

## APPLICATION COVER PAGE

**Check One:**    ☒ X Start-up Renewal        ☐ Conversion Renewal

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

How many charter terms has the school been in existence? 4

**Name of Charter School:** Dekalb PATH 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:** Ginger Williams Board Chair  
**Name Title**

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### **Contact Information for the Person Filling out this Application**

**Contact Person:** Crystal Felix-Clarke Principal and CEO  
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## PAST PERFORMANCE

Complete and attach as Exhibit 27 the Charter School's Annual 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 Annual Report will be presented to the *DeKalb Board of Education* and the State Board of Education with your charter petition, so please ensure it is accurate.

1. [Page# 16](#) 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:
  - a. *Address the school's performance in each year of your current charter term.*
  - b. *Address the school's performance in comparison to traditional schools.*
  - c. *Address the school's performance in comparison to state expectations.*
  - d. *You are urged to use the DCSD Charter School Annual Report Poverty Regression Analysis.*
  - e. *You are urged to include any supporting charts, tables, or graphs that provide quantitative data.*
  - f. *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*
  - g. *Explain how the school plans to address them in the upcoming charter renewal term requested.*
2. [Page# 36](#) Describe the school's current financial situation. In your description:
  - a. *Include an explanation of financial results*
  - b. *Detail any financial successes or struggles the school experienced during the current charter term.*
  - c. *Include any instances of fraudulent behavior or accusations of fraudulent behavior by school staff, governing board members, or anyone else associated with the school. Merely meeting the minimum expectations of an audit is not an acceptable success.*
  - d. *Explain how the school will address any struggles discussed above as well as any outstanding debts.*
  - e. *Explain how the school will allocate any surplus funds.*
3. [Page# 37](#) Provide a brief overview of the school's current governance structure. In your description, you must include:
  - a. *Specific examples of decisions the governing board has made on behalf of the school, within the following areas of authority; financial, resource allocation, personnel, curriculum and instruction, school improvement, and school operations.*
  - b. *Specific examples of decisions the school leader has made on behalf of the school;*
  - c. *How the governing board holds the school leader, any charter partners (ESP/CMO/EMO), and any independent contractors accountable; and*
  - d. *The governing board's training program for the current and proposed charter term. Attach as Exhibit 5 a copy of the board's Governance Training Plan.*

- e. *Full responses to the Governing Board Observations conducted by the DCSD Charter Office as Exhibit 29.*
4. [Page# 41](#) 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.*
  - j. *Ensure the adequate number and qualifications of SPED staff.*
5. [Page# 48](#) Describe how the charter school provides state- and federally-mandated services for English Learners (ELs).
- a. *Reciting the requirements of law and rule is insufficient.*
  - b. *Your description must include the diagnostic methods or instruments that are used to identify and assess those students,*
  - c. *As well as the instructional program that is provided to ELs.*
  - d. *Describe how student progress is monitored post-exit from the ESOL program, including staff roles, frequency, and types of data/documents reviewed.*
  - e. *Identify the thresholds for exiting a student from the ESOL program.*
  - f. *Indicate what if any supports and services are provided to students in the post-exit phase.*
6. [Page # 50](#) Explain how the charter school determines which students need remediation in each core content area, and the frequency in which this is monitored.
- a. *Describe the methods, strategies, and instructional programs the charter school uses to provide remediation for students at risk for academic failure. Include how the structure of the day is impacted to provide intentional remediation.*
  - b. *Describe your multi-tiered support system (such as RTI),*
  - c. *Describe your support system for the gifted and talented.*
  - d. *The description of the multi-tiered support system should include the specific academic and behavior interventions used for different tiers,*
  - e. *Who is responsible for such interventions, and for how long and with what frequency certain interventions are tracked prior to referral for special education?*

7. [Page# 52](#) 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).

a. *How does this discipline and dismissal data compare to the [Office of Civil Rights data](#)?*

	In-School Suspensions		Out-of-School Suspensions		Expulsions	
Ethnicity/Race	Number & Percentage of Total Population					
Latino Hispanic		%		%		%
American Indian		%		%		%
Asian / Pacific Islander		%		%		%
Black / African American		%		%		%
White		%		%		%
Two or More Races		%		%		%
Total Population						

8. [Page# 57](#) Describe in detail any difficulties faced during the charter term that were not already addressed above.

- a. *How the school dealt with such difficulties, and if they remain an issue for the school?*  
b. *Also explain how the school plans to avoid these difficulties during the upcoming charter renewal term.*

### **PROPOSED CHANGES**

If the answers given above to questions 1 - 8 reflect a change to any of the following, please provide the rationale for the change:

A. [Page# 59](#) ACADEMIC CHANGES:

- I. *The academic program and curriculum.*
- II. *The use of waivers/innovations.*
- III. *School programs – this includes Students with Disabilities, Gifted and Talented, English Learners, etc.*
- IV. *Any assessments being used.*
- V. *Any administrative positions.*
- VI. *Use of student achievement data*

B. [Page# 65](#) GOVERNANCE CHANGES:

- I. *The school's governance structure.*
- II. *The school's governing board composition.*
- III. *The school's relationship with an Educational Service Provider or other Charter Partner.*
- IV. *The relationship with the local district.*
- V. *The increase of diversity among the members.*

C. [Page# 66](#) FINANCIAL CHANGES:

- I. *The school's financial structure.*
- II. *The school's CFO.*
- III. *The school's relationship with any creditors (e.g., landlords, investors etc.)*

D. [Page# 66](#) OPERATIONAL CHANGES:

- I. *The school's facilities – this should include any proposed expansion or renovations.*
- II. *The school's attendance zone and any enrollment priorities being used (see O.C.G.A. § 20-2-2066(a)(1)).*
- III. *Whether the school will utilize a weighted lottery to provide an increased chance of admission for educationally disadvantaged students pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 20-22066(a)(1) and State Board Rule 160-4-9-.05(2)(g).*
- IV. *Racial and socioeconomic demographics in an effort to align with the District*
- V. *Any services provided to students such as transportation, food service, etc.*
- VI. *The grades the charter school will serve. Please note this includes adding additional grades or reducing current grades.*

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

9. [Page# 67](#) 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.
- a. *Academic performance*
  - b. *Financial performance*
  - c. *Governance performance*
  - d. *Operational & Organizational performance*



Dekalb PATH  
Academy  
Est. 2002

Charter Renewal Application

July 2020 to June 2025

Submitted to Dekalb County School District on

August 12, 2019

Resubmitted on October 8, 2019

# CHARTER RENEWAL APPLICATION

*Italicized items reflect that which is specific to Dekalb County School District*

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Name of Charter School: Dekalb PATH Academy

Proposed Charter Term Length: Five (5) Years

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

Expected enrollment at the end of the charter term: 368

This application was approved by \_\_\_\_\_ Local Board of Education on \_\_\_\_\_, 201\_\_\_\_

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
<b>Year 1</b>						92	92	92	92					368
<b>Year 2</b>						92	92	92	92					368
<b>Year 3</b>						92	92	92	92					368
<b>Year 4</b>						92	92	92	92					368
<b>Year 5</b>						92	92	92	92					368

**1. State the charter school's mission and describe why this initiative is important to the community it serves. (350 words or less)**

- I. Be specific about the needs of the students, as well as the expectations the District and general community holds for a new school.*
- II. Also provide a brief description of any defining features of the school.*
- III. Include how stakeholders were involved in the petition process and how they will continue participating.*

Since its inception in 2002, Dekalb PATH Academy (PATH-Persevere Achieve Triumph Honor) has been a high quality school option for middle school students in Dekalb County. PATH supports and enhances DCSD's vision, which is to inspire a community of learners. 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. 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

*The remaining 50%-60% of our graduates move on to one of our feeder schools. Below are the approximate percentages and which feeder schools they attend:*

- *Cross Keys HS – 25%-35%*
- *Lakeside HS – 5%-7%*
- *Chamblee International Charter HS – 5%-7%*
- *Clarkston HS – 3%-5%*
- *Dunwoody HS – 3%-5%*
- *Stone Mountain HS - 3%-5%*

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.

New features for the next term include: 1. Becoming a Strengths Finder school, which is a model that emphasizes individuals' strengths to discover talents and true potential, 2. Personalized teacher development and induction, and 3. Implementing a school-wide emotional support dog program. Emotional support dogs are used to support children with social and emotional learning needs, which in turn can assist with literacy development.

The charter renewal process included board members, administrators, teachers, parents and community members. The group met bi-weekly for six months to shape the petition and will continue to be involved through the academic committee of the board to ensure that new features are fully implemented.

**2. Describe the charter school's academic program, specifically focusing on why it is innovative in Dekalb County School District, and more specifically, about the school students currently attend.**  
**(350 words or less)**

- I. *How will this school be academically different from the traditional public schools within the community?* Include mention of any waivers of state law and SBOE (State Board of Education) rule that are needed to implement the academic program.
- II. 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.

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 (GSE). This allows for each teacher to maximize her/his 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 to occur seamlessly. 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 Measures of Academic Progress (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.

PATH uses standards-based end of unit test data and MAP data 3 times a year to assess the impact of flexible grouping and make any changes in placement or instructional accommodations to maximize that impact.

### **Standard Based Assessments**

Content Department Team previously met once a month to discuss content curriculum. However, in our performance assessment for this renewal, we learned that the bulk of these conversations revolved around school events related to content, and not necessarily curriculum and instruction. For the 2019-20, administration partnered with our leadership team to make important changes to how we conduct and facilitate content department meetings in order to maximize this important time. Those changes include:

- Creating a **content schedule** that allows departments to meet biweekly to discuss content and curriculum.
- **Administrative coaching and support** for department leads to develop their ability to successfully facilitate this work. This includes content meeting observations, visitations and feedback to the teams and team leads.

- **Administrative support in unit planning** through co-planning, unit plan review and feedback. Unit plans are now submitted for review by administration and content teams every 6-8 weeks. This comprehensive review includes discussions around planning, instructional strategies, assessment strategies and assessment uses. Ultimately, the teachers will use our summer planning time to review and revise all unit plans for the year, and work with their content teams during pre-planning to incorporate the lens of student data in to any curricular changes or accommodations they believe will maximize instructional impact.
- **Teacher Planning Days (2 additional days per year, 1 per semester)** – to give teachers the necessary collaborative time to work on refining their plans and instructional approaches.

### **MAP Data Review**

PATH teachers review MAP data and collaborate to make any necessary changes in placement, pace or instruction three times a year: August/September, January & April.

- The August/September data dive is used as a data point to place students in their flexible groups for the year. This is especially important for our incoming 5<sup>th</sup> graders to ensure placement in the appropriately paced class in all contents.
- January's data dive is the deepest, as this winter MAP data drives the instructional decisions behind Saturday school student selections, and any flexible group changes deemed necessary to maximize impact for the instructional year.
- April's data dive is used to place students in the appropriate summer programs. We have three summer programs that we can place students in at PATH:
  - **PATH 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Orientation:** This program is exclusively for Rising 5<sup>th</sup> graders accepted to PATH. We use these two weeks to prepare them for the culture and instructional climate integral to PATH. Students learn the PATH chant, meet their peers and teacher, and get a head start on preparing for the year. Families new to PATH also take this opportunity to finalize their decision to join our PATH family and ensure that

PATH is a good fit for them. Although it is rare that a family gives up a seat after being accepted, once in a while a family feels that the rigor and expectations at PATH may be overwhelming for the family and child. Most 5<sup>th</sup> graders get off to a wonderful start, forming bonds and feeling prepared on their first day of school.

- **PATH Rising Scholars:** This is a special program crafted for students who need remediation in order to prepare for the content they will be learning in their upcoming grade. This program is reserved for students that struggled the previous year, failed the state exams or may even be repeating the grade and want to start off strong. The instruction is scaffold and focuses on reteaching and reinforcing foundational skills in Literacy & Math.
- **PATH University** – This is a project-based enrichment program that focuses on activities and cultivates critical thinking in our students. True to its college theme, students that qualify by passing all of there classes get to select their top three choices. They can take up to two classes and the workshops are 2 hours long and last for two weeks. Class seats are limited and selection can be competitive. Students have shown great interest in this program and often times strive to pass all of their classes just to be able to participate.

To ensure that PATH students perform consistently well, cohort data is tracked and regularly reviewed. **Administration** uses both GA state assessment (Milestones) and MAP data to review and analyze cohort data several (3-5) times a year. However, the deepest dive happens at the end of the school year and throughout the summer as we plan for the upcoming year. This particular data dive drives all of the major instructional decisions we make at PATH. This includes but is not limited to:

- Choosing the Academic focus for:
  - School wide instructional initiatives
  - The explicit use of our flexibilities in the areas of: extended time (morning group and tutorial) and extended year (Saturday school & Summer Programs)

- Professional Development and personalized professional development options for content teams and individual staff members.
- Curriculum and Curricular review by content teams and administration

**Content Teams:** Each year, PATH begins their pre-planning with a school wide data dive that assesses the school's growth by grade and cohort. Content teams are then charged with customizing the curriculum for their students based on this data. Throughout the year, content teams will continue to meet biweekly to:

Co-plan, Review Unit Plans & provide Feedback. Unit plans are submitted for review by administration and content teams every 6-8 weeks. This comprehensive review includes discussions around planning, instructional strategies, assessment strategies and assessment use to maximize instructional impact.

PATH non-EOC/EOG content classes link their achievement and growth measures to our school wide initiatives, therefore teachers do assess the impact of their instruction through our school's overall performance. For example, Art class infuses and incorporates written responses into their projects to ensure that the curriculum is aligned with the school's literacy initiative.

In addition, content teams and administration assess achievement and growth in these areas through the review of their respective unit plans – which is required for all contents and teachers at PATH. These comprehensive reviews include discussions around planning, instructional strategies, assessment strategies and assessment use to maximize instructional impact.

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. The learning experience at PATH is culturally affirming for students, which empowers them and better prepares 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.

School culture is driven by morning meetings, which are a form of extended family. The school will further develop this through using the Strengths Finder assessment and emotional support dogs.

PATH utilizes waivers to extend 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. (350 words or less)**

- I.** *Its general partnership structure with an educational service provider (ESP) (if applicable), DCSD and GaDOE, and the school's community interest and need.*

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. A copy of the organizational chart can be found in [Appendix A](#).

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 232. While the waitlist is an indicator of demand, there are other factors to consider. For example, during the last charter term, PATH has increasingly become a hub for community engagement and parent support. Parents at PATH, particularly those who are in the immigrant community have unique needs. PATH's broad flexibilities allow them to provide support that would not otherwise be available to their community. **PATH is able to offer the following supports to our community that may, would or could not necessarily be offered without our flexibilities as a Charter School:**

- **An extended school day and school year.** This is a huge incentive for many of our families because it isn't just great for their children instructionally, but it considerably offsets childcare expenses.
- **Meals:** To support the extended day and extended year programs, PATH also offers **breakfast, lunch and snack** to all of our children – another huge incentive for a community like ours. For many of our students, we provide most of their meals and are proud to do so.
- **Top teaching talent:** PATH hires and maintains talented staff, and most of that staff are career changers with a passion for teaching. Our **certification and hiring flexibilities** allow us to not only hire them, but our **financial flexibilities** allow us to partially sponsor their certification – a considerable incentive for working at PATH.
- **A school counselor that is a certified therapist:** Thanks to our hiring practices, we have been able to hire and maintain a therapy certified school counselor to support our students and their families.
- **PATH's Emotional Support Dog Program (ESD):** PATH offers students who have opted in the opportunity to benefit from a therapy dog certified team that offers interaction with certified dogs that serve as a restorative practice, instructional incentive and who provide lots of joy to our

community. While this is not impossible to do at a traditional school, our Board has used its flexibility to support, monitor, and sponsor (insurance, training and PD etc.) this unique program.

Community partner engagement is also on the rise at PATH. Some of our most meaningful partnerships are discussed in question 3.

## **PAST PERFORMANCE**

Complete and attach as [Exhibit 27](#) the Charter School's Annual 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.

**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:**

- a. Address the school's performance in each year of the charter term.*
- b. Address the school's performance in comparison to traditional schools.*
- c. Address the school's performance in comparison to state expectations.*
- d. You are urged to use the DCSD Charter School Annual Report Regression Analysis*
- e. You are urged to include any supporting charts, tables, or graphs that provide quantitative data.*
- f. 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*
- g. Explain how the school plans to address them in the upcoming charter renewal term.*

### **a. Performance in Each Year of the Charter Term**

#### **Academic Goals**

**Goal 1: During each year of its first five-year charter term, the Charter School shall “beat the odds (BTO)” as determined by a formula measuring expected student growth.**



According to PATH’S charter contract, which was executed in April 2015, “The Beating the Odds analysis is a cross sectional, fixed effects regression model that uses the following factors from the College and Career Readiness Performance Index (CCRPI) school-level dataset, GaDOE student record file, and GaDOE Certified Personnel Information (CPI) data.” DeKalb PATH Beat the Odds for the first three years of its charter contract, which reflects all available Beating the Odds data at the time this application was submitted. PATH maintains a predominantly Hispanic population, with significant numbers of economically disadvantaged students.

**Figure 1: Demographic Factors Impacting BTO at PATH**

<b>DEMOGRAPHIC PERCENTAGE</b>	<b>2015-2016</b>	<b>2016-17</b>	<b>2017-18</b>	<b>2018-19</b>
% of White Students	0%	1%	1%	0%
% of Black Students	10%	15%	15%	16%
% of Hispanic Students	84%	78%	80%	78%
% of Asian/Pacific Islander Students	5%	6%	4%	6%
% of American Indian/Alaskan	0%	0%	0%	0%
% of Multi-Race Students	0%	0%	0%	0%
% of Economically Disadvantaged	98%	96%	96%	97%
% of English Language Learners	35%	39%	43%	33%
% of Students With Disabilities	7%	7%	7%	7%

**Figure 2: PATH CCRPI Scores -2015, 2016, 2017, 2018**

School Year	Elementary School	Middle School	Climate Star Rating	Final School Score	District	State
2018	81.0	71.7	4	74	71.9 ES 67.2 MS	77.8 ES 76.2 MS
2017	70.9	84.2	5	81	67 ES 67.8 MS	72.9 ES 73 MS
2016	80.9	83	5	82.5	62 ES 64.6 MS	71.7 ES 71.5 MS
2015	81.8	81.7	5	81.7	64.8 ES 66.3 MS	76 ES 71.2 MS

**Figure 3: PATH's Beating the Odds Track Record**

School Year	PATH BTO Status
2017-2018	Within Expected Range
2016-2017	BTO
2015-2016	BTO

PATH acknowledges, respects and understands why GOSA has changed it's poverty indicator from the % of free and reduced lunch provided in each school to the percentage of directly certified as economically disadvantaged reported by GADOE to GOSA. In an effort to provide as accurate of an illustration of our community as possible, we acknowledge and refer to both measures. The reason for this is based on the criteria assessed to determine certified economically disadvantaged status – which is the application and approval for government aid, the most common being food stamps. To be as frank and as respectful as possible, the social footprint that applying for government aid leaves behind is a risk that most PATH families are not willing to take unless it is absolutely necessary, given the current political climate towards both immigrant and undocumented immigrants in our country at the present time. Due to this stark reality, we believe that the % of free and reduced lunch at our school, which is based on the lunch application process, is a much more accurate descriptor of the poverty level in our

school community. That being said, we do not question or contest GOSA's measure of Economically Disadvantaged students, we simply would like to clarify that this number only reflects the % of families that have chosen to apply for government aid. To illustrate the difference in measures: PATH Free & Reduced Lunch % is 97%, PATH's percentage of directly certified as economically disadvantaged reported by GADOE to GOSA is 42%.

**Goal 2: The Charter School will demonstrate proficiency and/or improvement on the CCRPI.**

*Measure 1: For new start-up charter schools first opening in 2014 or later, using Year 1 of the charter term to establish a CCRPI baseline, the Charter School's CCRPI score shall be equal to or better than both the state and local district in Years 3-5 of the charter contract.*

*Measure 2: If the school's first year CCRPI score is lower than either both the local district and the State, the school shall have until the end of Year 2 of the charter term to close the gap between the Charter School and whichever score is higher, the local district or the State.*

*Measure 3: In Years 3-5 of the charter term, the Charter School's CCRPI score shall be better than both the State and the local district.*

As demonstrated by Figure 4 below, PATH has out-performed the state and the district during this charter term, except for the 2017-2018 school year, where the state out performed Dekalb Path Academy on the middle school level. In 2018, PATH outperformed the state in the elementary grade band, but not the middle school grade band. The middle school grade band performed 4.5 percentage points lower than the state in 2018. The CCRPI scores for the first charter term are detailed in the below chart.

**Figure 4: PATH CCRPI Scores -2015, 2016, 2017, 2018**

School Year	Elementary School	Middle School	Climate Star Rating	Final School Score	District	State
2018	81.0	71.7	4	74	71.9 ES 67.2 MS	77.8 ES 76.2 MS
2017	70.9	84.2	5	81	67 ES 67.8 MS	72.9 ES 73 MS
2016	80.9	83	5	82.5	62 ES 64.6 MS	71.7 ES 71.5 MS
2015	81.8	81.7	5	81.7	64.8 ES 66.3 MS	76 ES 71.2 MS

The PATH faculty and staff have a strong commitment to data driven decision-making. The schools PLC structure allows for the ongoing review of data and analysis of school-wide trends, which drive school improvement initiatives. During the current charter term the following trends were identified. Corresponding action plans and initiatives are detailed thereafter.

#### **English Language Arts**

During the current charter term, PATH implemented a school-wide focus on English Language Arts (ELA). Due to this special focus, the school finished the charter term with the lowest number of failures in ELA for the entire charter term and the highest number students scoring in the *proficient* and *distinguished* ranges for the entire charter term. While we are making gains, there is still much work to do in terms of closing the reading and writing gaps at PATH.

#### **Science and Fifth Grade Social Studies**

The school wide focus on ELA also positively impacted student performance in science and fifth grade social studies. As a result, the school finished its charter term with the lowest number of failures these areas and the highest number of *proficient* and *distinguished* scores for the entire charter term. As a next step, PATH must continue to focus on cultivating academic language and expanding vocabulary in these areas school wide.

## **Social Studies – 8<sup>th</sup> Grade**

There was a marked decrease in proficient and distinguished learners in Georgia Studies, which has statistically been an area of consistently high achievement. The decline was in part due to the transition of a teacher, with ten (10) plus years experience refining the instruction of Georgia Studies, to an administrative role. This master teacher was succeeded with first year teacher who was new to PATH's method of teacher created curriculum. One trend that has been consistent in analyzing our student performance highlights the impact of teacher turnover and what that specifically means at PATH where teachers author their own curriculum. When teachers start at PATH they are not only new to the school, but also to curriculum writing. Although they inherit curriculum from their predecessor, it must still be customized to fit their pedagogical style.

## **Math**

Math is an area of continued growth for students at PATH. By the fourth year of the current charter term, results showed the highest amount of failures for the charter term and the lowest number of *distinguished* learners. Upon further analysis, the trend was most salient in fifth and seventh grades. In these grades there were major faculty changes during the current term that impacted our advance track math course and our fifth grade beginning learners.

In the 2017-2018 school year, our advanced track math teacher for fifth, sixth, and seventh grade transitioned into retirement. The position was challenging to fill due to specific criteria for the position. It was successfully filled in the 2018-2019 school year; however, it was the teacher's first year teaching advanced track math for these grades. The predecessor for this position, in contrast, had been teaching the course for over ten years.

Another novice math teacher began in the fourth year of the charter term on the fifth grade team. This factor reinforces the trend we found in our data that highlighted the need for a more customized approach to transitioning newer teachers into PATH'S specialized teaching environment.

While PATH has succeeded in addressing concerns with ELA, overall there has been a downward shift in students scoring at the *distinguished learner* level, particularly in Math and Social Studies school wide. PATH continues to meet its contractual obligations to renew the charter; however, additional strategies are needed to close the gap in areas that declined during the current term. In terms of school-wide action plans corresponding to the areas of growth, the school needs to broaden the school improvement foci to include all core subject areas with specific growth targets in each area by addressing the bottom and top quartile of students across content areas. During the next charter term, this goal will be met by putting the following supports into place:

- **Administrative Support of Faculty:** Administration will provide support through a continued focus on 1:1 coaching to support staff and continued, personalized professional development. Departmental support will be provided starting in fifth year of the charter term through the provision of a bi-weekly departmental meeting schedule in which departments will have extended time to plan collaboratively.
- **Refine PLC Work at the Department Level:** Content departments will meet bi-weekly to use data to substantiate and refine teacher-authored curricula with the goals of positively impacting both the bottom and top quartile of the student body. Teachers will leverage their professional learning time to collaboratively plan and share curriculum embedded with critical interventions and scaffolds for the bottom quartile students, and rigorous projects that push the top quartile students to explore and process content that is at and above grade level.
- **Curricular Review:** During the final year of the current term, the administrative team will also regularly review and provide feedback on teacher-authored curricula in real time. Teachers will be sharing unit plans and assessments every five to seven weeks with administration and their respective departments. Administration will be reviewing the curriculum and facilitating the departmental review and refining of content. One of the

challenges at PATH is that due to low teacher turnover, 60-75% of faculty members are in years five to fifteen of their teaching practice, which poses a challenge in terms of professional development and their continued evolution as an educator. One of the ways that administration seeks to meet their needs and customize their professional development is through the facilitated review and reflection on their curricula in real time. Through this support, administration intends to equip veteran teachers with the support they need for continued growth.

- **PATH's theoretical foundation for our curriculum is based on two core instructional beliefs:**
  - **Rigor Is Non-Negotiable and can Transcend Social-Economic Disadvantages -**  
AT PATH we believe that there is no excuse for a lack of rigor, and that there is more than one "PATH" to learning. We are also dedicated to the belief that Rigor, when executed with careful precision, can transcend the socio-economic disadvantages that plague our community and are often times used as a scapegoat for lack luster performance. This is difficult work, but our PATH family is dedicated to consistently and constantly refining curricula to make the highest levels of critical thinking and learning accessible to our children, regardless of the past or lack of resources.
  - **Teacher Authored Curriculum has a greater fundamental impact than borrowed curricula because teachers are fundamentally committed to the success of their work.** Teachers can be coached and developed into writing their own standards based curriculum. When done properly and with proper oversight, this can have transformative results. At PATH we believe that teachers that write their own curriculum are more creative, take healthier and more calculated

instructional risks and are relentlessly dedicated to the success of their work because there is personal connection.

- **New Teacher Induction/Support:** Also in the final year of the current charter term, PATH has invested in a new teacher coach to support teachers in years zero to five. This support will assist teachers new to PATH with becoming acclimated to teaching, learning and school culture. New teachers will also receive targeted support with writing and customizing curriculum to fit their students' needs and the teacher's unique teaching style.
- **Customized Coaching** – PATH's Vice Principal specializes in new teacher induction and development by using new teacher strengths to develop their pedagogy, curriculum writing and collaborative practices. This is done through coaching sessions, written feedback on curriculum, observations, providing support through model lessons and collaboratively planning with their coach. Our Vice Principal takes a hands-on approach with her coaches, meticulously reviewing lesson and unit plans, providing feedback and modeling lessons if need be. She also works to match personalized professional development options outside the school to her coaches based on her knowledge of their strengths.
- **New Teacher Induction Program & Mentorship** This piece is new for the 2019-20 school year and focuses on teachers in two specific cohorts: Teachers in years 0-3 and teachers in years 3-5. The program is led by a mentor and veteran retired PATH teacher who engages and visits her mentees on a regular basis, providing guidance, feedback and support to new teachers, without the additional hat of being their direct report or TKES rater. This program provides a safe space for teachers to voice work through some of the more delicate aspects of not just being a new teacher, but the



nuances of juggling that reality with also being responsible for authoring and revising curriculum, an area that has gone overlooked in the school's past. Through this program and the active coaching that administration has dedicated itself to in the past 3 years, we believe we will see spikes in:

- Teacher retention
- Teacher engagement
- Quality of curriculum
- Frequency and accuracy of making strategic instructional revisions that impact student performance
- Teacher morale

Ultimately, while PATH continues to perform in the top three schools, among schools with comparable demographics, all stakeholders are determined to set a higher bar. In order to truly fulfill the mission and vision of PATH, the school must outperform all schools, not just those with similar demographics. With these plans in place, PATH will accomplish these goals in the next charter term.

#### **PATH's End of Course Assessment Results (EOC)**

**Figure 5: PATH's End of Course Assessment Results, 2018-2019, 2017-2018, 2016-2017, and 2015-2016 School Years:**

**2018-2019 School Year**

High School Course	Number of Students Tested	EOC Results by Proficiency Level					
		Beginning Learner	Developing Learner	Proficient Learner	Distinguished Learner	Developing and Above	Proficient and above
Coordinate Algebra	26	0%	4%	69%	27%	100%	96%
Physical Science	24	0%	13%	88%	0%	100%	88%

**2017-2018 School Year**

High School Course	Number of Students Tested	EOC Results by Proficiency Level					
		Beginning Learner	Developing Learner	Proficient Learner	Distinguished Learner	Developing and Above	Proficient and above
Coordinate Algebra	23	4.3%	8.7%	65.2%	21.7%	95.7%	87%
Physical Science	24	4.2%	16.7%	58.3%	20.8%	95.8%	79.2%

**2016-2017 School Year**

High School Course	Number of Students Tested	EOC Results by Proficiency Level					
		Beginning Learner	Developing Learner	Proficient Learner	Distinguished Learner	Developing and Above	Proficient and above
Coordinate Algebra	24	0%	0%	58.3%	41.7%	100%	100%
Physical Science	25	0%	24%	56%	20%	100%	76%

## 2015-2016 School Year

High School Course	Number of Students Tested	EOC Results by Proficiency Level					
		Beginning Learner	Developing Learner	Proficient Learner	Distinguished Learner	Developing and Above	Proficient and above
Coordinate Algebra	25	0%	12%	64%	24%	100%	88%
Physical Science	25	0%	4%	88%	8%	100%	96%

The most recent administration of the Georgia Milestones End of Course Exam was in Spring 2019. 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. PATH middle school students are also out-performing the high school students in their zoned schools with high levels of student proficiency. The most recent administration of the EOCs yielded achievement consistent with prior years with 100% of students scoring at the *Developing Learner* and above level.

**Figure 6 PATH's End of Grade Assessment Results, 2018-2019, 2017-2018, 2016-2017, 2015-2016 School Years:**

School Year	Subject	Number Tested	Beginning Learners	Developing Learners	Proficient Learners	Distinguished Learners	Developing and Above	Proficient and Above
2018-19	English Language Arts	368	16.0%	39.7%	35.3%	8.7%	83.7%	44.0%
	Mathematics	341	17.3%	45.2%	29.3%	8.2%	82.7%	37.5%
	Science	159	25.2%	34.6%	35.2%	5.0%	74.8%	40.2%
	Social Studies	183	12.6%	51.9%	2.3%	8.2%	62.4%	10.5%

School Year	Subject	Number Tested	Beginning Learners	Developing Learners	Proficient Learners	Distinguished Learners	Developing and Above	Proficient and Above
2017-18	English Language Arts	368	21.2%	40.5%	34.2%	4.1%	78.8%	38.3%
	Mathematics	345	13.6%	50.1%	26.4%	9.9%	86.4%	36.3%
	Science	161	29.8%	47.2%	19.9%	3.1%	70.2%	23%
	Social Studies	185	11.9%	44.3%	31.9%	11.9%	88.1%	43.8%

School Year	Subject	Number Tested	Beginning Learners	Developing Learners	Proficient Learners	Distinguished Learners	Developing and Above	Proficient and Above
2016-17	English Language Arts	368	20.4%	44.0%	29.3%	6.3%	79.6%	35.6%
	Mathematics	344	11.0%	48.0%	22.4%	18.6%	89%	41%
	Science	155	31.0%	36.8%	28.4%	3.9%	69.1%	32.3%
	Social Studies	180	13.9%	43.9%	26.7%	15.6%	86.2%	42.3%

School Year	Subject	Number of tested	Beginning Learners	Developing Learners	Proficient Learners	Distinguished Learners	Developing and Above	Proficient and Above
2015-16	English Language Arts	368	18.5%	42.9%	32.3%	6.3%	81.5%	38.6%
	Mathematics	343	15.7%	40.2%	26.2%	17.8%	84.2%	44%
	Science	343	32.9%	37.0%	26.5%	3.5%	67%	30%
	Social Studies	368	14.7%	42.7%	26.9%	15.8%	85.4%	42.7

PATH has acknowledged and takes very seriously the decline in their CCRPI scores and the increase in beginning learners in ELA & Math contents. We attribute these declines to the following reasons, which were pulled from a root cause analysis.

- Teacher Turnover – While this is not the sole reason for this decline, the 2017 school year was a transitional year that made a significant impact on instruction at PATH. This year, PATH lost some of its most senior and experienced staff after our founder and first school leaders Ms. Suttiwan Cox retired. Among those teachers that left PATH were, 1. Our Advanced Track & Gifted Endorsed ELA Teacher, 6<sup>th</sup> grade 2. Our 5<sup>th</sup> Grade gifted teacher 3. Our 6<sup>th</sup> grade Science Teacher 4. Our 7<sup>th</sup> grade Science Teacher 5. Our Advanced Track and Gifted Math Teacher grades 5-7. We also had our 5<sup>th</sup> grade social studies teacher experience a medical emergency that put her out of the classroom for almost the entire year, starting in September, and our ELA 7<sup>th</sup> grade gifted teacher out on maternity leave from February-May. The school was able to obtain

consistent coverage, but there was still a significant impact on instruction, particularly due to the fact that the advanced track Math position for the and the advanced track ELA positions for 6<sup>th</sup> were not immediately filled until the end of the 2018 school year due to lack of talent in the hiring pool.

- New Teacher induction and training – We did not have the luxury of training the teachers who replaced the outgoing staff due to much turnover during the year, therefore this was a need we acknowledged, but struggled to fill in time for the 2017 school year. In addition, the advanced track Math position for the and the advanced track ELA positions for 6<sup>th</sup> were not immediately filled due to lack of talent in the hiring pool.
- Curriculum Development & Oversight – The last and perhaps the most important detail was that with the hiring of so many new teachers, in key areas, we developed a need to train them in not just pedagogy, but in curriculum writing. Over 75% of our teachers at PATH are career changers, which means that although they have earned or are earning their certifications, they did not have formal training to teach or are going through their formal training while in the classroom. This was an area that was revealed when a significant amount of our foundational and experienced staff left, and where we determined we fell short. We recognized that we needed to put structures into place to support not just new teachers, but teachers that still needed support with curriculum writing. In addition, our staff did not just need support with curriculum development, but needed curricular oversight and a more engaged administration to ensure that standards were being met and feedback was being provided. This work began with the regular submission of lesson plans in the 2018-19 school year, and, now, for the 2019-20 teachers are receiving training and support on the writing of unit plans.

We believe that last root cause is being successfully addressed and plan on continuing this work and seeing an impact on student performance as a result. We also believe that this last root cause may not eliminate things like teacher turnover, but it has decreased significantly after the 2017 school year.

Adding these structures for teacher support and development will lessen the impact teacher transition has on instruction.

## **Organizational Goals**

### **Goal 1: The Charter School will be economically sustainable.**

*Measure 1: Each year, the Charter School will operate in a fiscally sound manner as measured by an external audit that is submitted on time to the Department.*

*Measure 2: Actual and proposed budgets for each school year will demonstrate effective allocation of resources.*

*Measure 3: Yearly balance sheets will demonstrate that the Charter School maintains adequate cash reserves.*

*Measure 4: The Charter School will meet all Generally Accepted Government Accounting Standards (GAGAS) as demonstrated by external, annual audit reports.*

*Measure 5: The Charter School will meet all financial reporting deadlines set by the Department.*

**Figure 7: PATH's Economic Sustainability Metrics**

Measure	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019
<b>Measure 1:</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	TBD
<b>Measure 2:</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Measure 3:</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Measure 4:</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Measure 5:</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	TBD

DeKalb PATH has had an unqualified audit every year of its charter term conducted by McKeivey and Russell, LLC. All audits have been completed and submitted to GaDOE in a timely manner by November 1<sup>st</sup>. PATH's budget is proposed by the Chief Financial Officer (CFO) and

approved by the board after two public hearings. PATH bases the budget off of fixed recurring costs and then adds in any variable costs that may change from one year to the next. Annually, PATH spends about 76% of its budget on student education including teacher salaries. PATH spends 11-15% on facilities costs through its arrangement with Oglethorpe University and about 10% on administration costs. The school allocates approximately 20% of the budget toward transportation, which is vital for the families served at PATH. Transportation costs have increased during the current charter term. PATH secures these services through a buy back contract with Dekalb County School District (DCSD). See [Exhibit 17](#) for the transportation agreement.

PATH maintains a lean administrative team consisting of a Principal/CEO and an Assistant Principal to ensure robust student services, supports, and quality instruction. Every year, PATH maintains over 75 days' worth of cash on hand. PATH is able to meet all of its short-term financial obligations and plan for longer-term financial priorities effectively and efficiently due to its fiscal management. We are able to accurately project enrollment from year-to-year to properly budget. We maintain an efficiency margin of about 11% and a debt to asset ratio between .04% and 2%. During the first four years of the charter term, PATH has adhered to Generally Accepted Government Accounting Standards (GAGAS). As of year four of operations, PATH has met all reporting requirements to the Department.

*PATH Academy has held over the minimum of three month's reserve for the past 5 years. Our current reserve covers 5 months of operating expenses or 100 days – and this includes the \$1 million that we have transferred into a high yield GA Fund 1 account. The GA Fund 1 account has already yielded approximately \$15,000 in earnings since February 2019.*

*Historically, PATH Academy has had a consistent financial track record with no occurrences where the school was not able to fully meet its financial liabilities.*

*PATH's longer-term financial priorities are focused on preparing to purchase a facility for the school. Currently, PATH enjoys and benefits from a very favorable lease agreement with Oglethorpe University, which expires in 2025. While we have not reason to believe that it will not be renewed, we are aware that the time may come where we would need to prepare to budget for the possible purchase of*

*a facility given the rise in property values in our surrounding neighborhood. The Board has been proactive and conservative in its spending and so has the CEO for this reason.*

**Goal 2: The Charter School shall ensure all Governing Board Members receive effective training as required by O.C.G.A. §20-2-2072.**

*Measure 1: All Governing Board members shall participate in initial training and annual training thereafter.*

All governing board members have met their training requirements during this charter term. Training has been conducted in partnership with the Georgia Charter Schools Association (GCSA). Additionally, PATH has also attended the required finance training as conducted by Finance and Budgeting Office of the Georgia Department of Education. The past term and upcoming term training plans are located [Exhibit 5](#).

PATH Academy has held three full day Board retreats in held in October 2017, October 2018, & July 2019 at which the Board trained together to address issues of governance, long term planning both fiscal and organizational, succession planning and in preparation for Renewal. The school is happy to furnish the documents and agendas for our retreats upon your request.

In order to determine training priorities the PATH Board uses a self-assessment that is based on the SBOE approved Standards for Effective Governance of Non-Profit Charter School Boards. This assessment is used to determine areas of growth and gage improvements since the last renewal. Based on the last renewal, areas of growth were for the board to better understand roles and responsibilities, how to hold the school leader effective, consistent adherence to the GA Open Meetings Act.

The Board has also made strides during this charter term to address, improve and sustain strong oversight. While the committee structure is not fully codified at this point, committees are in place and thriving.



PATH 's governing Board meets bi-annually in executive session to discuss the following:

At our fall meeting we discuss, review and provide input on the LKES goals that the leader has developed with her evaluator. Several indicators of success are considered including academic data.

- At our end of year meeting, the Board meets in executive session to discuss and take action on whether the leader has met her goals.
- In between both meetings, the leader meets with her evaluator and reviews her progress towards her goals, providing data and evidence to support her claims. The evaluator updates the Board on progress towards the leader's goals as need. The leader also presents a minimum of 3 times a year to the Board, presenting progress towards her goals and the data to support it.

**Goal 3: The Charter School shall promote a positive school experience that engages students, parents and teachers.**

*Measure 1: According to data reported by the Governor's Office of Student Achievement Report Card, in each year of the charter, the percentage of students absent 6 days or more shall not exceed 10% and shall improve by at least 2 percentage points annually until the percentage of students absent 6 days or more is below 5%.*

*Measure 2: Each year, 90% of parents will indicate that they are at least "satisfied" with the overall quality of their child's education as measured via an annual survey conducted at the conclusion of the school year, in which the options are very unsatisfied, unsatisfied, somewhat satisfied, satisfied, and very satisfied. The survey response rate will be at least 85% of parents surveyed.*

*Measure 3: Each year, 90% of teachers will indicate that they are at least "satisfied" with the overall quality of their job as measured via an annual survey conducted at the conclusion of the school year, in which the options are very unsatisfied, unsatisfied, somewhat satisfied, satisfied, and very satisfied. The survey response rate will be at least 85% of teachers surveyed.*

**Figure 8: PATH Attendance Data per the Governor’s Office of Student Achievement**

School Year	Number of Students	5 or Fewer Days Absent (%)	6 to 15 Days Absent (%)	More than 15 Days Absent (%)	Chronic Absenteeism (%)
2018-2019	368	55.7%	21.2%	1.4%	0%
2017-2018	371	81.1%	18.1	.8	0
2016-2017	381	89	10.8	.3	0
2015-2016	375	89.6	10.4	0	0

PATH’s student attendance rate is high and consistent. The school met attendance goals for each year of the charter term.

The latter two goals are regarding teacher and parent satisfaction. PATH assumed this was included in the school climate survey the GaDOE conducts. Based on the climate scores that are included in CCRPI, PATH made progress in this area. Beginning in spring 2020, PATH will administer satisfaction surveys to parents/guardians and faculty to collect this data, which will be beneficial for school improvement efforts. In the first and second years of the current charter term, PATH earned a climate score of five stars. In year three, the school earned a four star rating. In addition to the climate score ratings, PATH has high student and faculty retention rates. The lack of survey data, to be clear, was a misunderstanding on our part that has been rectified for the 2019-2020 school year. We mistakenly believed that these elements would be measured through our climate survey, and that the satisfaction data would be provided to the school, which was not the case. Beginning in the 2019-2020 school year, PATH will be in fully compliance in this area by administering our teacher and parent satisfaction surveys. We have also gone a step further, by partnering with Gallup to administer a student engagement survey that directly measures the impact of our mission.

### **PATH Academy's Performance in Comparison to Demographically Similar District Schools**

PATH Academy is open to all students in the district; however, the school has traditionally served areas with high immigrant and refugee populations. PATH fifth graders are predominantly zoned for four schools; 1) John Lewis, 2) Woodward, 3) Dresden and 4) Oakcliff. PATH's fifth grade students outperform the majority of their comparison schools, with the exception of Oakcliff, which outperformed PATH on the 2017 CCRPI score by 1.6 percentage points. The greatest gap is between PATH and Dresden, which underperformed PATH in 2018 by 18 percentage points.

**Figure 9: Elementary School Comparative Data**

<b>School Year</b>	<b>State</b>	<b>District</b>	<b>PATH Academy</b>	<b>John Lewis</b>	<b>Woodward</b>	<b>Dresden</b>	<b>Oakcliff</b>
2015	76	64.8	81.8	Not in operation	56.3	54.9	71.3
2016	71.7	62	80.9	Not in operation	60.3	48.8	70.2
2017	72.9	67	70.9	67.0	59.2	57.1	72.5
2018	77.8	71.9	81.0	62.0	65.1	62.9	76.8

The middle school comparison schools are Sequoyah, Freedom and Henderson. PATH middle school students consistently perform higher than their traditional school counterparts. The 2018 CCRPI score; however, has Henderson Middle School performance at the same level as PATH with a score of 71.7. In 2018, the largest gap is between PATH and Freedom Middle, where PATH outperformed by 11 percentage points.

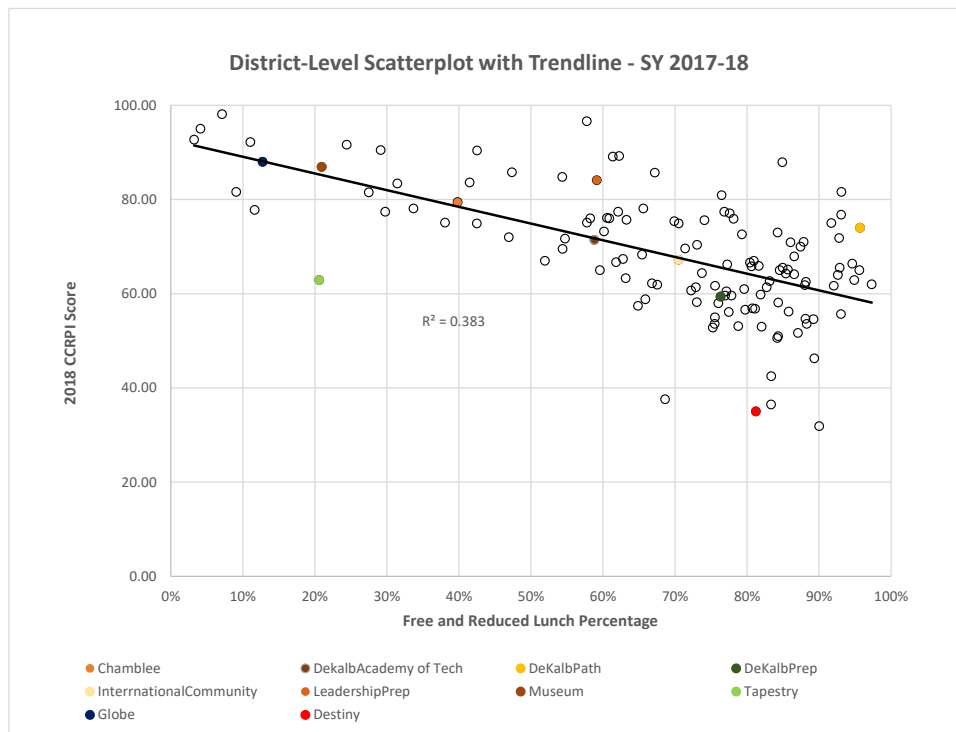
**Figure 10: Middle School Comparative Data**

<b>School Year</b>	<b>State</b>	<b>District</b>	<b>PATH Academy</b>	<b>Sequoyah</b>	<b>Freedom</b>	<b>Henderson</b>
2015	71.2	66.3	81.7	65.4	56.5	78.8
2016	71.5	64.6	83	64	61.4	74.8
2017	73	67.8	84.2	64.4	65	74.3
2018	76.2	67.2	71.7	65.5	60.7	71.7

## DCSD Regression Data

The district maintains regression analysis data to better understand charter versus traditional school performance. The below chart shows relative performance based on economic status and CCRPI scores.

**Figure 11: DCSD District Level Scatterplot – Regression Analysis**



Describe the school's current financial situation. In your description:

- Include an explanation of financial results.*
- 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.*
- 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 Results**

PATH has maintained positive financial measures throughout its existence. This is in part a result of its lean administrative team and organizational efficiencies. PATH partners with Oglethorpe University to lease its facility for \$145,798.68 per year, on average. This equals \$12,149.89 a month, which is within a reasonable threshold to determine long-term viability.

## **Financial Struggles and/or Successes**

PATH has not experienced financial struggles during the current charter term. During the current term, the school has received various private donations and foundation grants, namely the Coca Cola Grant for earning the GCSA Charter School of the Year award in 2018.

## **Fraudulent Behavior**

To date, there have not been any fraudulent activities at the school. PATH has several mechanisms in place to prevent fraud at the school. These procedures include:

- No petty cash on hand greater than \$100;
- All checks must be written to PATH Academy and are deposited weekly
- All checks written by PATH for greater than \$10,000 must be signed by two people, including the principal, board treasurer, and/or the CFO.
- All mail is opened by the operations manager or the assistant principal and then given to the CFO.

## **Mitigating Challenges /Managing Outstanding Debts**

There were no financial challenges during the current charter term. The school does not have any outstanding debts.

## **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 > 75 days of cash on hand.

*Provide a brief overview of the school's current governance structure.*

**In your description, you must include:**

- a. Specific examples of decisions the governing board has made on behalf of the school, within the following areas of authority;  
  
Financial, resource allocation, personnel, curriculum and instruction, school improvement and school operations.*
- b. Specific examples of decisions the school leader has made on behalf of the school;*
- c. How the governing board holds the school leader, any charter partners (ESP/CMO/EMO), and any independent contractors accountable; and*
- d. The governing board's training program for the current and proposed charter term.  
  
Attach as [Exhibit 5](#) a copy of the board's Governance Training Plan.*
- e. Full responses to the Governing Board Observations conducted by the DCSD Charter Office as [Exhibit 29](#).*

**Board Decisions**

The governing board oversees the overall strategic direction and makes high-level policy decisions for the school. The school leader makes day-to-day operational decisions. The governing board is comprised of three committees including academic, financial, and governance. Some recent decisions that the board has made have included electing a new board chair, getting certain long-time board members to either roll of the board at the end of their term or to resign, engage in a more meaningful committee structure that has allowed for more effective board meetings and better oversight. From a logistical perspective, the board has made several strategic and board operating decisions that have allowed for more transparent and effective meetings. These changes have included maintaining an up-to-date website and scheduling board and committee meetings for the year at the beginning of the school year.

The school leader makes all employment recommendations, which are ratified by the board. Administration designs professional development and makes recommendations to the finance committee regarding instructional program allocations. In addition, administration also analyzes school data, presents it to the board, and ensures the school is on track to meet its academic objectives. Some examples of recent decisions made by the principal include: deciding which teachers to renew for the upcoming school year, preparing and executing the growing emotional support dog program at PATH, Revamping the summer school program to make it less remediation focused and more college oriented / focused.

**Figure 12: Board and Leader Decision Examples**

Category	Board	Leader
<b>Finance</b>	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 a budget that allows her to implement the program with fidelity while increasing organizational effectiveness. The leader makes budget recommendations to the board via the finance committee.
<b>Resource Allocation</b>	The board approved the decision to allocate resources to a full-time facilities manager.	The leader vetted the facilities manager and made a recommendation to hire.
<b>Personnel</b>	Each year, the board ratifies all hiring decisions.	Each year, the leader makes recommendation to hire, renew and non-renew teacher contracts.
<b>Curriculum</b>	The board made a resource allocation decision to allow the administrative team to participate in the Strengths Finder Coaching Program	The leader made the recommendation based on data from the Strengths Finder assessment to have the administrative team become Strengths Finder Coaches.
<b>School Improvement</b>	The board ratified the addition of a 5 <sup>th</sup> ELA teacher to address the needs of English Language Learners	The leader analyzed the data and presented it to the board to justify the addition of a 5 <sup>th</sup> ELA teacher
<b>School Operations</b>	<i>See above resource allocation decision.</i>	<i>See above resource allocation decision.</i>

The governing board follows a strict conflict of interest policy and requires board members to disclose all conflicts and sign a conflict of interest agreement annually. PATH's board is especially diverse. On average, PATH maintains about 50% of board members who identify as white and the other 50% are split evenly amongst African American and Latino. Approximately, 60-70% of the board is female at any given time with the remainder being male. Board member resumes are located in [Appendix B](#).

PATH does not engage with EMO/CMO or another major contractor at this point, nor does it plan to. Additionally, the board holds the school leader accountable through the LKES process. The board maintains two members trained in the LKES system all times. The board conducts an annual evaluation of the principal/CEO. The CFO reports to directly to the board, but works closely with the CEO to monitor budget performance. The following provides additional detail on how the board holds the school leader accountable.

- PATH 's governing Board meets bi-annually in executive session to discuss the following:  
At our fall meeting we discuss, review and provide input on the LKES goals that the leader has developed with her evaluator. Several indicators of success are considered including academic data.
- At our end of year meeting, the Board meets in executive session to discuss and take action on whether the leader has met her goals.
- In between both meetings, the leader meets with her evaluator and reviews her progress towards her goals, providing data and evidence to support her claims. The evaluator updates the Board on progress towards the leader's goals as need. The leader also presents a minimum of 3 times a year to the Board, presenting progress towards her goals and the data to support it.

### **Governance Training**

The governing board's training program for the current and proposed charter term. The board has successfully engaged with the Georgia Charter Schools Association to meet its governance training



requirements and continuously improve its practices. The current and proposed Governance Training Plans are located in [Exhibit 5](#).

### **Federally Mandated Services**

**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.*
- j. Ensure adequate number and qualifications of SPED staff.*

### **Evaluation & Identification of Special Education Students**

As part of the DeKalb County School District, PATH utilizes DeKalb's special education services.

PATH Academy does not discriminate against students with disabilities during the admission process and/or other aspects of school operations. PATH Academy ensures that appropriate accommodations and equipment are provided to the students. All students with disabilities are provided with a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) special education in the least restrictive environment (LRE).

According to an arrangement between DCSD and start-up charter schools, DCSD has provided a Lead Teacher for Special Education (LTSE) to oversee the special education program in each start-up charter school. The LTSE provide technical assistance to the special education teachers, regular teachers, and SST chair on a weekly basis. In addition, to the LTSE, PATH is funded for four special education teachers. One serves as a case manager for all PATH special education students. Three certified special education teachers provide services to students according to their Individualized Education Plan (IEPs). The special education case manager acts as the case manager and is responsible for coordinating services, communicates with parents, and holds special education meetings. The remaining three special education teachers, along with dual-certified special education teachers on each grade, are responsible for executing and delivering special education services.

Due to smaller class sizes, smaller school environment, flexible grouping, and a data driven practice, teachers and staff members are able to accurately identify students who lag behind their peers in different subject areas. Teachers also work as a team in implementing the Response to Interventions (RTI) process in their teaching.

### **Identification of Students for Special Education Services**

The process used to identify and place students in the Special Education Program is as follows:

Teachers incorporate GADOE's Response to Intervention: Student Achievement Pyramid of Interventions in their lesson plans. The following timeline is usually implemented:

**Tier 1:** Four to 6 weeks of Standards Based Instruction —Georgia Standards of Excellence (GSE), 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

- a. Identify the Problem
- b. Assess why the problem is occurring
- c. Select an intervention
- d. Select a desired goal

- e. Document progress using RTI forms at least 1 time weekly
- f. Conduct at least 2 parent conferences to discuss concerns and progress
- g. Consult with Student Support Team (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).

The students will be evaluated by a psychologist or evaluator(s) from DCSD. The parents or guardians will be given the general information containing a general description of the types of psychological evaluations. 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 must be assessed in all areas of suspected disability.

#### **Development, Review and Revision of IEPs**

Once the school district's psychologist conducts the 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. 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. At least once a year, but more often if necessary, each student's IEP will be reviewed and updated 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**

The Special Education Program at PATH Academy emphasizes co-teaching and inclusion models that will 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.

In addition to the co-teaching model, the following special education services are also available. PATH offers the following services for our exceptional ed students:

- Resource & Pull out
- 1:1 Para pros as specified on the IEP

PATH also offers the following range of services offered by and in partnership with the district as needed:

- Speech Therapy
- Physical Therapy
- Occupational Therapy
- Vision Services & Support
- Virtual School

The special education and the 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 supports and interventions will be established. PATH's comprehensive plan includes the use of the Districts RTI intervention plan. We follow the RTI tiers to assess the need for intervention and follow that process for addressing the students' needs. If this still does not accomplish our goal of the student accessing the content to achieve academic success, we go through the formal district channels to conduct an IEP meeting and amend the student's plan.

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 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 IEPs, 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 504**

PATH 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 facility cannot be a barrier to students with disabilities accessing programming available at the school. The facility requirements under Section 504 vary depending on the age of the facility. Schools, such as PATH, operating in a building constructed before June 4, 1977, are required to adjust programming to accommodate students with accessibility needs. The PATH facility does have ADA compliant restrooms as well as accessibility at the main and side entrances to the building.

*In terms of how the school serves students on 504 plans, PATH's school counselor oversees the 504 process for all students. For those students who have academic needs as the rationale for their 504, our school counselor works in collaboration with the school's admin, staff, the student as well as their*

*family to craft, share and refine when needed a 504 plan that meets the needs of the student. Some examples of 504 plans that have academic foci at PATH are:*

- *Extended time on tests*
- *Frequent breaks*

### **Students Discipline for Special Education Students**

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 ten 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, then 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.

### **Disputes Involving Parents**

While it is expected that parents and schools work in partnership throughout the special education process, conflicts do arise between schools and parents. When such conflicts arise at PATH, the

school will use the procedural safeguards and dispute resolution options that are already part of Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). IDEA procedures allow formal and informal methods for resolving issues that arise. The informal approach may involve conducting an IEP meeting to discuss and revise the student's IEP. A more formal measure may be filing a complaint under IDEA. Mediation is available to help bring about peaceful agreements between disputing parties. If mediation does not bring resolution to the matter, a due process complaint may be filed. PATH then conducts a resolution meeting within 15 days of receiving notice of the due process complaint. If the conflict cannot be resolved using any of these measures, a due process hearing will be conducted. An impartial, trained hearing officer will preside over the hearing.

### **Confidentiality of Records**

Schools that receive federal and state funds must comply with all privacy acts. At PATH, this means that all personally identifiable data, information and records collected, used, or kept by the school regarding students. Confidentiality also applies to discussions about students and student's records. Faculty and staff who have reason to interact with students' records receive annual training on confidentiality requirements. The school maintains a list of faculty and staff who have access to records with personally identifiable information. PATH administrators have completed required training on student records management.

### **Service Providers and Buy Back Contracts**

According to charter law, DCSD withholds three percent of PATH's annual Quality Basic Education (QBE) allocation to reimburse the district for administrative services provided to charter school. Special education services are included in the three percent fee.

## **Technical Assistance and Training**

PATH special education staff members attend all required DCSD trainings 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 Local Education Agency (LEA) by providing guidance, support, and oversight as needed.

## **English Language Learners**

**Describe how the charter school provides state- and federally-mandated services for English Learners (ELs).**

- a. Reciting the requirements of law and rule is insufficient.*
- b. Your description must include the diagnostic methods or instruments that are used to identify and assess those students.*
- c. As well as the instructional program that is provided to ELs.*
- d. Describe how student progress is monitored post-exit from the English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) program, including staff roles, frequency, and types of data/documents reviewed.*
- e. Identify the thresholds for exiting a student from the ESOL program.*
- f. Indicate what if any supports and services are provided to students in the post-exit phase.*

## **Program Overview, Diagnostic Methods and Instruments**

As part of PATH Academy's target population, English Language Learners (ELLs) are at the heart of the mission. Seventy-eight percent of our students are Hispanic, and in 2018-2019 school year 32% of students qualify for English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) services. As a result, ESOL plays a major role in our educational program.



PATH Academy adheres to Georgia Department of Education guidelines and procedures for the identification, placement, and assessment of English learners. Upon enrollment, students are identified as eligible for ESOL services through their DCSD (or other Georgia school system) permanent record file or through the Home Language Survey (HLS). Students identified as eligible are then screened for placement using the WIDA-ACCESS Placement Test (WIDA – World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment, W-APT – stands for WIDA ACCESS Placement Test). Students qualifying for services are then placed in our ESOL program (described in detail below). Students are assessed annually using ACCESS for ELLs. ACCESS scores are used to determine each student’s placement and readiness for program exit. Students scoring 5 or above on ACCESS are eligible to exit ESOL services. Exited students are then monitored for two years.

### **Instructional Program Provided to English Language Learners**

PATH employs a full-time ESOL coordinator, and each grade level has at least one ESOL teacher. The school also provides regular training to content-area teachers in methods and strategies for accommodation of lessons for ELLs. PATH’s administration also has vast related experience, which aids in the effective implementation and oversight of our ESOL program. In each grade level ELLs are grouped together in a class, in which the content area teacher provides accommodations 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 ELLs.

ELLs who are eligible to be served in the ESOL program are served through a sheltered instructional model during core content classes. They are taught by the ESOL teacher and/or team-taught by the ESOL and language arts teacher. The curriculum for this course is based on the state-adopted WIDA and is aligned with the Georgia State Standards of Excellence, and focuses 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 ELLs have the tools they need to excel in PATH’s rigorous curriculum.

### **Progress Monitoring- Staff Roles, Frequency, Types of Data Reviewed**

The school uses the ACCESS assessment to monitor progress for ESOL students. In addition to ACCESS, the MAP assessment data along with student work is regularly reviewed to determine progress and appropriate flexible group placement. ESOL students interact with their core subject teacher along with an ESOL specialist and in-house coordinator. These individuals make up the team that monitors ELL progress.

### **Threshold for Exiting Students from the ESOL Program**

The threshold for exiting the ESOL program is a passing score on the ACCESS assessment as determined by DCSD. The passing score is variable from year to year-based on district criteria.

### **Post-Exit Supports for English Language Learners**

Upon exit, ELL students continue to receive support for their learning through flexible grouping that specifically addresses their learning needs. They are monitored by their core subject teachers as well as the ESOL team to ensure sustained growth. Students are monitored in this manner for two years after exiting the ESOL program.

### **Student Supports**

**Explain how the charter school determines which students need remediation in each core content area, and the frequency in which this is monitored.**

- a. Describe the methods, strategies, and instructional programs the charter school uses to provide remediation for students at risk for academic failure. Include how the structure of the day is impacted to provide intentional remediation.*
- b. Describe your multi-tiered support system (such as RTI),*
- c. Describe your support system for gifted and talented.*
- d. The description of the multi-tiered support system should include the specific academic and behavior interventions for different tiers,*

- e. *Who is responsible for such interventions, and for how long and with what frequency certain interventions are tracked prior to referral for special education?*

### **Methods, Strategies, and Instructional Programs Used for Remediation**

PATH's approach to flexible grouping provides remediation by strategically grouping students for maximum growth. Data is reviewed frequently and adjustments to flexible groups are made to provide additional challenge and/or remediation as needed. Morning group, afterschool tutorial, Saturday school and summer school are also used for intervention and remediation. MAP data is used to place students in these remediation programs and opportunities. In addition to MAP data, PATH uses the following data sources to support the need for remediation:

- Standards based end of unit tests
- Kahn Academy - Math
- IXL – All content areas

### **Response to Intervention Program – Academic and Behavior Interventions by Tier**

Teachers use GADOE's Response to Intervention: Student Achievement Pyramid of Interventions in their teaching. The following timeline is usually implemented:

**Tier 1:** Four to 6 weeks of Standards Based Instruction —GSE, 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

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

### **Supports for Gifted and Talented Students**

Students who qualify for gifted and talented services at PATH receive instruction from a gifted and certified teacher. PATH follows the same process and DCSD in terms of assessing students for services. The Renzulli, Torrance, Children's Intrinsic Motivation Inventory (CAIMI), and Cognitive Ability Test (CoGAT) assessments are used to determine eligibility. Teachers rate creativity as the third element to qualify for services. Gifted services are embedded in the flexible grouping method with one gifted certified teacher on every grade level.

### **Implementation of Interventions and Monitoring**

Specific interventions used are according to the DCSD RTI frameworks. These interventions are time-bound according to the RTI model used at PATH and DCSD. Monitoring is conducted by the SST chair along with classroom teachers and administration to ensure effective implementation of interventions.

### **Discipline Data**

**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](#)?**

### **PATH Yearly Discipline Data**

The following charts provide annual, disaggregated discipline data for years one through four of the charter term.

**Figure 13: 2018-2019– Discipline Data**

	In-School Suspensions		Out-of-School Suspensions		Expulsions	
Ethnicity/Race	Number & Percentage of Total Population					
Latino Hispanic	31	8.4%	9	2.4%	1	.2%

American Indian	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Asian / Pacific Islander	1	.2%	1	.2%	0	0%
Black / African American	4	1%	0	0%	0	0%
White	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Two or More Races	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
<b>Total Population 368</b>						

## 2017-2018– Discipline Data

	In-School Suspensions		Out-of-School Suspensions		Expulsions	
Ethnicity/Race	Number & Percentage of Total Population					
Latino Hispanic	31	8.4%	20	5.4%	0	0%
American Indian	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Asian / Pacific Islander	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Black / African American	6	1.6%	6	1.6%	0	0%
White	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Two or More Races	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Total Population 371						

## 2016-2017– Discipline Data

	In-School Suspensions		Out-of-School Suspensions		Expulsions	
Ethnicity/Race	Number & Percentage of Total Population					
Latino Hispanic	25	6.6%	15	3.9%	0	0%
American Indian	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Asian / Pacific Islander	1	.3%	0	0%	0	0%
Black / African American	6	1.6%	0	0%	0	0%
White	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Two or More Races	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Total Population 381						

## 2015-2016 – Discipline Data

	In-School Suspensions		Out-of-School Suspensions		Expulsions	
Ethnicity/Race	Number & Percentage of Total Population					
Latino Hispanic	9	2.4%	8	2.1%	0	0%
American Indian	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Asian / Pacific Islander	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Black / African American	1	.3%	0	0%	0	0%
White	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Two or More Races	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Total Population 375						

In addition to subgroup data tracked above, PATH's numbers of students with disabilities who were suspended during the current charter term:

- 2015 – 11.1%
- 2016 – 12%
- 2017 – 3.6%
- 2018 – 9.1%

### **PATH Discipline Data Compared to Office of Civil Rights (OCR) Data for the District**

PATH generally experiences low incidents of in-school and out-of-school suspension. In the current charter term there has only been one due process hearing, which resulted in expulsion from the school. The most recent data available from OCR for the district is from 2015. In terms of in-school suspension (ISS), in 2015, the district assigned ISS to 8% of the total student population. In the 2015-2016 school year, PATH assigned ISS to 3% of the total student population. In terms of out-of-school suspension (OSS), the district assigned this consequence to 11% of the total student population in 2015, whereas, PATH assigned OSS to 2% of the total student population. Statistically speaking, PATH suspends fewer students than the district. Relative to school wide demographics, PATH's data does not demonstrate disparities in terms of students of color receiving disproportionate consequences.

### **Restorative Discipline Practices at PATH**

PATH follows Dekalb County's discipline code to address disciplinary issues. In addition to the discipline code, PATH has the following preventative and restorative practices in place to help students succeed and stay on track:

- **PATH's paycheck system** in our in house student to teacher and student to home connection.

The PATH paycheck gives the student a live day to day pulse check on their behavior and also provides guidance on what to do if they get off track. Deductions and deposits are clearly exhibited week to week on the paycheck, and there are great incentives to continue to earn going forward.

- **Family Meetings:** PATH students and families have opportunities to meet regarding behavior and performance to work as a team and help the child succeed.
- **PATH Support Groups:** PATH has several support groups facilitated by our School Counselor to help students stay on track to succeed.  
  
Our therapy dog also makes visits to the support groups when needed to provide some much needed love.
- **Emotional Support Dog Program:** Cuddles on the couch has been a huge success and motivator to our students, particularly in 5<sup>th</sup> grade. Students must show exemplary behavior or submit a written request (there are explicit instructions for this).
- **PATH Detention:** At PATH, detention is a reflective time where a teacher is available to counsel and support students to complete their work and get back on track.
- **Check In/Check Out (CICO) w. Mr. Gobe:** This program focuses on supporting students who have gotten off track with behavior and/or grades. Students “check in” with the school counselor and plan for success during this brief morning group check in, and then check out at the end of the day during tutorial and make any necessary changes in work or behavior to succeed again the following day. It is simple, the kids love it and it works.

**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 2018-2019 school year 16% of our students were African American, 78% were Hispanic, and 6% were Asian or Pacific Islanders. Ninety-seven

percent of our students qualify for Free or Reduced Lunch (FRL), 33% qualify for ESOL, and 7% qualify 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. We are also fortunate to have a diverse staff and governing board. Our school leadership team is entirely comprised of people of color. The school leader is fluent in Spanish, which is extremely helpful given the parent and student population.

The governing board has two parent members. PATH's governing board is currently working in collaboration with GCSA to use their Board Bank to recruit additional Board members that reflect the community. During our October 2018 Board Retreat we identified this need during a root cause analysis exercise. The Board is committed to fully addressing the issue, however, it had postponed the search to prepare for our renewal. It was determined at that time that adding too many new Board members could compromise our ability to prepare and could be too large of a commitment to brand new Board members. The Board fully intends on resuming the recruitment process shortly after the renewal process is completed, with a focus on recruiting Black, Latino and male members to balance out representation on the Board so that it is more reflective of our school community.

**Figure 14: Board Composition Demographics**

PATH School Board Composition				
School Year	Board Member Names	Gender Composition	Racial Composition	# of years served 0-2 3-5 5-7 7+
2015-2016	1. Mark Miles 2. Mark Zamora 3. Ginger Williams 4. Joseph Patin 5. Chester Wojna 6. Veronica Linder	67% Male 33% Female	50% White 33% Latino 17% Black	3-5; 17% 7+ ; 83%



<b>2016-2017</b>	1. Mark Miles 2. Mark Zamora 3. Ginger Williams 4. Joseph Patin 5. Chester Wojna 6. Veronica Linder	67% Male 33% Female	50% White 33% Latino 17% Black	3-5; 17% 5-7; 16% 7+; 67%
<b>2017-2018</b>	1. Mark Miles 2. Mark Zamora 3. Ginger Williams 4. Joseph Patin 5. Aceli Zenil 6. Nadra Hopkins 7. Laura Toro 8. Eric Johnson 9. Rebecah Morris 10. Kathy Vega 11. Daina Devereaux	36% Male 64% Female	45% White 36% Latino 19% Black	0-2; 64% 7+; 36%
<b>2019-2020</b>	1. Ginger Williams 2. Joseph Patin 3. Aceli Zenil 4. Eric Johnson 5. Rebecah Morris 6. Kathy Vega 7. Daina Devereaux 8. Trey Prophater 9. Amy Botkin	33% Male 66% Female	66% White 22% Latino 11% Black	0-2; 78% 7+; 22%

**Figure 15: Dekalb PATH Staff Demographic Data 2019-2010 School Year**

<b>Demographic Category</b>	<b>Number of Staff Members</b>	<b>Percentage of Total Staff in each Category</b>
Latino	14	30%
African America	15	32%
White	13	27%
Asian	6	9%
Native American	0	0%
Multi-racial	0	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>100%</b>

### **Challenges in the Current Charter Term**

**Describe in detail any difficulties faced during the charter term that were not already addressed above.**

- a. How the school dealt with such difficulties, and if they remain an issue for the school.*

- b. Also explain how the school plans to avoid these difficulties during the upcoming charter renewal term.*

PATH has faced two major changes in the current charter term: 1. The founding school leader left the school and the board hired a new school leader; 2. The board has shifted in terms of on-boarding new board members and old board members being rolled off. The founding school leader retired after 15 years of service to DeKalb PATH. The board hired Crystal Felix-Clarke as the next school leader. Ms. Felix-Clarke was hired as Principal and CEO, positions that were occupied by two different individuals for the prior five years.

The other challenge was board turnover. Two board members were with the school since its inception and rolled off of the board during this term. These board members' departure allowed the rest of the board to step up and learn more about governance at PATH. As a result, PATH has established a more robust sub-committee structure focused on finance, academics, and governance. Additionally, the school leader and board members have worked more closely with the Georgia Charter Schools Association on issues on governance training and support. In addition to using GCSA for governing training support, PATH has partnered with GCSA for monthly governance meetings to gain extra guidance and support. The result has been a stronger governing board that is more active in overseeing the school leader and strategic plan for PATH.

Although these two changes were difficult for the school, they were part of the natural growing process. As such, PATH will go on to face other changes in the future. In order to continue to ensure PATH is able to face those changes, the board will continue to ensure staggered board terms. The board and administration will also continue to foster and maintain high staff retention rate. Currently, PATH has had the following turnover rates for the past three years:

**Figure 16: Staff Turnover Under New Leadership**

School Year	Turnover Rate
2018-2019	8%

2017-2018	17%
2016-2017	23%

## Proposed Changes

If the answers given above to questions 1 - 8 reflect a change to any of the following, please provide the rationale for the change:

### A. ACADEMIC CHANGES:

- I. The academic program and curriculum- See changes below.*
- II. The use of waivers/innovations- No changes in this area.*
- III. School programs – this includes Students with Disabilities, Gifted and Talented, English Learners, etc. - No changes in this area.*
- IV. Any assessments being used. - No changes in this area.*
- V. Any administrative positions. - No changes in this area.*
- VI. Use of student achievement data. - No changes in this area.*

### A. Academic Changes

PATH plans to change three components of its academic design as follows:

1. Becoming a Strengths-Based School
2. Personalized Teacher Development and Induction
3. Emotional Support Dog Program

### Strengths-Based School

Upon taking the helm at PATH Academy Charter, the first initiative Ms. Félix-Clarke explored was using the Gallup Strengths Finder assessment to familiarize herself with the talent and abilities of her staff. When the results of the assessment were reviewed and shared staff wide, the response from staff was overwhelmingly positive. This led to further explorations of how to incorporate this model school-wide. Within three months, Félix-Clarke became certified in coaching both individual and teams using

the Gallup Strengths Assessment. As a Strengths Certified Coach, she used what she learned in training to maximize the talent on staff and build their capacity. The following year, the assistant principal followed suit, earning her certification, and together, both began developing a plan to incorporate strengths based coaching and the strengths assessment into the culture of the school by collaborating to craft personalized professional development for the staff on how to identify and cultivate strengths within themselves, their teams and eventually their students. Since the introduction of Strengths, PATH has experienced reduced staff turnover, increased engagement, and productivity. According to research on the impact of the Strengths model, increases of up to 15% in employee productivity were achieved.<sup>1</sup>

As stated above, the Strengths model has had a tremendous impact on the professional climate at PATH Academy, and has been instrumental in retaining our talent. Post administrative certification as Strengths Finder Coaches and the initiation of the staff wide coaching program at PATH, turnover has substantially decreased, while investment in our in-house talent has increased. This has resulted in putting the necessary structures into place to maximize teacher talent and engagement, which we are beginning to see results in after the 2018-19 performance. One of the most salient connections we are seeing is that individuals and grade teams that most consistently engage in coaching sessions are showing spikes in performance. Here are some of the measures look at and have put into place to measure productivity:

- **Productivity:** Trends in teacher certification, specialist certification, special endorsements and doctorate program completions.
- **Productivity:** % of teachers submitting unit plans that meet PATH's standard (We are collaborating with Leadership this year to create a PATH Unit Plan Rubric for teachers, the highest rating being "exceptional". It should be complete by December 2019.
- **Productivity:** % of highly engaged teachers as evidenced by our Gallup Workplace Engagement Survey.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gallup.com/workplace/242096/focus-people-strengths-increases-work-engagement.aspx>

- **Productivity:** Results of standards-based unit assessments compared to the state assessments.

### **Personalized Teacher Development & Induction Program**

PATH also plans to customize their approach to staff development by personalizing their approach based on teacher tenure, need and interest. PATH will begin this year with a new teacher induction program that organizes new teachers into cohorts (0-2 years & 3-5 years) and assigns them a coach to walk them through the challenges of their first years in the classroom AND how to author as well as customize curriculum based on student need and data. In the upcoming charter term, PATH has contracted with retired a veteran PATH teacher to observe new teachers and give feedback as well as support on a regular basis. This opportunity will allow new teachers to be supported by a veteran PATH teacher who does not have an administrative relationship with the new teacher and does not have consistent employment at the school. Based upon this kind of relationship, we believe new teachers will better understand PATH's expectations and culture, will feel more supported by the community, and will be able to deliver high quality instruction at a higher rate. In addition to the observation and feedback, new teachers are assigned a veteran teacher on staff who can act as their mentor. All teachers regardless of how long they are on staff are observed and given feedback by either the principal or the assistant principal on a regular basis and receive 1:1 Strengths Coaching from administration on a regular basis. For teachers in years five or above in their tenure, administration will be leveraging their 1:1 coaching sessions and departmental PLCs to engage in more personalized teacher support.

Lastly, PATH's summer school programs have evolved throughout this last charter term. In the past, summer school was used for intense remediation for students who are at risk for failing. Presently, PATH offers summer options for students at all levels and pacing. PATH University is the most popular option. PATH University provides college like course options for all students who are successfully passing their classes during the academic school year. This college immersion program highlights PATH college bound culture, helping students to become more college ready. The vast majority of our students will be the first in their family to go to college, and will have little guidance in terms of what college will

be like. PATH University enriches students academically and teaches them the executive skills they need to excel and stay in college. For example, students enroll in PATH University classes before attending summer school and must meet the deadline to "get in." Students, who need remediation, will be required to sign up for mandatory PATH Summer Bridge. This program provides the necessary support they need to get off to a positive start in the upcoming year. Finally, PATH maintains a mandatory two-week summer orientation for incoming 5th graders, which is an essential part of their acclimation to the PATH culture. At orientation, we prepare rising 5th graders for the change in class schedule and the high academic and behavioral standards they will be expected to meet at PATH. They will also have the opportunity to meet their teachers, fellow students and of course, our emotional support dogs.

### **Emotional Support Dog Program**

In studies regarding in schools, students in classes with emotional support dogs demonstrate an increased interest in school and positive attitudes towards school. "Animal Assisted Interventions in the Classroom" Classrooms with emotional support dogs see a decrease in aggressive behavior, increase in calming or self-soothing behaviors, and better attention to the teacher. Lastly, 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 two therapy dog teams in training at the school that 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 play dates with either team in our school dog run, located on the side of the back

field. The play dates are always supervised and during recess so that instructional time is not compromised. During play dates, students have the choice to play ball or participate in tethered dog walk 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. Research shows dogs have numerous beneficial effects on children and adults alike when they have interaction, particularly in the workplace. It is proven that pets in the classroom can accomplish the following:

- Motivate pupils to think and learn
- Foster a sense of responsibility in children
- Teach children nurturing skills
- Encourage a feeling of empathy for others
- Improve academic achievement and increase attention span
- Lead to improved school attendance rates
- Stimulate social integration and social competence
- Reduce stress

***PATH Emotional Support Dogs follow these norms when visiting the school:***

All visiting dogs are clean and up to date on their vaccinations. If the dogs are visiting a classroom, students will be informed before the dogs come to school, as we realize that some students are initially nervous around dogs. All students are given the option to interact or not interact with our dogs. The dogs are not allowed to move around classrooms freely until each and every student is comfortable with the idea.

Students who are not normally very social become more talkative and laugh while the dogs are around, students become calmer when they can pet or hug the dogs and increased work ethic when they are aware that good behavior might allow for the dogs to come back more often.

### **Dogs in Classroom Rules:**

1. Dog should not be loose during transitions.
2. Leave dog in crate or should be on leash in classroom. Not in hallway to avoid confronting children who would not like contact.
3. Dog should always remain in crate or on leash in classroom unless every student has given consent.
4. If a dog is loose in room they should have certification, at minimum, of their Canine Good Citizen or equal obedience and behavioral training.
5. For dog to be in school, on leash, temperament testing must be performed first.
6. Dog should remain contained in classroom during class time.
7. Breaks need to be given to dog in between each class period (or as needed) for at least 10 min.
8. Dog should never be left unattended with children.
9. Child should never be forced to interact with dog and dog should never be forced to interact with child.
10. Students should be given rules for dog interaction before dogs are in classroom (and reminded once dogs are in room).
11. Dogs are to be removed from room or put back in crate if students do not follow the set rules.

For many kids this is a learning experience. Many do not have dogs at home or are not aware of proper behavior around dogs. They should be aware of rules before the dog ever comes to school so that excitement doesn't rule. It is better to have more rules at the beginning and relax them as they learn to be more appropriate.



***Student to Dog Interaction Rules:***

1. Students should never run/rush towards dog or make excessively loud noises.
2. Students should not pick up, grab, pinch or hold onto dog forcibly.
3. Students are not to feed dog.
4. Students should not be in charge of walking or holding onto dog.
5. Students should not force dog to interact with them.
6. Students are encouraged to wash hands or use hand sanitizer after petting dog.  
Especially if headed to lunch afterwards.
7. Students should keep floor clear of belongings as best they can to help prevent dog from ingesting unwanted items.
8. Students should not bother dog when they are in the crate. If crate has a cover, they should not lift it if not given permission.
9. You may want to put a limit of how many kids can pet the dog at one time, especially if the experience is new to the dog.
10. Depending on the dog you may want students to only pet the dog's back and avoid the face.
11. Students should not call dog, but allow dog to come to them (especially during class time and if dog is loose in the room)

**B. GOVERNANCE CHANGES:**

- I. The school's governance structure. – See changes below.*
- II. The school's governing board composition. – See changes below.*
- III. The school's relationship with an Educational Service Provider or other Charter Partner. – Not applicable.*
- IV. The relationship with the local district. – No changes.*
- V. The increase of diversity among board members. – See changes below.*

The board has changed over the course of the charter term to become more diverse. The board has become more diverse racially, and in terms of experience on the board. Over the last charter term the board made a conscious decision to create a more racially diverse board to reflect the communities impacted by the school. See Figure 14 above for the evolution of board diversity over time. The board also made a conscious decision to diversify the board in terms of experience level. PATH had a large number of board members who were on the board for over seven years and as a result we did not have a lot of room to grow the board's diversity and skillset. PATH's board had a number of board members roll off of the board as a result of board terms. Simultaneously, PATH expanded the board's size to account for greater diversity and increase effectiveness of oversight of the school leader and contractual obligations. The board increased from six to nine members.

#### C. FINANCIAL CHANGES:

- I. *The school's financial structure. - **No changes in this area.***
- II. *The school's CFO. – **No changes in this area.***
- III. *The school's relationship with any major creditors (e.g., landlords, investors etc.) - **No changes in this area.***

#### D. OPERATIONAL CHANGES:

- I. *The school's facilities – this should include any proposed expansion or renovations. – **See update below.***
- II. *The school's attendance zone and any enrollment priorities being used (see O.C.G.A. § 20-2-2066(a)(1)). **See update below.***
- III. *Whether the school will utilize 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). – **Not applicable.***
- IV. *Racial and socioeconomic demographics in an effort to align with the District. – **Not applicable.***

V. *Any services provided to students, such as transportation, food service, etc. – **See update below.***

VI. *The grades the charter school will serve. Please note this includes adding additional grades or reducing current grades. – **No changes in this area.***

## **Facilities**

Since its inception PATH has been located in a school building owned by Oglethorpe University. The school enjoys a strong partnership with Oglethorpe and recently renewed the facility lease, which can be found in [Exhibit 19](#).

## **Attendance Zone**

The school's attendance zone has not changed; however, in the prior charter term the school had targeted zip codes. In the new charter term, PATH is going to eliminate those target zip codes due to changing demographics in the formerly targeted areas.

## **Transportation Services**

PATH provides transportation for their students through a buy-back services contract with DCSD. A copy of the transportation agreement can be found in [Exhibit 17](#). Transportation is vital in terms of students being able to access PATH Academy's educational experience.

## **Looking to the Future**

**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.**

PATH is excited to continue meeting the needs of DeKalb's large minority and immigrant community. To continue doing so, we are going to continue providing transportation to our students. Due to gentrification and changing neighborhood demographics, the majority of our students live in Clarkston and Stone Mountain. Later in the future, we will also consider looking at alternative facilities that are closer to the community we serve.

The major checkpoints to measure student and family satisfaction will be our annual student and family engagement and satisfaction surveys that we will be administering through our partnership with Gallup. We are really looking forward to the information and data that these surveys will reap, particularly as we progressively look at year to year and cohort data. In addition to the formal survey process, there monthly opportunities for parents to interface with the administrative team and discuss questions, concerns as well as provide feedback on what is working well for their students. These monthly chats, or “cafecitos” are critical to gaging satisfaction during the course of the school year.

To continue to increase academic and organizational effectiveness, we plan to implement the academic programs and initiatives as stated in question 9. PATH Academy also plans to continue keeping a lean administrative staff so that the funding received goes where it impacts students the most. PATH also plans to continue to invest in quality and personalized professional development for administration and teachers to ensure that high quality curriculum and instruction continue to be offered at PATH.

PATH has a consistent record of strong student achievement and during its history has consistently outperformed the district and the state in all subjects and both grade bands (elementary and middle grades). During the last charter term, there was a decrease in student outcomes which is demonstrated in the table below:

**Figure 17 – CCRPI Performance – PATH Current Charter Term**

School Year	Elementary School	Middle School	Climate Star Rating	Final School Score	District	State
<b>2018</b>	81.0	71.7	4	74	71.9 ES 67.2 MS	77.8 ES 76.2 MS
<b>2017</b>	70.9	84.2	5	81	67 ES 67.8 MS	72.9 ES 73 MS
<b>2016</b>	80.9	83	5	82.5	62 ES 64.6 MS	71.7 ES 71.5 MS
<b>2015</b>	81.8	81.7	5	81.7	64.8 ES 66.3 MS	76 ES 71.2 MS

To address PATH's academic achievement goals, the following features will continued to be offered at the school, 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 (GSE). This allows for each teacher to maximize her/his 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.

New innovations that support increasing student achievement and organizational effectiveness also include:

1. Becoming a Strengths-Based School
2. Personalized Teacher Development and Induction
3. Emotional Support Dog Program

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PATH’s culture of high expectations, new and tested innovations, and superior teaching talent will perpetuate the student experience that families have enjoyed for nearly two decades.



# **LAST PAGE OF APPLICATION**

