

Policy Handbook



PLATO VIRTUAL
ACADEMY



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LEARNING

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Welcome

Welcome to PLATO Virtual Academy! Our mission is to provide inspired solutions for teaching and learning. We are committed to meeting the diverse needs of students and helping them to successfully complete their virtual programs.

Program Information

1. Program Overview

PLATO Virtual Academy, the premier virtual school solution for grades 7-12, offers a comprehensive online learning environment for today's student. Partnering with schools and districts, PLATO Virtual Academy provides a rigorous, proven curriculum and certified online teachers for students who need flexible learning options.

PLATO Virtual Academy's highly qualified teachers are certified specifically in the subject areas in which they teach and hold the appropriate level of certification required by each state. When a district enrolls students in a PLATO Virtual Academy class, they are assigned a teacher of record. This teacher is responsible for all class instruction, helping students understand the class material, and supporting students so that they stay on track to achieve their academic goals.

2. School Accreditation

PLATO Virtual Academy is accredited by the Northwest Accreditation Commission (NWAC) as a Distance Education School. This accreditation meets rigorous and comprehensive standards for student learning, with a focus on continuous improvement leading to greater student achievement. In addition to ongoing internal program improvement efforts, PLATO will facilitate external validation of the PLATO program on a periodic basis.

3. School Calendar

Plato Virtual Academy operates year round, allowing students to register anytime. PLATO Virtual Academy observes all federal holidays. School administration and teachers are not available on the holidays noted below.

4. School Holidays

- New Year's Day
- Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- President's Day
- Memorial Day
- Independence Day
- Labor Day
- Thanksgiving
- Day after Thanksgiving
- Christmas Day

5. School hours

PLATO Virtual Academy administration is available Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Eastern time. Online teachers are available at various times throughout the day and evening.

6. Enrollment

The 2012 Summer School Session is May 14-September 4. Students must enroll in summer classes by September 4. PLATO Virtual Academy follows to a rolling admissions process, and semester classes are available year round. Class sessions are Fall, Spring, and Summer.

PLATO Virtual Academy Classes

1. Mathematics

Pre-Algebra, Semester A
Pre-Algebra, Semester B
Algebra 1, Semester A
Algebra 1, Semester B
Algebra 2, Semester A
Algebra 2, Semester B
Geometry, Semester A
Geometry, Semester B
Precalculus, Semester A
Precalculus, Semester B
Advanced Calculus, Semester A
Advanced Calculus, Semester B
Consumer Mathematics

2. Reading, Writing, and Language Arts

English 7, Semester A
English 7, Semester B
English 8, Semester A
English 8, Semester B
English 9, Semester A
English 9, Semester B
English 10, Semester A
English 10, Semester B
English 11, Semester A
English 11, Semester B
English 12, Semester A
Basic America History II, Semester B
Civics, Semester A
Civics, Semester B
Geography, Semester A
Geography, Semester B
U.S. Government, Semester A
U.S. Government, Semester B
World History, Semester A
World History, Semester B
Advanced U.S. History, Semester A
Advanced U.S. History, Semester B
American History 1, Semester A
American History 1, Semester B
American History 2, Semester A
American History 2, Semester B
Economics, Semester A
Economics, Semester B

5. Electives

Health
Computer Applications and Technology
Art History and Appreciation
Anthropology I: Uncovering Human Mysteries
Anthropology II: More Human Mysteries Uncovered
Archeology: Detectives of the Past
Personal & Family Finance
Criminology: Inside the Criminal Mind
Digital Photography I: Creating Images with Impact!

English 12, Semester B
Advanced English Literature & Composition, Semester A
Advanced English Literature & Composition, Semester B

3. Science

Advanced Biology, Semester A
Advanced Biology, Semester B
Biology, Semester A
Biology, Semester B
Advanced Chemistry, Semester A
Advanced Chemistry, Semester B
Chemistry, Semester A
Chemistry, Semester B
Physical Science, Semester A
Physical Science, Semester B
Physics, Semester A
Physics, Semester B
Integrated Physics and Chemistry, Semester A
Integrated Physics and Chemistry, Semester B
Earth and Space Science, Semester A
Earth and Space Science, Semester B

4. Social Studies

Basic America History I, Semester A
Basic America History I, Semester B
Basic America History II, Semester A

Digital Photography II: Discovering Your Creative Potential
Forensic Science I: Secrets of the Dead
Forensic Science II: More Secrets of the Dead
Gothic Literature: Monster Stories
Great Minds in Science: Ideas for a New Generation
International Business: Global Commerce in the 21st Century
Law & Order: Introduction to Legal Studies
Music Appreciation: The enjoyment of Listening
Introduction to Philosophy: The Big Picture
Personal Psychology I: The Road to Self-Discovery
Personal Psychology II: Loving in a Complex World
Real-World Parenting
Social Problems: A World in Crisis
Social Problems II: Crisis, Conflicts & Challenges
Sociology I: The Study of Human Relationships
Sociology II: Your Social Life
Veterinary Science: The Care of Animals
World Religions: Exploring Diversity

6. Global Languages

Spanish I, Semester A
Spanish I, Semester B
Spanish II, Semester A
Spanish II, Semester B
Spanish III, Semester A
Spanish III, Semester B
Advanced Placement Spanish, Semester A
Advanced Placement Spanish, Semester B
French I, Semester A
French I, Semester B
French II, Semester A
French II, Semester B
French III, Semester A
French III, Semester B

Advanced Placement French, Semester A
Advanced Placement French, Semester B
Latin I, Semester A
Latin I, Semester B
Latin II, Semester A
Latin II, Semester B
Chinese I, Semester A
Chinese I, Semester B
Chinese II, Semester A
Chinese II, Semester B
German I, Semester A
German I, Semester B
German II, Semester A
German II, Semester B

Electives, Global Languages, and Advanced Placement classes will be available for Fall 2012.

Curriculum Overview

PLATO incorporates an engaging, age-appropriate learning experience that emphasizes real-world applications. PLATO Courses are developed to give teachers a variety of ways to engage different learning modalities and to give students the opportunity to experience a range of standards and objectives that ensure academic success.

PLATO Courses integrate PLATO online curriculum, electronic learning activities, and supporting interactive activities. An array of assessment tools allow teachers to correctly place students at the appropriate learning level, to evaluate their strengths and needs, to create individualized learning goals, and to determine proficiency. Reports assist students in understanding where they need to focus to be academically successful as measured against objectives. Guidelines and tools are provided to track student progress and to determine a final class grade.

PLATO Courses give teachers control over instructional choices for their classrooms and for individual students. PLATO Courses can be used in a variety of ways to increase student achievement. Teachers may use all of the components as sequenced or select specific activities to support and enhance instruction.

1. PLATO Class Features

Tutorials

Tutorials provide direct instruction and practice interactions. Instruction is made engaging through the use of videos, animations, interactive timelines, and hotspot graphics. Practice interactions—including drag-and-drops, ordered problem solvers, multiple-choice questions, and fill-in-the blank questions—all help students check their progress on mastering new concepts. Some tutorials also include Web links to informational sites, games, and videos, which are designed to broaden students' access to information on the topic.

Lesson Activities

These written assignments allow students to develop new learning in a constructivist way or apply learning from the tutorial in a significant way. In either case, Lesson Activities are designed to be an authentic learning and assessment tool: doing something real to develop new understanding, while at the same time providing a subjective measure of that understanding. Lesson Activities are embedded in the tutorials and supply a document for offline use by students to write a response or record results. Each activity has an answer key that provides answers for single-answer questions and objective rubrics or sample answers for open-ended questions. Students submit some activities through the Digital Drop Box for teacher evaluation and feedback. Other activities can be checked by students themselves using the answer key. Keep in mind that some students may need guidance to successfully self-check open-ended questions against a model.

Online Discussions

Online discussion with teachers and other students is a key twenty-first-century skills-based activity that allows for higher-order thinking about terminal objectives. An online threaded discussion mirrors the educational experience of a classroom discussion.

Teachers can initiate a discussion by asking a complex, open-ended question. Students can respond to the question as well as to the responses of other students. Each unit in a class has one predefined discussion topic along with a rubric for grading responses. Teachers can include additional discussion topics.

Unit Activities

The culminating activity at the end of each unit aims to deepen understanding of some key unit objectives and tie them together, or tie them to other class concepts. This activity also includes authentic performance and supports twenty-first-century skills development. The student version includes a simple rubric, if appropriate, while teacher versions can contain more complex rubrics, answer keys, and modeled sample answers. Unit activities supply a document for offline use by students to write a response or record results.

2. Assessment and Testing

Best practices in assessment and testing call for a variety of activities to evaluate student learning. Multiple data points more accurately present an evaluation of student strengths and needs. Some learning activities also serve as assessment activities to provide authentic learning and assessment opportunities. These activities are designed to encourage higher-order cognitive thinking, and most focus on real-world applications and/or twenty-first-century skills. Note that assessment items are available for each lesson.

- A mastery test at the end of each module or lesson provides the teacher and the student with clear indicators of areas of strength and weakness. These multiple-choice tests are taken online.
- A unit posttest helps a teacher track how well students have mastered a unit's content. These multiple-choice tests are available online and offline.
- An end-of-semester test assesses the major objectives covered in a class. By combining the unit posttest information with the end-of-semester test results, teachers will get a picture of student progress. See the Student Proctoring section below for proctoring requirements for end-of-semester tests.

3. Class Length

Fall/Spring classes are designed to be one semester in length, which is equal to 18 weeks. Students are able to complete classes anytime within the 18 weeks. Summer School classes are 8 weeks in duration. Class content is not condensed; instead time expectations per day are increased to accommodate the condensed timeframe.

Responsibilities of District Partners

1. Site Coordinator Role

The Academy Site Coordinator has certain roles and responsibilities for PLATO Virtual Academy programs. Each partnership with PLATO Virtual Academy must have at least one Academy Site Coordinator at each site. This position can be filled by any staff member who will successfully managing the following responsibilities:

Student Support

Serve as an intermediary between students and their online teacher when needed to support students' needs at the school site.

Student Management

Where applicable, manage students in the classroom and/or computer lab.

Student Registration, Enrollment, and Orientation

It is the responsibility of the Site Coordinator to register and enroll students into PLATO Virtual Academy. Site Coordinators receive training during the two-hour virtual Site Coordinator Orientation session on how to log in

to the PLATO Virtual Academy and perform various administrative tasks. Site Coordinators receive the PLATO Virtual Academy Toolkit, which provides the information needed to get started. Site Coordinators can refer to the toolkit at any time for help with technical readiness, navigating the PLATO Virtual Academy Student Information System (SIS), and accessing links to additional resources.

Student Pacing

For Fall/Spring classes, students are expected to spend 50 minutes per day on each class, 5 days a week. For the Summer session, students are expected to work 4 hours per day, 5 days a week.

Student Proctoring

To address student integrity and exam security, it is the responsibility of the Site Coordinator to ensure that students are properly proctored during end-of-semester exams. All end-of-semester exams are locked. A locked exam requires the Site Coordinator to log in to the PLATO Virtual Academy Student Information System, unlock the exam, and ensure proper oversight of the student prior to administration of the exam.

Student Reporting and Progress Monitoring

PLATO Virtual Academy provides Site Coordinators with access to a Student Information System (SIS), which allows them to view student progress tracking, grade performance, student transcripts, and more. This level of engagement by the Site Coordinator(s) in student management will help ensure that students meet the requirements of their online classes.

Responsibilities of PLATO Virtual Academy Online Teachers

PLATO Virtual Academy teachers communicate regularly with students using online communication tools. Teachers also use a secure Web-based system to manage student grades, assignments, and assessments. Students can contact teachers through email or by phone when they have questions or need extra tutoring.

Although Site Coordinators will always be PLATO Virtual Academy's first line of contact with the site, they are welcome to delegate some responsibilities to other staff members within their site or district.

2. Communication Expectations

Teachers are required to answer questions, grade assignments, and provide feedback to students within 24 hours. Almost all questions will be answered within a few hours, but 24 hours is the maximum response time. Additionally, teachers are required to check email from students once over the weekend and provide a response before Monday.

3. Students with Learning Disabilities or Physical Disabilities

It is the responsibility of the school district or agency to provide the PLATO Virtual Academy guidance department with a valid copy of a student's IEP in order for the student to be granted the required accommodations. All related documentation for review should be faxed to 703-243-8472.

4. English as a Second Language (ESL) Students

Please note that all PLATO Virtual Academy courses are written in English. Students who do not have at least a working knowledge of English will have difficulty in these classes.

Program Policies

1. Earning Credit and Grading Policy

To earn a half-credit (one semester class) in the PLATO Virtual Academy, students must meet three requirements: submit all required work, earn a combined average of 60 percent or higher on the final exam, and earn an average of 60 percent or higher overall in the class.

2. Student Discipline Policy (Code of Conduct)

The following are the Policies that PLATO Virtual Academy adheres to in determining the consequences for the infractions identified below. The guidelines have been developed as a means to maintain the academic integrity of the PLATO Virtual Academy, its curriculum, students, and staff and to address the consequences of non-compliance.

Academic Misconduct

Academic Misconduct, in any form, is not tolerated. Academic misconduct includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, copying another student's work or allowing another student to copy your work. If academic misconduct is found, the following consequences will result:

- First offense: zero on the assignment, a written warning, and a note added to the records of the students involved
- Second offense: zero on the assignment and a referral to the administration for possible withdrawal

Defiance of Authority/Insubordination

Disobedience or noncompliance toward any staff member of the PLATO Virtual Academy is considered insubordination. That includes refusal to maintain communication with PLATO staff. An act of insubordination may occur in any situation or communication, including, but not limited to, in an e-mail, during a phone conversation, or in person.

If defiance of authority or insubordination is found, the following consequences will result:

- First offense: referral to a guidance counselor
- Second offense: referral to administration for possible withdrawal

Computer Misuse

Any student who attempts to access the secure information of PLATO Virtual Academy or PLATO Learning, Inc.® or its affiliates in an improper manner, uses another student's or staff member's log-in information to gain access to information, intentionally attempts to obtain access to areas or information not open to normal access, or engages in any act similar to the above, has committed a computer misuse.

If computer misuse is found, the following consequences will result:

- First offense: Depending on the nature of the offense, the consequences can include a written warning, referral to a guidance counselor, suspended access to PLATO courseware, or administrative referral possible withdrawal.
- Second offense: Referral to the administration for possible withdrawal

Deviation from the above consequences: Notwithstanding anything in this Policy to the contrary, the Plato Virtual Academy reserves the right to modify the consequences or action taken against a student violating this Policy in the Plato Virtual Academy's sole discretion for reasons including, but not limited to, the severity of or damages caused by the violation or to ensure compliance with applicable law.

Note: Students working in a computer lab at a school site still fall under the student discipline plan of that school or school district.

Internet Acceptable Use Policy

The Internet is a compilation of many networks that support the open exchange of information for research and educational purposes. The internet can be accessible to anyone, anywhere, anytime. Students must understand that by using the network, their actions can be monitored at any time by a teacher or administrator.

Internet-Terms and Conditions of Use

- Users will not be abusive in PLATO Virtual Academy messages to others. They will not use offensive, obscene, or harassing language when using any PLATO Virtual Academy or PLATO Learning, Inc., or its affiliates' systems or software.
- Users will not reveal personal addresses or phone numbers of other users.

- Users will not post information if it violates the policy of others, jeopardizes the health and safety of students, plagiarizes the work of others, is a commercial advertisement, or is not approved by the teacher or school administrator. Users will accept responsibility for all materials they link to or upload.
- Users shall promptly report any inappropriate material they receive.
- Users will not attempt to log in to the network using any other user's name and password.
- Users accept and acknowledge that additional documents and paperwork may be required, including but not limited to documents requiring agreement and signature upon the request of PLATO Virtual Academy administration.
- Any and all student-produced Web pages will be subject to the approval of the teacher or school administrator.
- Vandalism will result in the cancellation of privileges. Vandalism is defined as any malicious attempt to harm or destroy the data of another user, agency, or PLATO. This includes, but is not limited to, the uploading or creation of computer viruses.
- In the event of a virtual field trip, all users will conduct themselves in accordance with the Policy or agreement applicable to the field trip.

Academic Integrity Contract

1. I will do my own work.
2. I will not copy another person's work, in whole or in part, and turn it in as my own.
3. I will not consult unauthorized material or information during tests unless my teacher gives me permission.
4. I will not plagiarize.
5. I will not copy text, graphics, mathematics solutions, artistic layouts or presentations, or any ideas in any form from another source without proper citation.
6. I will not communicate exam information or answers during or following an exam.
7. I will not provide unwarranted access to materials or information so that credit may be wrongly claimed by others.
8. I will not turn in an original paper or project more than once for different classes or assignments.
9. I will not, in laboratory situations, falsify or fabricate data or observations, including computer output.

3. Non-Discrimination Policy

PLATO Virtual Academy and PLATO Learning are equal opportunity employers and do not discriminate in matters affecting employment or the provision of services, programs, or activities in compliance with all federal and state anti-discrimination laws.

Who to Contact

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PS3148 168-PROD04 03/12

