

Academies of Parkway Central

Middle Level Learning Reimagined



Our Mission

The mission of the Parkway School District is to ensure all students are capable, curious, caring and confident learners who understand and respond to the challenges of an ever-changing world.

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Introduction

The information that follows outlines the reimagining of education for students in Grades 6-8 at Parkway Central Middle School. One burning question to consider as we begin this exploration into providing educational choice within a school - "Is the middle school concept still relevant for all students in our pursuit to fulfill our mission?"

In light of our research into Personalized Learning programs, investigations of innovative structural and pedagogical ideas throughout the country, changes required due to the Coronavirus Pandemic, and our own instructional practices continuing to evolve, it may be time to rethink how our middle level education students approach learning.

We believe that a reorganization of the middle level learning environment would help us accomplish the statements below.

Parkway School District - Our Why

*The **MISSION** of the Parkway School District is to ensure all students are capable, curious, caring and confident learners who understand and respond to the challenges of an ever-changing world.*

VISION We succeed when each student and each graduate:

- transfers prior learning to new demands, in and out of school
- is fully prepared for future educational challenges
- is a creative, thoughtful and effective problem solver
- is increasingly a self-directed, skilled and persistent learner
- is a literate and critical consumer of information and ideas
- speaks articulately and listens effectively
- acts out of a strong sense of personal, social and civic responsibility
- seeks to understand the views, values and cultures of others
- works skillfully with others to achieve common goals
- pursues a personal direction based on individual talents and interests



Overview

To succeed in our mission and realize our vision for students, we will expand on our school's traditional middle school structures that began in the mid-1990s in Parkway. These additional philosophies, structures and approaches will provide more options for our community and allow us to join the advancing landscape of public education. This goal could be accomplished through an Academy concept for our middle level students at Parkway Central. The framework would allow school choice within a singular school rather than a one size fits all approach. Each Academy has a unique delivery of learning content and learning environment that we believe promotes certain strengths of students to be reinforced and should be available to families interested in pursuing a new direction for their students. While this concept is new to the Parkway School District at the middle level, we will be joining a myriad of other schools and districts that are recognizing the value of these options for their students and school community.

Common Aspects Across All Academies - we are still ONE



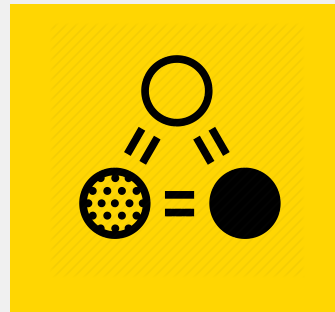
Rigorous Standards

The outcomes for learning would still meet our rigorous standards. The rigor may even increase. The planning for the academies are through a value added approach.



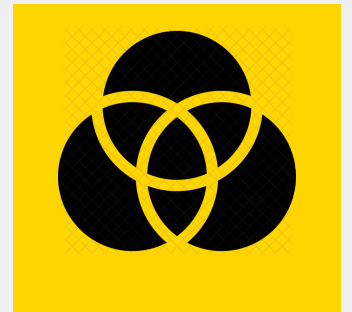
High School Preparation

Students from each academy will be well prepared for their high school experience. In fact, we believe they will be ready for anything that comes next.



Diverse Representation

A goal for each academy is to be representative of our student population. Students from a variety of backgrounds can be successful in each.



Inclusive Practices

While instructional practices may vary, the experiences in the academies are not mutually exclusive to each other. Each academy will explore new ideas collaboratively..

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PC Legacy

This academy is based on the ongoing research and philosophies surrounding middle school education over the last few decades. Five person interdisciplinary teams are in place using a blend of research based methods and strategies. Teachers embrace active, real world learning activities that sustain engagement and develop citizenship skills through a variety of interactions. They work to serve students beyond academics by offering social and emotional learning opportunities. The curriculum is standards based by grade level, district wide and it is evaluated cyclically.



KEY Messages to Describe Legacy

Standards Based Curriculum

Structured Daily Schedule

Interdisciplinary Teams

Multiple Instruction Practices

Best Practices in Middle School Model continue

The PC Legacy Academy encapsulates the middle school model, which includes a core teacher for each content area. Legacy teams use the research-based methods and rigorous, district-curated curriculum, thus guaranteeing instruction that is aligned with the district for that grade level. Within the team structure, teachers continually adjust instruction to the needs of students using any combination of methods and strategies. Students will be exposed to a combination of learning platforms and taking an active role in their education. Students on a Legacy team continue to benefit from two elective class options.

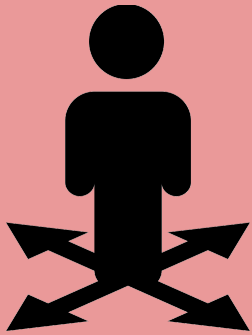
Probable Strengths & Characteristics of Students in Legacy

Notes: None of the academies are designed with a specific type of student in mind. These are simply generalized points to help families make the best choice when considering the academies..

- ❖ Thrives in a predictable and consistent structure in the school day
- ❖ Successful in a variety of student and teacher-directed activities in the classroom
- ❖ Prefers learning through multiple instructional models
- ❖ Likes collaborating with others in the shared learning experience
- ❖ Succeeds with typical pacing of courses
- ❖ Enjoys a variety of classroom environments (including electives)
- ❖ Desires opportunities for real world connections

PC Flex

This academy highlights personalized pathways of learning for all students. Flexible schedules, content, and classrooms allow for teacher-facilitators to adapt instruction to students' needs and monitor their progress on demand. Students will access content and skills using digital platforms in order to efficiently meet the future expectations of their academic careers and beyond. The time shared in-person during the school day will be arranged to support, teach and reteach, reinforce, and monitor the progress of students' learning and engagement. Pathways for success will be developed with students.



Key Messages to Describe Flex

Flexible Learning Structures
 Blended Learning Environment
 Instructionally student centered
 Mastery Learning
 Increasingly self directed
 Flexibly Pacing Learning
 Well developed Learning Management System
 Multi age setting

Interest in accessing education through more flexible learning environments is becoming a sought after characteristic in education.. The reality is that a dynamic environment can work really well for many students. In fact, the ability to do so may very well be preferential. The general theme of the PC Flex will be that the time and pace of learning is not fixed. Teachers begin planning with the end in mind and understand that achieving common and individual goals can take many paths. Support for and monitoring the progress of learning is front and center. Students will gain access to curriculum and direct instruction from their teachers, and will have access to supportive resources for the learning in person and/or online. The daily schedule for this academy will be developed in response to the needs of the students and staff.

Probable Strengths & Characteristics of Students in Flex

Notes: None of the academies are designed with a specific type of student in mind. These are simply generalized points to help families make the best choice when considering the academies..

- ❖ Is a self advocate and comfortable seeking support from teacher
- ❖ Manages time well and makes good use of time
- ❖ Able to function well in a dynamic environment
- ❖ Wishes to set a personal direction for their learning
- ❖ Enjoys attempting and completing tasks in collaborative settings
- ❖ Would enjoy having some control of the pace of learning
- ❖ Likes having content and information accessible online to preview and review

PC Empower

This academy is designed with each individual student's growth in mind (academically and socially). The faculty and staff surrounding the students will remain constant throughout the three year middle school experience by an intentional looping model, and there will be a progressive focus with the students to maintain connection to the school community. Instruction is designed with the goal of empowering students to become co-creators of their learning with their teachers. Curriculum and instruction will be spiraled and scaffolded to build mastery of learning targets and take learning to a personalized level. Students will be coached to become more actively involved in decisions pertaining to their education as their time in the academy progresses.



Key Messages to Describe Empower

Curriculum is spiraled and scaffolded around traditional and personalized approaches

Focus on Personalizing Learning through Learner Profiles, Self Assessment, and Growth

Instructional strategies continually build toward student ownership of learning

Emphasis in knowing students as individuals and developing self-awareness

Multiple assessment methods are developed with deep knowledge of students

The approach to this academy is the integration of rigorous academics through individual students' considerations, teaching growth mindset, developing students' learning profiles, goal setting, and supporting social emotional health. Teachers and other adult support would loop with the students, and instruction will be designed with the focus on students growing into learners who know themselves and how to take ownership of their learning. The students' day would look similar to a traditional schedule with the addition of support/contact time built into the day.

Probable Strengths & Characteristics of Students in Empower

Notes: None of the academies are designed with a specific type of student in mind. These are simply generalized points to help families make the best choice when considering the academies..

- ❖ Typically performs well in class activities and assessments, but seeks relevance in learning
- ❖ Expresses a desire to learn in new and different ways; maybe gets bored with school
- ❖ Performs well on assessments, but often forgets information after test
- ❖ Seeks belonging in a community of Learners
- ❖ Most successful when they can apply learning and has some choice in learning
- ❖ Likes to "show" others what they have learned
- ❖ Is reflective in nature and wants to continue to grow as a person

PC Design

This academy takes on a personalized approach to learning that Parkway has been studying for the last few years. Teachers and students collaboratively design a transdisciplinary learning environment and relevant experiences to achieve high rigor competencies. Students have a voice and choice in demonstrating their mastery of learning through project and problem based learning experiences.



Key Messages to Describe Design

Project Based, Problem Based, Inquiry Based

Flexible learning environment

Mastery of competencies

Student voice and choice central to the learning process

Students are co creators of learning with teachers

Students identify and explore interests

Students have multiple ways to demonstrate learning

Multi age setting

The structure of this academy is a hybrid environment of sorts where students have a guided voice and choice in the strategies and activities in learning competencies applicable to the real world and relevant to the students. Teachers are co designers of learning with the students to find creative and innovative ways to solve larger problems connected to the community. Learning plans and applications dealing with real world issues will be sought through collaborative planning. Activities will be project based with the intent of creating an end product, proposal, and/or presentation. Demonstrating mastery of the competencies can take many forms and be represented in a portfolio of achievements.

Probable Strengths & Characteristics of Students in Design

Notes: None of the academies are designed with a specific type of student in mind. These are simply generalized points to help families make the best choice when considering the academies.

- ❖ Takes joy in designing and creating projects
- ❖ Likes to brainstorm ideas and research information about interesting topics
- ❖ Enjoys solving big problems
- ❖ Takes initiative when an opportunity of interest presents itself
- ❖ Engages better when allowed choice
- ❖ Desires to “show” people what they have learned
- ❖ Works well in small group projects
- ❖ Draws connections between what is learned and the real world
- ❖ Works well in a flexible environment

Quick Comparison of Academies

	 PC-Legacy	 PC-Flex	 PC-Empower	 PC-Design
Focus/Theme	Research Based Middle School Model Based on grade level teaming structure	Blended Learning Flexible Pace, Place, Path Mastery	Student Centered Instruction Ownership of Learning Learner Profile	Personalized Learning Model Creativity and Inquiry Driven Voice & Choice
Schedule	Structured	Flexible	Structured	Flexible
Curriculum	Parkway Curriculum Standards Based	Parkway Curriculum Standards Based	Parkway Curriculum Competencies & Standards	Parkway Curriculum Competency Based Standards
Instruction	Higher Teacher Direction Blend of Strategies	Flexible Pathways Personalized Direction Blended Learning Model strategies	Initially Teacher Directed Increasingly Co Created	Co Creation Project/Problem/ Inquiry based
Content Delivery	In Person Teacher Facilitated	In Person Differentiated	In Person Gradual Release of Ownership	In Person Student Inquiry and Design
Digital Platform	Schoology	Schoology	Schoology	Schoology
Homework	Teacher Created	Teacher Created with Student Choice	Teacher Created Student Choice increases	Co Design Teacher Approved
Assessment	Tests Quizzes Artifacts Projects	Videos Presentations Discussions Demonstration	Projects Tests Quizzes Project Options	Project Based Portfolio Presentation Demonstration
Support	Homeroom Intervene/Enrich	Small Group Reteaching Progress Monitoring	Advisory Small Group Goal Setting	Team Collaboration Project Management Coaching

Sarah

Sarah has always liked school and enjoys being exposed to a variety of adults and peers. She is like a sponge in her environment, and she finds it easy to participate in large and small groups. Sarah enjoys reading independently and puts forth the effort necessary to complete classroom assignments and homework. She is used to the daily routine of school, and follows general classroom rules naturally. School just works for her. Sarah is probably a great fit for PC-Legacy.

Hayden

Hayden has attended several schools due to his family moving frequently. The one constant has been the structure of school. He understands how to navigate the typical school environment, and it is reassuring for him and his family. The family is anticipating another move in about a year and a half. A continually changing environment may not be beneficial for him. Hayden is most likely to benefit from a stable routine. Hayden is probably a great fit for PC-Legacy.

Geoff

Geoff is a very busy student with a lot of demands on his time, inside and outside of school. He can take in a great amount of information quickly and often feels held back by the pace of a traditionally structured day. He wants to use his time wisely and is a self starter. Geoff is successful when provided the opportunity to plan out his day on his own. He even was successful in the virtual environment during the pandemic. He benefits from seeing the lessons and units outlined ahead of time to help him in his planning, and having them available when and where he needs them. Geoff is probably a great student for PC-Flex.

Cynthia

Cynthia finds the structure of the typical school day monotonous. She loses focus and attention at times, and she benefits from small breaks throughout the day. She likes to break her studying and work time up into smaller chunks of time. Cynthia needs the ability to hear the instructions multiple times and often wishes she could “watch” the teacher teach the lesson again. In the past, teachers have needed to spend a lot of time one on one with her to repeat directions. The support she benefits from is small group instruction and getting her questions answered through a cooperative setting. Cynthia is probably a great student for PC-Flex.

Tamara

Tamara is an outgoing student who wants to be deeply involved in her education and always seems to have creative ideas she wants to put into her schoolwork. She enjoys working closely with teachers and, at times, going beyond the scope of the content being discussed. Tamara prefers to make something rather than simply taking a test. She wants to connect her learning with those things outside of the classroom and wants to help solve larger problems in her world.

Tamara is probably a great student for PC-Design.

Dylan

Dylan has never really liked the structure of the day and feels like his interests are important, yet ignored or not relevant to school. When he is interested in something, he has a natural curiosity for learning all he can about the topic. He enjoys sharing his learning with others and wants them to be interested in his work. He wants to build things and show them off. He can easily describe things in great detail, but, at times, needs to work with teachers to organize those thoughts in a presentable format.

Dylan is probably a great student for PC-Design.

Colin

Colin is a student with a gifted mind and often questions why he has to learn these things. He likes learning, but sees little point in most of the activities he does. He is a rule follower, earns pretty much straight A's, but often wonders what the point is. He simply complies with the various expectations from class to class. He knows how to do school, but does not know the value of school down the road. He often forgets what he has learned, and just moves on to prepare for the next test. Colin benefits from "constants" in his life and excels when he has a personal connection with the adults around him. He is motivated by a learning plan made especially for him where he can accomplish individual goals relevant to him. Colin is probably a great student for PC-Empower.

Kylie

Kylie has finally found a place to call home after moving around. Due to all the moving, it has become evident that there are gaps in her learning. She is a bright student, but has missed a lot of content. There is also a good chance she will be reviewing much content she has already learned at other schools. Kylie needs to take advantage of this opportunity for consistency to really grow as a learner these next couple of years. She will benefit from an individualized learning plan to best prepare for high school and from being a part of a consistent caring community.

Kylie is probably a great student for PC-Empower.

Competency Based

Competency-based learning refers to systems of instruction, assessment, grading, and academic reporting that are based on students demonstrating that they have learned the knowledge and skills they are expected to learn as they progress through their education.

Curricular Extensions

Curricular extensions are additions to our existing curriculum and content standards that build on what students are learning during the school day.

Goal Setting

Individual goal setting is a practice that students can employ to make learning self-directed, purposeful and organized. When every individual student sets his/her own goals, he/she has an understanding of what to achieve and can develop strategies to achieve these goals.

Intervention

Specific, intensive, skill-building instructional strategies implemented and monitored to improve a targeted skill and achieve adequate progress in a specific area (academic or behavioral).

Inquiry

Inquiry-based learning is a learning and teaching approach that emphasizes students' questions, ideas and observations. Instructors actively encourage students to share their thoughts and to respectfully challenge, test and redefine ideas. With inquiry-based learning, instructors and students share responsibility for learning.

Learning Management System

A learning management system (LMS) is a software application or web-based technology used to plan, implement and assess a specific learning process. Typically, a learning management system provides an instructor with a way to create and deliver content, monitor student participation and assess student performance.

Learning Profiles

A learner profile is a document, project, or even conversation that helps teachers learn more about their students. Learner profiles may include information such as: Skills, strengths, and interests or Struggles and potential barriers to learning.

Learning Standards

The Missouri Learning Standards define the knowledge and skills students need in each grade level and course for success in college, other post-secondary training and careers. These expectations are aligned to the Show-Me Standards, which define what all Missouri high school graduates should know and be able to do.

Looping

Looping (education): the practice of moving groups of children up from one grade to the next with the same teacher.

Mastery

Mastery learning encourages all students to learn at their own pace as they master skills and progress toward learning goals.

Modules

Module learning is a style of learning in which a particular course is broken down into segments or units. This is a very typical approach when studying an online course as it allows students to get to grips with the subject they are studying by breaking it down into smaller segments.

Personalized Learning

Personalized learning in Parkway will include more flexibility for learners and teachers, more student voice and personalization to meet the individual needs, interests and goals of each student. Personalized learning is designed to offer students relevant experiences that allow them to problem-solve and prepare them for the real world - a world that we all recognize is ever-changing.

Scaffolding

scaffolding refers to a variety of instructional techniques used to move students progressively toward stronger understanding and, ultimately, greater independence in the learning process.

Spiraling

A spiral curriculum can be defined as a course of study in which students will see the same topics throughout their school career, with each encounter increasing in complexity and reinforcing previous learning.