity/Race		Percent of Disciplined Population VS. Percent of Overall Population	
Latino Hispanic	14.0%	17.7%	Latino Hispanic	14.8%	20.2%	Latino Hispanic	93.0%	84.8%	American Indian	0.2%	0.2%
American Indian	0.2%	0.2%	American Indian	0.5%	0.4%	American Indian	0.0%	0.0%	Asian / Pacific Islander	1.1%	4.5%
Asian / Pacific Islander	1.1%	4.5%	Asian / Pacific Islander	1.3%	6.4%	Asian / Pacific Islander	0.0%	4.5%	Black / African American	53.3%	37.3%
Black / African American	53.3%	37.3%	Black / African American	77.8%	60.0%	Black / African American	7.0%	10.8%	American	26.8%	35.8%
American	26.8%	35.8%	American	4.0%	10.3%	American	0.0%	0.0%	White	4.5%	4.5%
White	4.5%	4.5%	White	1.7%	2.7%	White	0.0%	0.0%	Two or More Races	4.5%	4.5%
Two or More Races	4.5%	4.5%	Two or More Races	1.7%	2.7%	Two or More Races	0.0%	0.0%	Total Population:	1,915,722	105,508
Total Population:	1,915,722		Total Population:	105,508		Total Population:	381				

Figure 27. 2023 State, District, School Discipline Data Comparison

State of Georgia 2023			DeKalb County 2023			DeKalb PATH Academy 2023					
In-School Suspensions Rate	Out-Of-School Suspensions Rate	Expulsion Rate	In-School Suspensions Rate	Out-Of-School Suspensions Rate	Expulsion Rate	In-School Suspensions Rate	Out-Of-School Suspensions Rate	Expulsion Rate			
8.1%	7.0%	0.1%	4.6%	9.4%	0.0%	13.9%	5.3%	0.0%			
Ethnicity/Race		Percent of Disciplined Population VS. Percent of Overall Population		Ethnicity/Race		Percent of Disciplined Population VS. Percent of Overall Population		Ethnicity/Race		Percent of Disciplined Population VS. Percent of Overall Population	
Latino Hispanic	14.1%	18.2%	Latino Hispanic	16.1%	21.2%	Latino Hispanic	85.3%	85.3%	American Indian	0.2%	0.2%
American Indian	0.2%	0.2%	American Indian	0.4%	0.4%	American Indian	0.0%	0.0%	Asian / Pacific Islander	1.2%	4.7%
Asian / Pacific Islander	1.2%	4.7%	Asian / Pacific Islander	1.5%	6.2%	Asian / Pacific Islander	4.4%	5.6%	Black / African American	54.3%	37.5%
Black / African American	54.3%	37.5%	Black / African American	76.4%	59.0%	Black / African American	10.3%	9.1%	American	25.4%	34.7%
American	25.4%	34.7%	American	3.5%	10.2%	American	0.0%	0.0%	White	4.7%	4.7%
White	4.7%	4.7%	White	2.0%	2.9%	White	0.0%	0.0%	Two or More Races	4.7%	4.7%
Two or More Races	4.7%	4.7%	Two or More Races	2.0%	2.9%	Two or More Races	0.0%	0.0%	Total Population:	1,923,756	105,053
Total Population:	1,923,756		Total Population:	105,053		Total Population:	374				

PATH Discipline Data

PATH has demonstrated a history of low rates of disciplinary action. In the past four years of PATH's current charter contract, the school has had zero instances of expulsion and markedly lower rates of out-of-school suspensions than the state and DeKalb County School district as a whole. In three of the past four school years, PATH had a lower rate of out-of-school suspensions than the state or DCSD; PATH had a lower rate of out-of-school suspensions than the state for all four years. PATH is committed to keeping students within a continuous learning and support environment, which begins by making every effort to keep students within school walls.

Additionally, PATH's equitable disciplinary measures have ensured that no racial/ethnic group receives disproportionate disciplinary action. Our discipline rates, as disaggregated by racial/ethnic group, are not significantly different from our student demographics. In particular, PATH out-performs state-level discipline disparities among the Black/African American student population, which is known to experience disproportionate levels of teacher surveillance and punishment in school environments.

DeKalb PATH Discipline Policies

Charter schools are bound by both state and federal due process requirements; DeKalb PATH is committed to upholding the due process of student rights during the disciplinary process. As a DCSD charter school, DeKalb PATH follows DeKalb County School District's Student Code of Conduct, which provides a framework for taking a nuanced approach to understanding student behavior, methods for promoting positive student behavior, and implementing fair and discipline consequences when needed. The DeKalb County Code of Conduct ensures that all discipline processes equitably serve the best interests of PATH's student body. Discipline processes are standardized across the school and all staff are trained on best disciplinary practices.

In addition to discipline policy and procedure, PATH creates a learning environment designed to teach strong social-emotional learning and conflict resolution designed to prevent the need for disciplinary action. In alignment with DCSD's Character Education Initiative, DeKalb PATH maintains a school environment designed to develop the whole child. This means promoting character development through curriculum, engaging the whole community in the development of the child's moral character, and fostering a safe learning environment.

DeKalb PATH's Approach to Discipline

PATH Academy adheres to General Education Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS), as required by Georgia schools for the continuous school improvement process. This data-driven, multi-level prevention system is designed to meet the needs of the whole child. With an emphasis on the academic *and* behavioral needs of each student, teachers, administrators, and school leadership can provide a continuum of support for a diverse student population. To support tiered interventions, PATH conducts ongoing data monitoring to understand programmatic impacts and inform disciplinary decision-making. Progressive discipline is designed to simultaneously dissuade poor conduct, incentivize good conduct, and provide support services to students in a proactive manner.

Additionally, DeKalb PATH implements the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) framework, as outlined in the DeKalb County Code of Conduct. PATH's approach focuses on establishing and reinforcing clear behavioral expectations, providing consistent consequences, and using data-driven decision-making to support students' social, emotional, and academic success. PBIS's collaborative efforts, combined with data-driven and culturally responsive decision-making, allows for strong prevention of negative behaviors.

Finally, PATH implements Restorative Practices as designed by the DeKalb County School District. PATH contracts with [Restore More](#) for staff training in restorative practices, teacher wellness, and social-emotional learning. The International Institute of Restorative Practices defines restorative practices as “social science that studies how to build social capital and achieve social decision making.” Rather than simply punishing the student in violation of proper school conduct, restorative practices aim to leverage community-building and conflict management to create stronger and more productively positive school communities.

As a part of these practices, students *and* teachers regularly engage in Restorative Circles. Teachers meet regularly in this format to practice wellness and maintain consistent inter-staff communication. Students meet in this format during Mindful Mondays, which feature the same teacher for the entire year. Beyond regularly fostering social-emotional skills, PATH utilizes Restorative Circles for mediation. This victim-sensitive tool emphasizes dialogue and allows students to practice harm reduction and relationship repair. Restorative conferences vitally prepare students for future moments of tension and create roadmaps to prevent further wrongdoing.

- 8) Describe in detail how the charter school’s students, governing Board, faculty, and staff reflect the sociodemographic diversity of the community served by the charter school. If the charter school does not reflect the community’s diversity in one or more areas of the areas listed above, provide a comprehensive plan to address this need for diversity. Included in such a plan could be, for example, the use of targeted recruitment or the use of a weighted lottery to provide an increased chance of admission for educationally disadvantaged students pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 20-2-2066(a)(1) and State Board Rule 160-4-9-.05(2)(g).

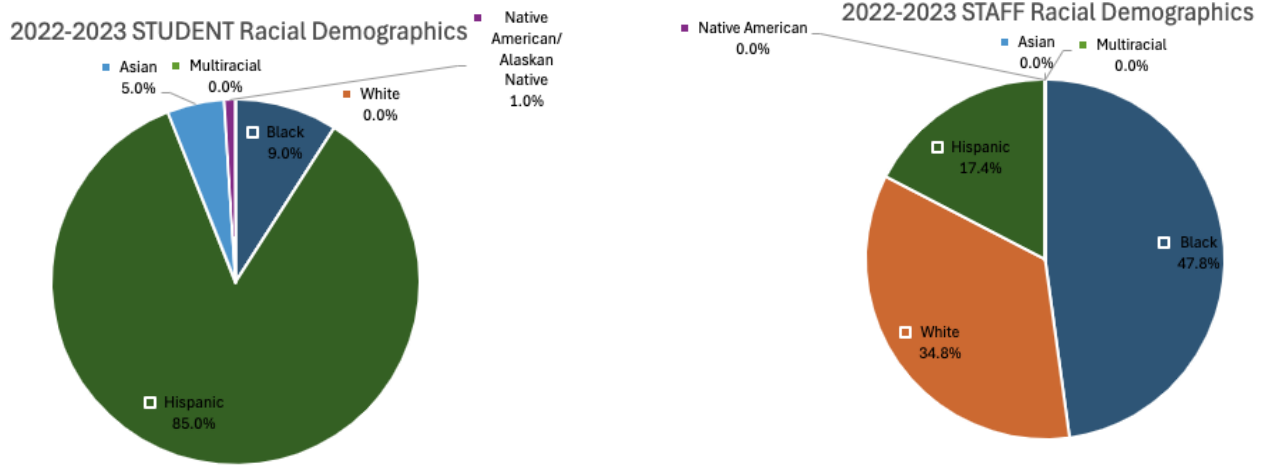
PATH serves a very diverse student body. During our 2022-2023 school year, 9% of our students were African American, 85% were Hispanic, and 5% were Asian or Pacific Islanders. 97% of our students were economically disadvantaged, 51.4% qualified for ESOL, and 7.3% qualified for

SPED. These numbers are consistent from year to year. Our diversity is representative of the communities that we serve, which are Clarkston, Stone Mountain, Brookhaven, and Chamblee. Clarkston is often described as the most diverse square mile in the U.S. thanks to decades of welcoming refugees.

PATH is committed to making its educational program accessible to its attendance zone through a random lottery process. Through community outreach efforts and a strong reputation among community members, PATH has maintained a student population representative of its surrounding communities.

Our diverse faculty, staff, leadership, and board team are necessary for understanding and meeting the needs of our student population. Figure 28 shows the racial demographics of our student and staff populations in the 2022-2023 school year. The majority (**65.2%**) of our staff, including administration, teachers, and personnel support, are people of color. Our school leadership team is entirely comprised of people of color. Our school leader is fluent in Spanish, which helps to ensure that the student and family needs of our Hispanic and ESOL populations are properly met. Similarly, 30% of our teacher population speak Spanish.

Figure 28. PATH Student and Staff Racial Demographics



PATH’s Governing Board is similarly diverse and represents broad socio-economic and racial backgrounds. It is vital that PATH’s governing body has a deep and nuanced understanding of the school community’s cultural backgrounds based in personal experience. Our Board is deeply rooted in our surrounding community and represents various professional backgrounds, including community and school choice advocacy, education, and finance. In the current school year, 37.5% of our Governing Board is Latino and 25% of our board is Black. Additionally, half of our Board members speak Spanish fluently. In ensuring that 2 members of our Board are parents, PATH also deliberately seeks to create a Board directly representative of the student population. The following figure details the Board’s current gender and racial composition.

Figure 29. PATH Governing Board Composition

PATH School Board Composition				
Name	Role/Title	Gender	Racial Identification	Title, Organization
Bonnie Birrell	Chair	Female	White	Teacher, Dunwoody Elementary School
Michelle O'Neil	Vice Chair	Female	White	PATH Parent; Doraville Police Officer
Marvia Bright	Secretary	Female	Black	Education Administrator
Tim Kalbas	Voting Member	Male	White	Chief Sales Officer, Domino Data Lab; School Choice Advocate
David Morgan	Voting Member	Male	Black	Educator; Advocate with the Freedom Coalition for Charter Schools

DeKalb PATH Academy

Celenia Perdomo	Voting Member	Female	Latina	PATH Parent; Facilities Manager, Shallowford Presbyterian Church
Aceli Zenil	Voting Member	Female	Latina	PATH Parent; Community Advocate of 20 Years: Founder of Friends of Buford Highway and Amigos de la Comunidad Georgia
Crystal Felix-Clarke	Ex-Officio	Female	Latina	PATH CEO

Finally, PATH boasts a high male teacher population with exceptional staying power: 28% of our teachers are male. The Governor’s Office of Student Achievement reports that men make up only roughly 30% of the teacher workforce statewide.² This creates a unique strength in our school community as male students have consistent representation and mentorship among school staff. PATH also benefits from former students serving as teachers and former PATH parents serving on our Wellness Team. Direct representation from the community helps to drive our high student engagement.

PATH will continue to prioritize diversity in its Board and staff recruitment, hiring, and professional development practices. Staff breadth and depth of personal cultural and experiential knowledge drives our ability to connect with every student and meet their unique educational and socio-emotional needs.

²<https://gosa.georgia.gov/document/document/2021-teacher-leader-workforce-reportfinal-051222pdf/download>

- 9) Describe in detail any difficulties faced during the charter term that were not already addressed above, how the school dealt with such difficulties, and if they remain an issue for the school. Also explain how the school plans to avoid these difficulties during the upcoming charter renewal term.

Academics

As described above, PATH experienced specific academic challenges during the charter term, including learning loss following the COVID-19 Pandemic, curriculum continuity, and challenges with student literacy and math achievement. Efforts to address these challenges are described in Question 2.

In addition to these challenges, PATH has faced difficulties in successfully testing ELL students out of the ESOL program. Significantly, PATH’s ESOL population increased from 28% in SY 2019-2020 to an average of 48% in the following 4 years. In tracking a group of 5th-grade students’ overall scores over three years, ACCESS data showed the majority of students remaining in the “Developing” proficiency level. Few students grew beyond the “Expanding” proficiency level in this period at PATH.

Figure 30. PATH ESOL Cohort Proficiency 2021-2024

School Year	Grade	Number of Students Tested	Proficiency Level					
			Entering	Emerging	Developing	Expanding	Bridging	Reaching
2021-2022	5	63	0%	6%	46%	33%	8%	0%
2022-2023	6	60	3%	13%	60%	13%	0%	0%
2023-2024	7	57	3%	14%	64%	17%	3%	0%

PATH has set forth a goal to test at least 15% of its ESOL students out of the program in the current 2024-2025 school year. To reach this goal, PATH has transitioned from grade-level to composite EL groupings designed to better match student abilities. These groupings target student

ESOL needs by proficiency level and small groupings by modality provide stronger emphasis on the reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills necessary for individual EL advancement.

As a part of PATH's literacy efforts, PATH has provided stronger ESOL professional development for non-ESOL staff; teacher-developed strategies then assist students in reading, writing and speaking about core content area curriculum. In training all teachers on common strategies to serve English Learners, regardless of their classroom population, ELL students feel better supported and more welcome in the school environment. Support and consistent curriculum delivery allows students to take more risks in class and make academic gains. PATH has also instituted cross-departmental collaboration efforts designed to incorporate literacy and language development strategies into the Science and Social Studies curriculum.

PATH has recently implemented Instructional Conversations: an ELL Literacy pedagogy developed by the Center for Latino Achievement and Success in Education at the University of Georgia. Over 70% of PATH's staff has been trained in Instructional Conversations at UGA. Instructional Conversation is a collaborative learning model that meets the needs of linguistically-diverse classrooms through conversation-based, small-group instruction. In learning through conversations, students engage more closely and consistently with learning objectives.

A study conducted by UGA finds that ELL students that engaged with the Instructional Conversation pedagogy improved reading standardized test scores 14% above ELL control group peers.³ Improvement in reading ability for ELL students is generally understood to positively affect performance in other content areas. While this intervention has already shown promising anecdotal outcomes, its full effect is likely to show in the next few school years because teacher training has

³ <https://ugaclase-pd.com/our-research#ICs>

taken place over two years in cohort groupings. While ESOL data for the current term raises concern, we expect future gains from long-term interventions.

Outside of the classroom, a Parent Liaison assists teachers in communicating with parents about their children's literacy skills by scheduling parent conferences and providing translation in both oral and written format to support literacy at home. Monthly “Cafecito” events conducted in both English and Spanish allow parents to provide input and ask questions about school policy and practice, which further facilitates literacy progress at home.

Lastly, these challenges were further compounded by an increase in teacher turnover. Beginning in the SY 2020-2021, PATH faced significant turnover, *particularly among teachers with ESOL endorsements and training*. In response, PATH took proactive measures to document and preserve the curriculum, ensuring that key knowledge remained intact despite staff changes. Additionally, PATH leadership revisited and refined hiring practices to better align with the school culture and experience.

Governance

In the current charter term, the PATH governing Board struggled with board leadership retention and continuity. In the recent past, PATH has experienced two periods of dramatic board turnover, once during the 2019-2020 school year and another during the 2021-2022 school year. In both cases, PATH welcomed new Board Chairs. The first Chair transition, which occurred due to retirement, was eased with transition support by Elisa Falco at GCSA. The second transition, which occurred due to unexpected health issues, suffered from a lack of transition planning and infrastructure.

Leadership transitional issues were exacerbated by sudden board resignations, which reduced board membership to three. While the inciting grievance issue that led to the resignations was

properly handled and resolved, this board member shortage caused two primary problems: a reduced capacity to serve and challenges managing board leadership succession and transition. Efforts to address the latter are detailed in Question 10. PATH worked carefully to balance recruitment and growth designed to increase capacity with deliberate alignment with PATH's mission and vision. Thanks to concerted recruitment efforts, the Board increased membership to seven in January of 2024.

PROPOSED CHANGES

10) If the answers given above to questions 1 - 9 reflect a change to any of the following, please provide the rationale for the change:

School Climate and Culture Changes

PATH has, and plans to continue to, improve its school climate and culture by providing students with targeted social emotional support and utilizing intervention and prevention supports for students designated as off-track as determined by grades, attendance and behavioral referrals. Through these interventions, PATH can provide more robust wraparound services designed to ensure both the academic and emotional wellbeing of its student body.

Targeted social emotional supports include Restorative Circles and Instructional Conversations, as detailed previously, and participation in the Breathe for Change Program, which promotes student mindfulness. These interventions and program partnerships center restorative practices; these practices can successfully mitigate disruptive student behavior and identify underlying emotional difficulties preventing student growth.

Additional intervention and prevention support will track student attendance, behavior, and academic performance to identify students in need of additional support. PATH's Principal, Assistant Principal, and counselor will identify these students and collaborate with the MTSS Coordinator to provide students with support in the continuation of services on the tiered level of

support. PATH will also provide incentives on a monthly basis for all students who are meeting goals for attendance, behavior performance, and academic performance. This system uses a holistic approach to student success and wellbeing.

To engage the wider school community in this initiative, PATH will develop Parent/Guardian Sessions/Workshops, professional development opportunities, and staff training focused on supporting students with social and emotional needs aligned with navigating middle school challenges. PATH will also continue to improve its Parent Center, which integrates translation services and incorporates feedback and engagement from all student families.

Operational Changes

Strategic Planning

In its new charter term, PATH will develop a strategic plan designed to identify areas of academic, operational, and financial improvement and to develop strategies and actions plans aligned with PATH's vision and mission. Through engagement of the PATH governing Board, school administration, and PATH staff, this process will first involve robust data and stakeholder input gathering to identify areas of growth and improvement. With this information, PATH leadership will solidify a vision and mission for the future designed to cement organizational longevity. Strategies and action plans created to achieve these goals will utilize PATH's resources, collaborative implementation methods, and tools and metrics for monitoring and evaluating progress.

Beyond improving PATH's performance in the coming term, the strategic plan will create a common language and direction for PATH stakeholders. Engaging the PATH community in developing and implementing our goals will encourage a culture of shared values and direction

while ensuring alignment in implementation between board leadership, school leadership and administration, and school staff.

Governance Changes

Board Succession Planning

PATH's Governing Board is responsible for ensuring that the Board is prepared to guide the school through times of planned and unplanned leadership transition. In the current charter term, PATH experienced one instance of board member turnover, which resulted in leadership instability and poor succession transition. To address this issue and ensure future board stability, efficiency, and consistency, PATH plans to strengthen its governing Board succession planning policies in the new charter term. Succession planning will include the following elements:

- The Board Chair will monitor term expirations of current board members. The Personnel Committee will draft and the Governing Board will approve a plan to recruit and onboard new board members in accordance with Governing Board policies for Board Recruitment and Onboarding and Board Training and Development.
- The Governing Board will aim to identify new board members at least 3 months prior to any planned vacancy.
- The Governing Board will create regular “shadowing” opportunities for current Board members to understand board leadership roles and responsibilities. In the case of a board leadership vacancy, potential new leadership within the board may already be familiar with leadership positions.
- The PATH Governing Board will create written “Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) designed to outline board member responsibilities. In the case of expected

or unexpected vacancies, new board members or new board leadership may refer to these SOPs to reduce onboarding time.

- Additionally, the Governing Board shall continually recruit additional members to serve to better meet the needs of its students and to prepare for unexpected transitions in Board membership.

Committee Structure

While PATH's Governing Board has historically operated successfully as a committee of the whole, it is currently transitioning to a committee structure. As described in Question 4, the three committees include an Academic Committee, Finance Committee, and Governance Committee. The committee structure will allow for more detailed oversight of school areas of operation, more frequent interaction between board members and administrative staff, and a clearer delineation of board member responsibility. During regular committee meetings, board members may advance committee-specific oversight and policy-making directives before bringing proposed action to the committee of the whole for approval. In this way, the committee structure is also designed to improve efficiency during Board meetings.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

- 11) Briefly describe how the school has and will continue with its proposed changes to serve the needs of its students for the upcoming (renewed) charter term.

As DeKalb PATH Academy looks to the future, we are steadfast in our mission to promote the academic, social, and emotional well-being of our students. PATH's history serving our local immigrant and refugee families has created a strong infrastructure of safe, nurturing support designed to uphold our rigorous academic programming. As a charter school, PATH Academy has been able to exercise its broad flexibility to meet the needs of our unique students, including our

majority ELL population, utilizing a rigorous, standards-based, teacher-created curriculum supported by a longer school day, tutoring, flexible grouping, Saturday school, and summer school programs.

PATH has been able to leverage these features and its community partnerships, deep connection and collaboration with student families, and the dedication of its bright staff to mitigate learning loss created by the COVID-19 Pandemic. PATH will continue to adjust its programming to meet student social-emotional needs, promote student academic growth, and close performance gaps seen in the current charter term. In particular, PATH is committed to implementing targeted math curriculum alignment measures, strengthening ESOL programming, closing performance gaps between elementary and middle grade bands, and expanding community-building initiatives.

PATH also looks forward to continuing to strengthen its governance capacity. Through intentional Board re-structuring and comprehensive succession planning, PATH is dedicated to building a Board capable of stronger and more detailed oversight of school academics and operations. The Board's strong relationship with the Leader and administrative team make Board initiatives possible and PATH looks forward to furthering our mission and vision from the top down. To aid this mission, PATH also looks forward to creating and implementing a Strategic Plan rich with community input and deliberate data-based strategies and solutions. In its next charter term, we are excited to deepen our shared vision, language, and drive.

PATH believes that these interventions will support students in continuing to make remarkable gains, which will ultimately continue PATH's 22-year legacy as an anchor in the community.

EXHIBITS

The following Exhibits are required to complete your Charter School Renewal Application Package. Please tab the Exhibits to match the item numbers below. Exhibits should be as limited in size as possible.

1. Attach an official copy of the certificate of incorporation for the required Georgia nonprofit corporation from the Georgia Secretary of State. Please Note: All charter school contracts—including those of start-up and conversion charter schools—must be held by a Georgia nonprofit corporation.
2. Attach a copy of the by-laws for the nonprofit corporation.
3. Attach a copy of the governing Board’s Conflict of Interest Policy.
4. Attach a copy of the governing Board’s Conflict of Interest Form.
5. Attach a completed Accountability Report.
6. Attach a copy of the governing Board’s Governance Training Plan using the governance training memo available on GaDOE’s website.
7. Attach a completed Locally-Approved Charter School Partners Roles and Responsibilities chart. This chart shows the balance of authority between the charter school’s Board and management, as well as the autonomy of the charter school from the district.
8. Attach a copy of any admissions (pre-lottery) application the charter school proposes to use. Pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 20-2-2066 and SBOE Rule 160-4-9-.05, any admissions application must conform to the open enrollment requirement. Therefore, admissions applications should be limited to a student’s name, contact information, home address for the purpose of verifying the student’s residence within the school’s attendance zone, grade level, and information required for any enrollment preference, such as identifying a sibling already enrolled at the charter school. If the charter school proposes to utilize a weighted lottery for educationally disadvantaged students, the admissions application may also include questions tailored to the subgroup(s) the school will offer an increased chance of admission according to the weighted lottery guidance available on GaDOE’s website.
9. Attach a copy of the policy setting annual enrollment, re-enrollment, and lottery deadlines, including a description of the lottery procedures detailing how enrollment priorities will be applied and an assurance of complete transparency in its procedures.
10. Attach the charter school’s annual calendar and the charter school’s daily school schedule.
11. Attach a copy of a sample scope and sequence for a proposed course/grade level
12. Attach a copy of the charter school’s Student Code of Conduct.
13. Attach a copy of the charter school’s Student Discipline Policy and Procedures, including any Positive Behavior and Intervention Supports (PBIS).
14. Attach a copy of the rules and procedures concerning how the school will address grievances and complaints from students, parents, and teachers. Include the role the

governing Board will play in resolving such grievances and complaints. If this is included in another response, please indicate that.

15. Attach a copy of the charter school's Employee Policies and Procedures.
16. Attach proof of the school's insurance coverage, including the terms, conditions, and coverage amounts.
17. Attach a copy of any intended education service provider contracts or arrangements for the provision of education management or support services, including with any EMO, CMO, ESO, etc. Such contracts shall describe the specific services for which the contracting organization is responsible. Such contracts should clearly delineate the respective roles and responsibilities of the management organization and the governing Board in the management and operation of the charter school. Such contracts must also include the fee structure.
18. Attach a copy of any agreements with your local school district or Board of Education (Exhibit 18 - DCSD Assurances and Required Statements). Exhibit 18 – DCSD Assurances and Required Statements may not be altered in any way.
19. Attach a copy of any Letters of Intent and/or agreements detailing any proposed partnerships, including agreements with other local schools/systems for the charter school students' participation in extracurricular activities such as interscholastic sports and clubs.
20. Attach a copy of any MOU/lease/proof of ownership for the school's facility.
21. Attach a copy of the school's Certificate of Occupancy.
22. Attach a copy of the facility's Emergency Safety Plan.
23. Complete and attach the budget template located on the Charter Schools Division's website: Please note that the budget template includes: A monthly cash flow projection detailing revenues and expenditures for the charter school's first two (2) years of operation; A spreadsheet projecting cash flow, revenue estimates, budgets, and expenditures on an annual basis for the first five (5) years of the charter term. Back-up documentation proving the legal reality of additional sources of revenue included in the budget template – i.e., funds other than state and local funding, including bank statements and/or signed grant award letters
24. Attach the résumé for the charter school's Chief Financial Officer.
25. Attach the charter school's signed Assurances Form (see below).
26. Attach the charter school's signed and notarized Affidavit (see below). Attach the charter school's signed Local Board of Education Resolution approving the charter school's application.
27. Attach the charter school's signed Governing Board Resolution approving the charter school's application. This will serve as the formal petition to the SBOE. For conversion schools only, attach the charter school's Confirmation of Teacher and Parent Vote.