

# GCPS Parent Leadership Academy

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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 is 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 seven times, each meeting last 2.5 hours**

<u>DATE</u>	<u>TOPICS:</u>
TBA	Team Building: PLA Goals, Mission, and Vision
TBA	NCLB (Local, State, Federal)
TBA	Title I – Overview
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	FT – Barnes & Noble
TBA	Discuss, Reflect, & Evaluate

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

<u>DATE</u>	<u>TOPICS:</u>
TBA	Team Building: PLA Goals, Mission, and Vision
TBA	Digging Deeper into NCLB/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 – Give West and Inside the Youth Detention Center
TBA	Discuss, Reflect, & Evaluate

**PLA Level 3 – Meets eight times, each meeting last for 2.5 hours**

<u>DATE</u>	<u>TOPICS</u>
TBA	Team Building: PLA Goals, Mission, and Vision
TBA	Graduation Criteria (State & Local)/ <i>Project</i>
TBA	Book Study – Now Put Your Strengths to Work (Buckingham)/ <i>Project</i>
TBA	Book Study – Now Put Your Strengths to Work (Buckingham)/ <i>Project</i>
TBA	Material Review and Adoption: How and Why/ <i>Project</i>
TBA	Disaggregating Data: Why and How!
TBA	<i>Project Presentations</i>
TBA	Discuss, Reflect, & Evaluate

**\*Level 3 member must attend one Board of Education Meeting**

**\*\*Level 3 member must plan and participate in a project that benefits children and/or schools and/or community.**

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3. What books are used for the book studies?

Level 1 – Now, Discover Your Strengths: by Marcus Buckingham & Donald O. Clifton, Ph.D.

Level 2 – A Framework for Understanding Poverty: by Ruby K. Payne, Ph.D.

Level 3 – Go Put Your Strengths to Work: by Marcus Buckingham

4. What about teaching materials?

Each level has a notebook with information and resources addressing each class. This information and resources was gathered from various websites, books, articles, etc.

*"Permission to Use" was attained for any materials needing such permission.*

5. 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 apply to participate in Parent Leadership Academy "Level 1".

Prerequisite for PLA Level 2 – Complete PLA Level 1

Prerequisite for PLA Level 3 – Complete PLA Level 2

6. 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 they need to involve them in the education of all children. We demonstrate that parent involvement not only reflects the traditional images we grew up with, but it also takes on the role of advocate and partnering.

In addition, we teach that parental involvement also means 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.

7. **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

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### 8. Feedback from parents on their experiences?

"This is really exciting, it is something parents need."

"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."

"I'm not sure about how to write goals, but I want to learn."

"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."

"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 8<sup>th</sup> 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."

"Learning about how teachers view parent involvement from Ms. Sparks was really interesting. When Ms. Sparks said, "teachers want parent involvement, but they do not know exactly how to utilize it," she was right on."

"Hearing Mr. Peri talk about Gangs and the community made me realize that the problem was bigger than I thought. When Mr. Peri said that he normally spoke to parents whose child was already a gang member, truant, and/or in jail, I did not want to believe his words. But, after his presentation I realized I needed to be more involved in my neighborhood and now I know what to look for and who to call."

*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](http://www.parentsanonymous.org)*

