

# FAQs about Paul Duke STEM High School



## What is the Paul Duke STEM High School?

Paul Duke STEM High School (PDS HS) will be a theme high school, opening in the Norcross Cluster in August of 2018. The school's focus will be on rigorous and relevant applications of technology in science, engineering, and mathematics (together, known as STEM) in three main areas:

- Applied Engineering and Robotics
- Communication, Art, and Design
- Digital and Innovative Technology

## Where is the school?

The school will be located at 5850 Peachtree Industrial Boulevard in Norcross.

## Will the school have an attendance zone?

Yes. Students who live in the Norcross cluster attendance zone will choose to attend either Norcross HS or Paul Duke STEM HS. The addition of a second high school within the Norcross Cluster provides much-needed relief to Norcross HS, the district's largest high school with a current enrollment of 3,800 students. Paul Duke STEM HS offers a unique "smaller school" experience not available at Norcross HS.

## Will the feeder middle schools be Summerour MS and Pinckneyville MS?

Yes. Students from Summerour and Pinckneyville middle schools will feed into both Paul Duke STEM HS and Norcross HS. Information meetings will be held at the middle schools about the high school options and 8th graders will be able to select their choice in December.

## How large will the school's enrollment be when the school opens? What is the school's capacity?

We anticipate Paul Duke STEM HS will open with approximately 800 to 900 students, growing to its capacity of 1,200 students over the next few years.

## Will transportation be provided to PDS HS?

Transportation to Paul Duke STEM HS will be provided to students who live in the Norcross Cluster.

## What is a theme school and why the focus on STEM?

As a theme school, Paul Duke STEM HS will offer its students a unique STEM-focused learning experience that

emphasizes technology. (Yes, the "T" is bigger because it's a big deal at our school.) While there are a growing number of STEM schools in the region, the technology focus at this school will be very unique. This focus will transform our students from consumers to producers of technology.

## When a student graduates from Paul Duke, what kinds of college majors will they be prepared for?

One of the best parts of Paul Duke STEM is that graduates will be prepared to major in traditional STEM areas, such as engineering, computer science, and medicine, or in the growing areas of art, design, and digital media. However, because our school covers Gwinnett's AKS curriculum, our graduates will be ready for any college major they wish to pursue.

## What is the benefit of attending a smaller school?

A smaller school experience creates a learning community where teachers really get to know their students. The students are closely connected to each other due to common experiences, which fosters a positive learning environment. When combined with a specific focus area, such as STEM, a small school also supports a focus on each individual student's academic success as well as a commitment to connecting students with engaging, relevant learning.

## Will the school offer the traditional AKS curriculum?

Gwinnett County Public Schools' AKS is a rigorous curriculum that prepares students for college and 21st century careers in a globally competitive future. Paul Duke STEM HS students will learn and demonstrate mastery of the AKS, just like other Gwinnett students, but they will experience the AKS in innovative and transformational ways. Our goal will be to extend learning in the STEM areas, providing our students with experiences and knowledge that will help them unlock their future.

## How will the curriculum at the school differ from what is taught elsewhere?

Paul Duke students will engage in an integrated and rigorous STEM-focused approach to learning the AKS. What does that mean?

- Most of the language arts classes will be taught in connection with social studies and science classes, which will help students make connections and apply their learning.

- In mathematics and science, expectations will be high. All students will be expected to take either an Advanced Placement or Dual Enrollment class as one of their graduation requirements.
- Other differences... Technology use will be high. Students in the same class will work on different assignments. And, students will have opportunities to apply their learning through in-class projects, internships, and design challenges.

### **Are there other differences between this high school and others?**

- Paul Duke STEM HS will have a four-day school week (Monday–Thursday) with every Friday being a digital learning day. The daily schedules will be varied.
- The most significant differences are found in the design of the school and how it connects to the learning. There are three large learning hubs (one on each floor). These large, multipurpose classrooms are each attached to two computer labs and include nearby collaboration rooms. Each of the three STEM programs has dedicated space for instruction and hands-on learning, including a makerspace, a design studio, and advanced computing lab. Our science labs are larger than traditional labs to support research and investigation. And, the fine arts spaces, including our dance studio, are designed for collaboration across subject areas and with access to our large multipurpose theater.
- All students will progress through a four-year research program that begins with seminar courses and culminates with capstone projects and internships.
- All 9th graders will participate in our HS Freshman Experience that pairs language arts and biology in one class and mathematics and introduction to digital technology in another class.
- At the end of 9th grade, Paul Duke students will move into one of our STEM programs, which will drive their learning and skill development through graduation.

### **I am in 10th grade and I am interested in attending Paul Duke. Can I transfer to the school as an 11th grader or is it suited more toward students entering as 9th graders?**

As space is limited, we will only take a certain number of students. Obviously, our incoming 9th and 10th graders will have more time to benefit from our school's focus than older students. But we think our courses and leadership opportunities will benefit students of all ages.

### **What is a technology-infused STEM curriculum?**

A technology-infused curriculum is one that emphasizes students learning *with* and *through* technology. Instead of traditional assignments or worksheets, students will be expected to generate digital products to demonstrate knowledge of our AKS curriculum. The infusion of tech-

nology and focus on application will prepare students for a high-tech and high-skilled future.

### **Will students who attend earn special certificates or diplomas based on their coursework at PDS HS?**

There are no special diplomas that all students will earn, but all graduates will complete a college and career pathway, take at least one college-level math course, and complete an internship or capstone experience. Also, we are providing extensive opportunities for students to earn industry certifications, certificates from colleges, and some students will be able to earn a two-year college degree while in high school.

### **Will the school provide students with computers like they do at GSMST?**

We do not anticipate that we will provide laptops to every student. We are working with industry partners and colleges to determine what students will need in upper-level coursework to ensure that students have the access to technology that they need.

### **Will the school offer services like ESOL, Gifted, Special Education, etc.?**

Yes, we will offer ESOL, special education, and gifted services to our students.

### **Are there any prerequisites or requirements students need to meet in order to be eligible to attend?**

There are no requirements for eligibility to attend PDS HS. However, PDS HS was designed for students who:

- Are passionate users of technology.
- Are creative thinkers and curious critical-thinkers.
- Enjoy applying math and science to solve problems.
- Desire to help others and improve their community.
- Want the school experience to look and feel different.

### **Will there be sports? Other extracurricular activities?**

While our school will not have a traditional sports program, we will have intramurals, clubs, student associations, and service organizations like you might experience at the college level. We'll have Relay For Life, Gwinnett Student Leadership Team, and student council, but you also will find robotics and entrepreneurship clubs, dance and theatre opportunities, and more!

### **How can I learn more?**

Our website is coming! In the meantime, interested students, parents, or community partners may contact: Dr. Jonathon Wetherington, principal, at [jonathon\\_wetherington@gwinnett.k12.ga.us](mailto:jonathon_wetherington@gwinnett.k12.ga.us).

**Paul Duke STEM High School**  
5850 Peachtree Industrial Boulevard, Norcross, GA

