

PAULDING VIRTUAL MIDDLE ACADEMY



Virtual Middle Parent & Student Handbook

Updated November 2020

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PROGRAM SUMMARY

The Paulding County School District is excited to announce a new online learning opportunity for middle school students. The 6-8 Paulding Virtual Middle Academy (PVMA) option was created in direct response to the feedback we received from parents/guardians during the COVID-19 pandemic. The academic expectations, rigor, and instructional day will mirror that of a traditional school day (8:15-3:35pm). Students will be required to participate in virtual class sessions along with utilizing an online platform for their daily/weekly assignments and submission of completed work. Students who are taking classes for high school credit such as (Spanish I, Algebra I, Physical Science, 9th Literature) will be enrolled for those courses in the Paulding Virtual Academy (PVA).

Prior to each semester through the Infinite Campus Parent Portal, an online registration form will be issued to parents/guardians during an announced window of time. Parents/guardians must register students for PVMA during the window to allow schools, teachers, and the district to plan appropriately for the following semester. Please note that parents selecting PVMA for their student during the window are committing to virtual instruction for a full semester **(which is a minimum of 18 weeks)**.

Paulding County School District teachers provide instruction to students in both the virtual and face to face options so as the demand for virtual learning changes each semester then adjustments to virtual staffing will also be made. Parents/guardians should be aware that their child may have a completely different schedule of teachers each semester and that some virtual teachers may not be physically located at the school where their child is districted to attend.

The Paulding Virtual Middle Academy will provide the following to students:

- A completely online program facilitated by Paulding County School District teachers
- Live video conferencing and online classes to be completed at home
- Opportunities for participation in live tutoring and supportive instruction
- Access to supportive instruction such as ESOL, ESEP, etc.
- Student grading that is consistent with the Paulding County School District grading policy. Students/Parents will be able to utilize the normal parent portal to view and monitor student academic progress
- Regular opportunities for parent/teacher communication
- Encouragement and monitoring to complete assignments as scheduled
- An opportunity to participate in home school (your normal districted middle school) activities which may include feeder sports programs along with other after school clubs

Paulding Virtual Middle Academy requirements:

- Enrollment in the program for a **minimum of one semester (18 weeks)**
- Internet access and appropriate technology device
- Attending live video conferencing sessions

Paulding Virtual Middle Academy student responsibilities:

- Work daily in assigned courses
- Participation in video conferencing sessions
- Meet daily/weekly pacing guide expectations
- Communicate with teachers via email and video conferences
- Complete weekly academic assignments and submit as required by teachers
- Participate in activities as required by the districted school and PCSD
- There are courses (specifically any that earn high school credit) that will require students to be on a PCSD campus for proctored assessments
- Students will be required to be on a PCSD campus to take required state assessments which may include Georgia Milestone Assessments, and End of Course Assessments

DISTRICT CALENDAR

July

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

27-31 Pre-planning

January

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

1 Holiday Break
4 - Teacher Workday
5 First Day Second Semester
18 - MLK Holiday
18 Days

August

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

3 - First Day of School
21 Days

February

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15*	16*	17*	18*	19*	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28						

3 - Two Hour Early Release
15-19 - Winter Break/Pres Holiday
15 Days

September

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

2 - Two Hour Early Release
7 - Labor Day
21-25 Fall Break
16 Days

March

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

12 - Teacher Workday
15-19 Parent Conferences (2 hr)
22 Days

October

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

12-16 Parent Conferences (2 hr)
22 Days

April

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	

5-9 Spring Break
17 Days

November

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

3 - District Professional Learning
23-27 Thanksgiving Break
15 Days

May

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

28- Last Day of School
28 - Two Hour Early Release
28-29 Graduation Ceremonies
31- Memorial Day
20 Days (92 Days)

December

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

18 - Two Hour Early Release
21-31 Holiday Break
14 Days (88 days)

June

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

1-2 Post Planning

Approved 7/24/18

- Holiday/Schools Closed
 - Conferences (ALL Levels) Students Dismissed 2 Hour Early
 - Teacher Workday/Student Holiday
 - Early Release/All Students Dismissed 2 Hours Early
- *Days marked with an asterisk may be used as inclement weather make-up days

ACADEMIC PROGRESS

Students should attend daily live video conferences and plan to work on all classes daily. Assignments will be posted in Canvas by the virtual instructor and students should plan on 4-5 hours of academic work each day.

Students should regularly communicate with the virtual instructor(s) and check Canvas; parents should regularly check their Parent Portal account to help monitor that work is being submitted by their student.

MIDDLE SCHOOL GRADING SCALE INFORMATION

Numerical Grading Scale

A = 90 - 100

B = 80 - 89

C = 70- 79

F = below 70

Honors Weighting on Numerical Grade Point Average

Additional numeric points are added to 8th student's grades who take honors (High School Level) courses and earn a 70 or higher. The additional 5 points is recorded as part of the weighted numerical average on the student's high school transcript for each course successfully completed. Students taking courses that earn high school credit such as 9th Literature, Physical Science, Algebra I, and Spanish I will take those courses with the Paulding Virtual Academy.

GRADES – COURSE – PLACEMENT

Student grades and course placements are based upon the time of enrollment into PVMA. The academic expectation is for students to complete all course work within the allotted semester.

PVMA will offer a full suite of online classes. The school counselor will discuss with students and families the best course load based upon each student's individual needs.

WITHDRAWAL CRITERIA

PVMA is considered a virtual school choice option; therefore, enrollment may be revoked based on one or more of the following reasons. Appropriate school personnel are authorized to withdraw a student who:

1. Has excessive absences or tardies
 - a. Accumulates 10 unexcused absences per semester
 - b. Fails to consistently login and attend live, video conferences Monday-Friday: This refers to the student being online and engaged for daily required live video conferences.
2. Fails to maintain appropriate academic progress: This refers to the student's current progress towards grade/subject standards at any given time.
3. Student or supervising parent/guardian continually behaves in an inappropriate or disruptive manner during live class sessions and/or infringes upon the rights and privileges of other students participating in the class. This includes, but is not limited to, frequently interrupting classroom instruction, the use of profanity or course language, disrespectful behavior/comments, and inappropriate exposure.
4. If the superintendent or superintendent's designee has determined the student is no longer a resident of the local school system or is enrolled in a private school or home study program.
5. Other just causes

GENERAL ATTENDANCE AND TARDINESS RULES

1. Excessive absences have a significant impact on students' academic performance. The PCSD shall comply with all requirements of state law, State Board of Education rules, and the Student Attendance Protocol that has been developed by the Student Attendance Protocol Committee. **Board Policy JB.** Attendance will be reported and maintained in Infinite Campus, and parents may monitor their student's attendance in Parent Portal.
2. **Attendance will be taken daily for each required video conferencing session.**
3. **Students not in attendance during a scheduled video meeting will be considered absent.** A student is considered absent if not in the virtual conference room at the appointed start time and/or if he/she does not have the necessary materials to begin class. Students who sign in late to the virtual conference room will be considered tardy.
4. Teachers will manage the first three absences or tardy events to class. On the fourth absent or tardy event, the student will be referred to the local school according to the Student Attendance Protocols.
5. Students who visit the physical school building for completion of specific academic or counselor tasks must be checked in/out through the school office by a parent or other authorized adult. All visits to the physical school building must be approved either by the virtual teacher or by local school administration **no less than 24-hours in advance.** Unapproved/drop-in visitation and non-academic visitation are prohibited

INTERNET/EQUIPMENT AND ELECTRONIC NETWORK USAGE

Paulding Virtual Middle students have 24/7 access to most course materials. Please note:

1. Students are offered the opportunity to enhance their education through the use of the internet and other electronic networks. There is no right to privacy as it relates to information accessed, developed, or used on Paulding County School District computers, networks and the internet. Paulding County School District employees may monitor or access information from computer workstations at any time. Paulding County School District does not provide electronic mail, off campus internet access, or equipment to students.
2. Paulding County School District takes precautions to prevent access to materials that may be defamatory, inaccurate, offensive, or otherwise inappropriate in the education center setting. On an unregulated network however, it is impossible to control all material, and a user may discover inappropriate material. Ultimately, the parent/guardian is responsible for setting and conveying the standards that their son/daughter or ward should follow, as the parent/guardian is legally responsible for his/her student's actions. Paulding County School District supports and respects each family's right to decide whether or not to authorize unsupervised access to the Paulding County School District education center's electronic networks. Any violation of the terms and conditions, outlined on the internet and electronic network usage form, will result in immediate revoking of internet and electronic network privileges and may result in termination from the program.

FINANCIAL OBLIGATIONS

There is no charge to participate in Paulding Virtual Middle Academy. **Please note, all prospective Paulding Virtual Middle students must confirm access to their own device and internet connection during school hours before enrollment in the program.** Additionally, students need the ability to print handouts and need access to general school supplies.

Materials, equipment, internet access, or any support that students receive from the school system, are issued to students as borrowed property; consequently, students will be held responsible for damage and/or loss of items issued to them. Any financial obligations must be settled before a student can withdraw, graduate, receive grade reports (including final transcripts), student records, or diplomas. Please note, all prospective PVMS students must confirm access to their own computer and internet connection during school hours before enrollment in the program.

PAULDING VIRTUAL MIDDLE SCHOOL POLICIES AND INFORMATION

Students participating in the PVMA are subject to the rules, regulations, and behavioral expectations of the Paulding County School District as defined by Paulding County School District’s Board Policy. All students are expected to adhere to both Board Policy and local program rules. These policies and rules will serve as guidelines and are subject to administrative discretion when appropriate.

STUDENT DISCIPLINE

Parents/guardians and students are asked to sign a form acknowledging their receipt of the Student Code of Conduct. The Student Discipline Codes of Conduct for Elementary, Middle, and High School Students are contained in Regulation JD-R (2) and JD-R (3). The information regarding rules and regulations of this policy are contained in Regulations JD-R (0), JD-R (1), JD-R (2) and JD-R (3).

It is the intention of the Paulding County School District to establish standards for behavior that expect students to respect each other and school district employees, to obey student behavior policies adopted by the Board and to obey student behavior rules established at each school within the district. Supervising parents/guardians should also model proper behavior during live classes by respecting behavior policies and classroom rules and processes as established by Board policy and the virtual teacher.

PVMA’s primary goal is to educate, not to punish; however, when the behavior of an individual student comes in conflict with the code of conduct, corrective actions may be necessary for the benefit of that individual and the school as a whole.

Accordingly, students shall be governed by policies, regulations and rules set forth in the Paulding County School District Code of Conduct.

The Code of Conduct is effective during the following times and in the following places:

1. At school, on school property, or at school sponsored events at any time
2. Off school grounds at any school activity, function or event and while traveling to and from such events
3. On vehicles provided for student transportation by the school system; and at school bus stops

Students may be disciplined for conduct off campus which is felonious, or which may pose a threat to the school's learning environment or the safety of students and employees.

Parents are encouraged to become familiar with the Code of Conduct and to be supportive of it in their daily communication with their children and others in the community.

As required by the Georgia General Assembly, parents and guardians are encouraged to inform their children on the consequences, including potential criminal penalties, of underage sexual conduct and crimes for which a minor can be tried as an adult.

STANDARDS FOR STUDENT BEHAVIOR

Standards for student behavior are designed to create the expectation that students will behave themselves in such a way to facilitate a positive learning environment. The standards are designed to encourage students to respect each other and school district employees, to motivate students to follow student behavior policies adopted by the BOE, and to obey student behavior rules established at each school within this school district.

BEHAVIORAL EXPECTATIONS

1. Demonstrate courtesy with all individuals regardless of circumstances.
2. Behave in a responsible manner, always exercising self-discipline.
3. Actively engage in live video lessons and avoid any behavior that may be distracting to other learners.
4. Demonstrate positive Digital Citizenship & Safety behaviors.
5. Prepare for each class by bringing appropriate materials.
6. Meet the Paulding County School District Dress Code when on video conferencing (or when physically on campus).
7. Respect the rights and privileges of all students, teachers, and employees of PCSD.
8. Respect the property of others, including Paulding County School District property and facilities.
9. Refrain from committing violations of the Code of Student Conduct.

PROGRESSIVE DISCIPLINE PROCESSES

The Code of Conduct (**Board Policy JD**) provides a systematic process of behavioral correction in which inappropriate behaviors are followed by corrective consequences. Disciplinary actions are designed to teach students self-discipline and to help them substitute inappropriate behaviors with those that are consistent with the character traits from Georgia's Character Education Program. Level 1-2 behaviors will follow the outlined process below. Level 3 behaviors will be directly reported to a school administrator.

Due to the nature of the PVMA's format, disciplinary options are limited to denial (continuation) of access to school district properties including software.

1. First infraction
 - Parent and student notification/warning, parent meeting prior to continuation (teacher reports infraction to school administrator) denial of access up to 3 days
2. Second infraction
 - Parent and student notification, parent conference with school administrator prior to continuation, and possible denial of access up to 5 days
3. Third infraction
 - Parent and student notification, parent/administrator conference prior to continuation, denial of access (5 days)
4. Fourth infraction
 - Removal from PVMS and return to the districted public school

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Parents are encouraged to monitor their student's progress regularly by checking Canvas along with regularly checking Parent Portal. Parents/guardians must be available for conferences, meetings, or phone calls with teachers and administrators as requested. Parents are expected to be actively involved in the behavior support processes designed to promote positive choices and behavior. Parents should avoid disruptive adult behaviors during live conferencing sessions that would disrupt the educational process.

AUTHORITY OF THE SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION

The principal may undertake the corrective measure or measures that are determined to be in the best interest of the student and the virtual school, including student withdrawal, denial of access, adjustments to a student's schedule, adjustments to the building schedule, and course offerings provided any such action does not violate school board policy.

PROGRAM DETAILS

- All Paulding County School District students in grades 6 - 8 who elect not to attend their zoned school due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic are eligible to apply for admission into the PVMA during the open registration window.
- Prospective students not currently enrolled in the PCSD, but living in Paulding County, must first register through Central Registration and then apply for PVMA via hardship following district registration.
- PVMA instruction will be a combination of live video conferencing (synchronous learning), self- paced online instruction (asynchronous learning), online resources, along with opportunities for tutoring.
- PVMA students will have 4 Academic Courses along with 2 Connection courses each semester
- Students will have 24/7 access to most course content
- PVMA students will be required to participate in live video conferencing sessions that will take place during the regularly school day (8:15am-3:35pm) and the schedule will be determined by school administrators/PVMA teachers at each middle school.
- Student grading that is consistent with the Paulding County School District grading policy. Students/Parents will be able to utilize the normal parent portal to view and monitor student academic progress
- Regular opportunities for parent/teacher communication and requests for tutoring provided the request can be scheduled between the hours of 8:15AM – 3:35PM.
- All students taking classes through PVMA will be required to take any state or district mandated assessments.

SPORTS - CLUBS – EXTRACURRICULAR

- Students will maintain all eligibility requirements established at the time of enrollment into PVMA.
- Students initially enrolling with PCSD and enrolling into PVMA will have an eligibility status of their districted home school.
- Students may not change eligibility once enrolled into PVMA. (HS Feeder Sports Programs)
- There may be opportunities for students to participate in after school clubs/extracurricular activities.
- Please note that there may be limitations for participation in clubs/extracurricular activities contingent upon the individual expectations of each local school program

REGISTRATION PROCESS

Students interested in attending PVMA must complete the required online registration within the designated window prior to the beginning of each semester (Fall/Spring)

PROGRAM MODEL

The PVMA is designed to utilize current technology, live virtual instruction, online resources/software, and teacher support. Students are expected to maintain 100% attendance while in PVMA as measured by participation in live conferencing sessions and consistent completion/submission of assignments.

Students are granted off site access to the curriculum but are not able to access live instruction outside of the scheduled sessions. Pace and academic progress are monitored by the virtual teacher. Students who do not progress adequately in both their participation and their academic progress may be removed from PVMA and returned to the face-to-face learning experience to improve academic outcomes. The following supports will be offered:

The following supports will be offered:

- a. Access to video conferencing and tutoring
- b. Differentiated instruction
- c. Full access to PVMA technology
- d. Full access to internet-based services and software

Students should:

- a. Be able to remain on pace and pass all classes
- b. Have access to adequate technology and internet access from home
- c. Have the ability to communicate via e-mail and video conferencing
- d. Attend daily Video Conferencing Sessions

Students are required to attend daily video conferencing sessions. Students are granted off site access to the curriculum and their academic progress will be monitored by certified middle school teachers. Students who do not progress adequately in both their pace and their academic progress may be removed from PVMA and returned to the face-to-face learning experience to improve academic outcomes.

Please note that online learning requires a highly motivated student with good home support.

Virtual students will need to attend their regular districted middle school when they need to take a test on campus. The number and frequency of tests depends on the course.

PVMS PARTICIPATION CRITERIA

Student and Enrolling Parent/Guardian must reside within the borders of the Paulding Count School District and must apply during the open registration window.

STATEMENT OF PLAGIARISM

Definition of Plagiarism:

Plagiarism in an academic setting occurs when a student uses someone else's language, ideas, or other original (not common knowledge) material without crediting the original author. There are two types of plagiarism:

- **Deliberate Plagiarism:** The most serious offense, involves a deliberate attempt on the part of a student to pass off as his own the writing or ideas of another person (student, parent, published or unpublished author, et al). Straight copying or slight paraphrasing of a source that the student attempts to conceal.
- **Unintentional Plagiarism:** Carelessly or inadequately citing ideas and words borrowed from another source.

Both types of plagiarism are serious violations of the principles of academic integrity. The parents/guardians of students should support their child's efforts through monitoring and guidance; however, parents/guardians should avoid giving their child answers, completing assignments for their child, typing written responses for their child, overly editing student writing assignments, or otherwise doing anything that may present inaccurate data regarding student mastery of grade/subject standards.

Penalties for Plagiarism:

- A student who has unintentionally plagiarized will not receive a grade until citation errors are corrected, at which time he will receive a grade reduction just as he would for any other formatting error. Should a student fail to resubmit the paper with corrections within five school days, he will receive a grade of zero. A pattern of documentation error will be considered as intentional.
- A student who intentionally plagiarizes will receive zero credit for the assignment and will be subject to a disciplinary referral. Recovery will not be given.
- A student who allows another student to copy his or her paper or assists in the act of plagiarism will be subject to disciplinary action.
- A student who allows someone else to complete his/her virtual assignments or assessments will be subject to disciplinary action and may be dismissed from the PVEA.

Frequently Asked Questions:

1. What is the program called?

Paulding Virtual Middle Academy

2. Why did the PCSD decide to develop PVMA

PVMA was developed to meet the educational needs of PCSD students who wanted a virtual option due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

3. If my student was in PVMA first semester, is he/she guaranteed to have the same PVMA teachers the following semester?

No, PVMA staffing is based upon several factors including the number of students who register for PVMA and the number of students who choose in-person instruction.

4. Can students withdraw from PVMA and return to their districted school for in-person instruction?

Transfers from PVMA back into in-person instruction will only occur after the completion of a semester (either Fall or Spring)

5. At what point are students committed to attending PVMA for Spring Semester 2021?

Students who are registered for PVMA are committed to PVMA at the close of the registration window.

6. Will PVMA students have the first 10-days of the semester to return to face-to-face instruction?

No, PCSD students who wish to drop-out of PVMA after the start of the semester will need to have a documented hardship and there must be available space at their districted school.

7. What would be an appropriate device to access the computer software and participate in video conferences?

Laptops, chrome books, desktops, tablets, cell phones. Tablets and cellphones work but can be challenging to navigate compared to laptops, chrome books, or desktops. For video conferencing students will need a device with a camera and microphone.

8. As a student, is there a minimum amount of time each day that I should expect to spend completing assignments and participating in video conferences?

Students will have approximately 2-3 required video conferencing sessions each day and can expect to spend a minimum of 1 hour on each academic class and 30 minutes on each connection class. (Students will have 4 academic classes and 2 connection classes)

9. If I decide that Paulding Virtual Middle School is not for me, will I be able to return to traditional classes at my home school location?

Students are required to remain in the virtual program for a semester (18 weeks) and can return to face to face instruction at their home school the following semester.

10. What courses are offered?

6,7,8 grade Language Arts, Math, Science, Social Studies, Family and Consumer Science, PE, Transition to High School, Health, Career Explorations, Art, and Music Appreciation. Students who meet district established guidelines will be able to take HS Spanish (7/8 grade), 8th grade students who meet district establish guidelines will be able to take HS Physical Science, Algebra I, and 9th grade literature (note that any course earning high school credit will be offered through the Paulding Virtual Academy)

11. I have a child with an IEP that receives special education services, can my child attend the Paulding Virtual Middle School program?

Yes, as a public school, Paulding Virtual Middle School (PVMS) accepts students with disabilities. Once a student with a disability has been registered with PVMS, the Exceptional Students Education Program (ESEP) coordinator will facilitate an IEP to discuss possible amendments to the student's IEP to reflect acceptance into PVMS. We encourage parents to contact the PCSD Student Services Department at 770-443-8003 prior to registering; Student Services can also be reached at:

studentservices@paulding.k12.ga.us

12. Can my child participate in Band or Chorus at their home school while enrolled in Paulding Virtual Middle School?

No, these classes are not available for students choosing the virtual option

13. What are my responsibilities as a parent?

Parents are encouraged to provide a good learning environment at home, such as a workspace, a good schedule for students to follow, encourage consistent work habits, and regularly check parent portal. Regularly checking parent portal and monitoring their student's completion and submission of assignments in Canvas is essential towards student success in PVMA.