

Parent Leadership Academy

1. What is the purpose of the academy?

After working with children and parents in education for several years I realized that every parent had basically the same goal. Regardless of their race, gender, class, or religion they wanted the best education possible for their child. Armed with this information and three years of research, I developed the Parent Leadership Academy. The original academy began with thirteen parents on March 13, 2008. The PLA was designed to help parents gain the knowledge and skills to function in meaningful leadership roles and represent the "parent voice" that will help shape the direction of their children's education.

2. How the academy is structured...frequency of meetings, types of events, and topics covered.

PLA Level 1 – Meets six times, each meeting last 2.5 hours

<u>DATE</u>	<u>TOPICS:</u>
TBA	Parents: The Important Key to School Success
TBA	GaDOE: Learning Your Child's School System
TBA	Book Study – Leadership Qualities/Learning Styles (Now Discover your Strengths) Part 1
TBA	Book Study – Leadership Qualities/Learning Styles (Now Discover your Strengths) Part 2
TBA	ESEA (Local, State, Federal)
TBA	Title I – Overview
TBA	FT – Barnes & Noble

PLA Level 2 – Meets ten times, each meeting last 2.5 hours

<u>DATE</u>	<u>TOPICS:</u>
TBA	Parents: The Important Key to School Success
TBA	Digging Deeper into ESEA/Title I: State, Local, & Federal Funding
TBA	Book Study – Understanding Poverty (Ruby Payne)/Talking Community Dialogue
TBA	Book Study – Understanding Poverty (Ruby Payne)/Hidden Rules/Building Relationships
TBA	Special Needs Children and the Law
TBA	ESOL Students and the Law/Gifted Students and the Law
TBA	A Deeper Understanding about Gangs and Gang Violence
TBA	School Discipline: Discipline by the Book/2008 Youth Health Survey
TBA	FT – GCPS Alternative School Give West and Gwinnett REgional Youth Detention Center

PLA Level 3 – Meets eight times for 2.5 hours

<u>DATE</u>	<u>TOPICS</u>
TBA	Parents: The Important Key to School Success
TBA	Graduation Criteria (State & Local)/Project
TBA	Book Study – Now Put Your Strengths to Work (Buckingham)/Project
TBA	Book Study – Now Put Your Strengths to Work (Buckingham)/Project
TBA	Material Review and Adoption: How and Why/Project
TBA	Disaggregating Data: How Important is the Data?
TBA	Project Presentations

***Must attend one Board of Education Meeting**

****Must plan and participate in a project that benefits children and/or schools and/or community.**

Parent Leadership Academy

3. Who participates?

Any parent, guardian, educator, or community member can participate in the academy. The maximum class size is 30 members and new classes should begin for all three levels every fall and spring.

*Eventually, members should have to apply to PLA Level 1.

Prerequisite for PLA Level 2 – Complete PLA Level 1

Prerequisite for PLA Level 3 – Complete PLA Level 2

4. What do parents get out of the PLA and how do they use the experience to support their child, school, and community?

The focus of the PLA classes is to provide parents, guardians, educators, and community members with the tools needed to involve them in the education of all children. We work to demonstrate that parent involvement not only reflects the traditional images we grew up with, such as room mothers, field trip chaperones, and/or members of the PTA, but what a true advocate for education looks like.

We teach that parental involvement can also mean Understanding School Accountability and Parental Rights and Responsibilities; Being Part of a School's Decision-Making Process; Attending Parent Group Meetings and Asking Informed Questions at Parent-Teacher Conferences; and/or Connecting Schools with Community Resources.

Parents who attend the academies become more informed and empowered leading to more successful students academically, emotionally, and socially in and out of school and throughout their life.

5. **Building Community . . . The Foundation for Excellence**

No society can remain vital or even survive without a reasonable base of shared values. When community exists, it confers upon its member's identity, a sense of belonging, a measure of security. A community has the power to motivate its members to exceptional performance. Community can set standards of expectations for the individual and provide the climate in which great things happen.

—JOHN W. GARDNER, FORMER
PROFESSOR, STANFORD UNIVERSITY

6. Feedback from parents on their experiences.

"I want us to become a group that goes into the schools and community and works with at-risk students, particularly the African American male students."

PLA Level 1 provided a very strong base regarding the Gwinnett County School System. The NCLB can be very daunting especially if you're just learning about what our Government has laid out for the state to mandate. It can be a bit overwhelming. I thought each class presented a good overall picture of what the County has to offer. It is a LOT of information to cover in only 8 sessions. I often wish we had more time for discussion.

"Now that I understand NCLB, I agree that teachers should be held accountable, but disagree with some of the rigid structuring of the scoring process. I did not realize there was so many scenarios and different situations that are not taken into account, or are simply disregarded in Title I schools."

Parent Leadership Academy

"The academy has successfully rallied all of us together by utilizing our strengths. The Strengthfinder Book and the Learning Style Inventory was a great way for me to understand my strengths and how I learn. The class helped me realize that my children may not have the same strengths, or learn the same way I do. Now I realize how important it is for me to understand my children's strengths and learning style in order to be able to help them better with their school work."

"The new graduation requirements is especially important for uprising 8th grade parents. Ms. Walter's example transcript provided me with a hands-on scenario of the effects of starting out with poor grades and trying to increase the GPA. I'm really glad I was involved in this workshop, I would have never known this information."

I enjoyed being a part of PLA, learning about subjects I had never taken time to explore. It gives me a better perspective of ways I can help my children work for academic success. When my son and I talked about his GPA and tests, I was informed enough to give him good advice. One of the things that stuck out in my mind was discovering how much one failed grade can change a GPA. My son was not doing so well in his math class last year and when I told him how important it was to make a passing grade, he stepped up and did quite well. This year, it has been what has kept him focused on keeping up with his math scores and staying on task.

The Parent Leadership Academy is a wonderful place to gain knowledge as a parent whose child attends a Title I school. The classes are informative. Speakers are knowledgeable. Level 1 gives enough information to bring a greater appreciation for GCPS. I left Level 1 with a heightened level of confidence in the system. I am grateful that my child is a student here. Learning behind the scenes information that keeps the system running gives a parent confidence in the leadership of GCPS. When you know details and specific examples/projects that show how hard people are working to make GCPS the best, you are more forgiving when mistakes do happen. I have a great respect for GCPS after attending the PLA.

Goals for next year: With the completion of year two we have had an overwhelming response to the Parent Leadership Academy. Although this is very exciting for us, it has presented us with the unacceptable problem of putting parents on waiting list. Therefore, we are planning to open a second location for PLA Level 1. This second location will enable those parents who were not able to attend the academy at Radloff MS due to distance issues and/or because of lack of seats will be afforded the opportunity to become a participant in the GCPS Parent Leadership Academy in the fall of 2010.

Favorite Quote:

***Parent leadership is successfully achieved when parents and professionals "Build Effective Partnerships" and share "Responsibility", "Expertise," and "Leadership" in decisions being made that affect families and communities. The parents involved in these collaborations are called Parent Leaders. www.parentsanonymous.org*

