

Duane Lake Academy

Handbook

64A East Main St.
Pawling, NY 12564

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THE MISSION OF DUANE LAKE ACADEMY

Duane Lake Academy (DLA) provides for its students a learning environment, which is not limited by traditional grade levels. Students experience the freedom which continuous progress through Mastery Learning can provide. Because the learning/teaching process involves the entire family, the program builds on many strengths-that of the individual, that of parental involvement and that of the student's associates in the school. Our students are encouraged to be self-directed and self-educated through independent study and development of individual responsibility. Because of these qualities, the program provides opportunities for success throughout the educational process.

HISTORY

Sherri Muniz founded Duane Lake Academy, in Duanesburg, New York on the shores of Duane Lake. Sherri's hope was to create a positive, stimulating, learning environment based on "Mastery Learning", a concept in which the student continually progresses in skill development. In 1990, a sister school started in Austin, Texas.

Duane Lake Academy does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national or ethnic origin, or sex in its admission or educational programs.

ACADEMIC INFORMATION

COLLEGE ENTRANCE

Students must follow the standard enrollment process outlined in the handbook of the college of their choice. This generally requires standardized test results, a transcript that documents course work and grades, and any supplementary information such as academic portfolios that can be accepted for application by a college choice.

CURRICULUM OPTIONS

Individual Curriculum

Students' interests, learning styles, and knowledge base are taken into consideration as staff, parents, and students together design an appropriate, individual curriculum for each student.

The flexibility of DLA's approach facilitates adjustments to curriculum as mastery is achieved or interest expanded. Students are encouraged to pursue individual interests, both within the context of DLA and through community involvement. Duane Lake Academy enjoys the luxury of a low pupil/teacher ratio. Time is made available to address those elements of course work not yet mastered by a student before allowing the student to proceed to the next level in a given subject. Most important, there is no stigma to remediation or acceleration. There is only continuous progress toward mastery.

Concurrent Enrollment

Some students may prefer to supplement DLA course work with college courses in order to gain a head start on their college careers. Some local area colleges offer concurrent credit. This means that high school credit is earned while official college credit is gained upon course completion. Colleges vary in their policy concerning acceptance of concurrent college credit. Students must contact the college or university of choice to determine the number of hours allowable. A rule of thumb is 18 hours of concurrent credit, though some institutions permit as many as 32 hours.

DLA students are required to consult with their Curriculum Coordinator to determine the advisability of any concurrent course work, and to allow our staff to assist in inquires regarding enrollment and evaluation.

Off-Campus Classes

Students who are enrolled at DLA and have elected to take formal and informal course work which meets the New York State Regents Standards, under the supervision of an accomplished and/or certified instructor, are permitted to receive academic credit for the course work. Detail documentation must be completed to get full credit for these courses. The student/parent must get approval from the student's Curriculum Coordinator for these classes and the Curriculum Coordinator will work with the family, doing on-going evaluations and final evaluations of these courses. Credit for these courses is dependent upon meeting the essential elements and presenting an acceptable portfolio.

Tutorial Help

Students may arrange to have private tutoring sessions with a specific instructor, if available, for an additional fee. A student falling behind in course work or struggling to make consistent adequate progress may be required to enroll in one or more tutorial sessions until the difficulties are resolved.

ENROLLMENT STATUS

There are four designations of Enrollment Status applicable to all students enrolled at DLA. These are **Probationary, Provisional, Clear, and Exemplary**. As part of our performance assessment plan, these enrollment standings have been developed to reflect and acknowledge a student's overall success in adapting effectively to the challenges and the opportunities of DLA in the following areas: academic performance, responsible school behavior, community contribution and awareness, and demonstrated time management and organization. Under normal circumstances, enrollment status will be assigned to each student by a staff review panel at the completion of each semester of attendance.

Please note: the exception of this end of semester enrollment status designation will occur in the case of any student's serious violation of the Student Code of Conduct as outlined in the DLA Handbook. Such a violation may result in the immediate lowering of a student's

enrollment status at any time in the semester when the violation occurs. Please refer to the following section, “Lowering of enrollment status as part of disciplinary action.”

All newly enrolled students automatically enter DLA with **Probationary** or **Provisional** status, with the expectation that they will raise their status upon successful completion of their first semester at DLA.

We encourage each student to seek and pursue every avenue and opportunity to raise his/her enrollment status to **Clear** and, following that, to **Exemplary**. As a solid baseline of academic accomplishment and sound citizenship, these designations will be used as part of the criteria for application for dual credit course work, internships, work-study opportunities, and school-sponsored programs.

When a student appears to be in jeopardy of a lower designation or at the continuing risk of a second semester designation of **Probationary** standing, the staff will make mid-semester recommendations and requirements. In the event that a student earns **Probationary** status for two consecutive semesters, a transition plan will be developed with the student, parents and staff to counsel and transition the student out of the School and into another program and environment better suited to meet the student’s needs.

Probationary: The enrollment status of Probationary is meant to serve as a strong statement to the student that his/her school performance in one or more areas is in serious jeopardy for continuing enrollment. Any student with Probationary standing is expected to make swift and extraordinary effort to correct the areas of challenge or lack of success.

Provisional: Provisional standing indicates a student who is experiencing moderate challenges in one or more areas of student life or who is facing a singular serious challenge in a particular subject area or in certain circumstances. A student improving from Probationary to Provisional is one who has demonstrated sincere effort and measurable improvement in the areas of difficulty.

Clear: To achieve and maintain the enrollment status of Clear, students must consistently meet academic requirements in a timely and quality manner, practice responsible social behavior, exhibit overall positive adjustment to challenges, and contribute thoughtfully to the school community in and out of the classroom.

Exemplary: Exemplary Enrollment Status is reserved for the most outstanding and truly exemplary DLA students who, through their academic accomplishments, social development, maturity, and community ethic, set a high and honorable example of student behavior in all aspects of school life.

Lowering of Enrollment Status as Part of Disciplinary Action

Any serious violation of the Code of Conduct as given in the DLA Handbook may result in the immediate lowering of a student’s enrollment status at any time in the semester when the

violation occurs. A student's standing may be lowered one or more ranks, depending on the nature and the circumstances of the offense as determined by the inquiry and deliberation of the staff. Regardless of enrollment status, any serious offense may result in full suspension, an immediate transition plan out of the School, or, in extreme cases, expulsion.

GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

Duane Lake Academy follows the New York State Regents Standards Graduation Requirements. For details consult the Curriculum Coordinator.

HOMEWORK

During off campus days, students are required to devote a minimum of 15 hours to reinforce and advance their own learning, strive to develop good study skills, and enrich understanding through experience. DLA **requires the off campus work to be documented on DLA approved time sheets (Homework Activity Log) and approved by the student's Curriculum Coordinator.**

INCOMPLETES

Should a student fail to complete the requirements of his/her course schedule, a new schedule and a new deadline for completion must be negotiated with the curriculum coordinator. A student **will not be allowed** to move forward to the next course level without successfully completing the prior level of that course. Any incomplete carried into the following semester must be cleared, with all work submitted, no later than the eighth week of the first nine week period of that semester. After that date, the course is considered closed and dropped from the student's transcript. In order to receive credit, the student must re-enroll for the full semester course (with all of the new course work required). Course requirements may also be fulfilled with a passing grade on a UT credit by exam, if available.

PORTFOLIOS

Students are encouraged to maintain academic portfolio examples for their mastery level work. Portfolios may include assignments, academic performance reviews, community service, and resumes of extracurricular activities beyond the scope of DLA.

REPORT CARDS

Report cards are issued at the end of each semester. In addition to a letter/numerical grade, the percentage of work completed that semester, in relationship to the year's curriculum (or to a semester's curriculum, in the case of a one semester course), is recorded.

TEXTBOOKS

DLA can supply each student with textbooks for a fee or parents can purchase the correct textbook elsewhere. Textbook bills must be paid in full before the books will be issued.

WITHDRAWING FROM DLA

At least one week prior to withdrawing a student from DLA, parents must contact the school administration and set up an appointment to get the appropriate forms. The student will be provided with a list of current grade averages. **No official records will be sent to the new school until all fees are cleared, including tuition payable through the end of the current semester.**

ATTENDANCE AND ABSENCES

Each on-campus day is extremely important to a student's success. **All non-emergency appointments should be scheduled on non-campus school days.**

Student Absence

The parent/guardian must call the school office no later than 8:30 a.m.

It is the responsibility of the student to make-up all missed assignments and to continue his/her schoolwork.

Parent/Mentor Absences

Should the parent/mentor have more than 4 days of absences during a semester (or the hourly equivalent), they will be billed for each additional day's absence at the standard non-participation fee of \$50 per/day. Should an emergency arise making parental involvement temporarily impossible, arrangements must be made with the administration for interim supervision of the student and curriculum instructional support.

Tardiness

Tardiness to class is disruptive to other students and to the learning environment as a whole. Continual tardiness will result in a disciplinary meeting with the student, parent, and Curriculum Coordinator.

Leaving Campus- Student/Parents

Students or parents leaving school **must sign out when leaving campus.**

Truancy

Truancy (absence from school for any reason without the permission and/or knowledge of the school or the consent of the parents) is a violation of state law and a severe violation of school

policy. Repeated truancy will be reported to State authorities, may result in full suspension for a calendar year, or dismissal of a student from DLA.

Release of Student other than to Custodial Parents

For the safety of students, custodial parents must provide DLA with a list of authorized persons with whom their student may leave campus.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Off Campus Participation

The manner in which the parent supports student efforts in non-class study periods and the areas in which parents may support the child's education include:

Fulfillment of financial responsibility to DLA.

Establishment of an appropriate home study environment for off-campus school days.

Encouragement to study at a regularly scheduled time each day.

Communication of realistic expectations, and support of efforts to meet those expectations.

Overseeing daily completion of the *Student Activity Log*.

On Campus Participation

Presence on campus as a resource for the child **throughout the entire class day** is required.

Parents act as facilitators, tutors, and mentors taking an active role in their children's education and that of all children in the school.

Parents are responsible for their own children at all times while on the DLA campus and expected to share group supervision duties during break and lunch.

Parents are expected to maintain regular communication with their child's Curriculum Coordinator and all those involved in their child's instruction.

Parents are expected to attend meetings/parent facilitation workshops when offered by DLA.

CODE OF CONDUCT

The learning environment is directly affected by a student's willingness to abide by the established school policies designed to contribute to the overall positive atmosphere of the school. DLA is committed to helping students develop responsible behaviors and to understand the importance of accepting the potential consequences of Prohibited Behaviors.

RESPONSIBLE BEHAVIORS

Strive for excellence in one's personal and academic life;
Maintain a healthy perspective on the importance of one's mental and physical well-being;
Prepare for additional studies after graduating from DLA and be successful in a profession of choice;
Learn to enjoy life and being with others, and accept the challenges and opportunities afforded by virtue of membership in the community;
Develop an appreciation of the importance of becoming a contributing member of society and strive to better society for all in the community;
Demonstrate courtesy and respect for others;
Behave in a responsible manner;
Attend all classes regularly and on time;
Prepare for each class; take appropriate materials and assignments to class;
Be well-groomed and dress appropriately;
Respect the rights and privileges of other students, teachers, staff, and parents;
Respect the property of others, including DLA property and facilities;
Cooperate with or assist the school staff in maintaining safety, order and discipline.

PROHIBITED BEHAVIORS

DLA encourages and actively supports students who strive to avoid harmful behaviors. The following behaviors affect the ability of a student to develop responsible behaviors resulting in a negative impact on the community as a whole.

A student whose behavior shows disrespect for others, including interference with their access to education and/or a safe environment, will be subject to disciplinary action.

Alcohol/Drugs/Tobacco

DLA is committed to a substance free environment

No tuition or fee refunds will be granted to those removed from DLA for violation of our substance free policy.

DLA prohibits any student from possessing, using, transmitting, or being under the influence of any of the following substances while at school or at school-related events on or off campus:

Tobacco products

Alcohol

Marijuana

Stimulants such as amphetamines, "speed drugs", inhalants

Narcotic, hallucinogenic, hypnotic, sedative, mind-changing chemicals capable of altering or impairing the physical or mental faculties of the user.

Look-alike drugs or items attempted to be passed off as drugs or contraband.

Inducing others to violate the substance free policy, either by coaxing, intimidating, or supplying another with a banned substance, will be treated as a serious violation at least equal to that of using the substance. Students who violate this policy will be subject to dismissal. Those found in violation of narcotics laws will be reported to the appropriate authorities and immediately removed from the campus. In the case of full suspension, the suspension term and conditions of re-entry will be determined by the administration.

Assault

Intentional harm to another individual on campus may result in immediate removal from campus, suspension, and upon further inquiry, full expulsion from DLA.

Cheating and Plagiarism

Cheating is the taking/stealing of information from a source outside yourself, with or without permission, with the intent to represent it as your work. Plagiarism, the use of another's ideas or products as one's own, is a type of cheating. Cheating will result in disciplinary action and may result in a student's dismissal from DLA.

Destruction/defacement of property

A student found in the commission of an act of destruction or defacement of school, private or public property on campus or in the immediate vicinity of the campus will be immediately suspended. Depending on the severity of the destruction or vandalism, a report of the student's behavior may be made to appropriate juvenile authorities. Any serious episode may result in immediate removal from campus, suspension, and upon further inquiry, full expulsion from DLA.

Disruptive Behavior

A student who intentionally disrupts class or others with loud, rude or objectionable noises, aggressive, or inappropriate behavior will be removed from the setting and must appear before the Curriculum Coordinator and/or disciplinary committee. Any student who habitually disrupts the learning environment will be suspended.

Extortion, Coercion or Blackmail

A student who, by violence or threat of violence, demands money or possessions of another will make restitution and be expected to commence counseling. Any episode may result in immediate removal from campus, suspension, and upon further inquiry, full expulsion from DLA.

Fighting

Students involved in physical fighting will be suspended pending investigation of the incident by the School Administrator.

Fireworks

The use or possession of fireworks of any kind on or around the DLA campus is forbidden. This is a violation of city and state law. Students found in violation will be immediately suspended and the fireworks will be confiscated.

Hazing

Students involved in any action taken or situation created intentionally, to produce mental or physical discomfort, embarrassment, harassment, or ridicule will be disciplined.

Inappropriate Language

Students shall treat others with respect and fairness at all times. Cursing, suggestive language, racial slurs, or other inappropriate remarks or actions against others is unacceptable. Any serious episode may result in immediate removal from campus, suspension, and upon further inquiry, full expulsion from DLA.

Pornographic material

A student found in possession of magazines, books, audio or videotapes, pamphlets, or other pornographic material, which describes or depicts sexual behavior will be suspended or expelled.

Possession or use of matches or a lighter

A student found in possession of matches or lighters while on campus will be subject to disciplinary action.

Public display of affection

Public displays of affection are not allowed.

Sexual behavior

Students engaging in provocative, indecent, or explicit sexual behavior on campus or in the vicinity of the campus, will be immediately suspended from school pending a full suspension hearing.

Sexual harassment

Sexual harassment is both a legal and a social issue, and it demonstrates a disregard for the dignity and equality of others. Law defines it as "unwelcome sexual advances, request for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature which interferes with an individual's work performance or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment." Any serious episode may result in immediate removal from campus, suspension, and upon further inquiry, full expulsion from DLA.

Theft

Students caught stealing will be suspended from school pending a board expulsion hearing regarding the duration of the suspension. In the case of full suspension the suspension will be for one full calendar year.

Weapons

Weapons or semblance of weapons of any kind are not permitted on campus or at school activities. Possession of a weapon is a violation of state and federal law and state statute requires that instances of weapons possession on school grounds be reported to the sheriff's department. A student in violation of the weapons policy will be expelled **with no opportunity for readmission.**

DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES

DLA does not practice corporal punishment. Conflict resolution, respectful dialogue, and review of community needs bring greater clarity to negative behavior between individuals.

When a DLA faculty member, parent resource, or administrator has reason to question or address a student regarding a Behavior of Concern, a Curriculum Coordinator must meet with the student involved to discuss the behavior, evidence that supports the charge, and accountability.

After conferring with the student, the faculty member may consider the matter resolved. The student, parents, and the administrator shall be notified within three (3) school days if it is felt that further action is necessary.

A faculty review committee will handle behavior calling for immediate suspension, the Three-Step Discipline Process, or full suspension.

Three-Step Disciplinary Action

First Offense: Restriction to the DLA building for two consecutive school weeks, including breaks, passing periods, and lunch.

Second Offense: Two weeks out-of-school suspension during which a student is expected to keep current with work and homework in all courses. Re-admission after the two-week period will be granted **only when the student demonstrates being current in course work** during a conference with faculty and an administrator.

Third Offense: Upon documentation of a third offense, a student is suspended for a full calendar year, as of the date of the most recent fact-finding conference. Any student under full suspension is not eligible for DLA credit, tutoring or other academic suspension. A suspended student may reapply directly to the board after the year.

Disciplinary Penalties

Disciplinary penalties include, but are not limited to the following:

Warning

Bar against re-admission and/or drop from current enrollment. May be imposed upon a student as a final decision for:

Failure to respond to a summons by the Administrator to discuss an alleged violation. (Note: The penalty shall be lifted when the student responds to the summons as requested.)

Reason(s) of health, either physical or psychological, or pending outcome of competent medical evaluation. This bar would be removed on the recommendation of a licensed, qualified physician and/or psychologist.

Restitution - or reimbursement for damage. Reimbursement may take the form of appropriate service to repair or compensate for full or partial damage and/or disappearance.

Suspension of rights and privileges. A flexible penalty which may be imposed at the Administrator's and/or Faculty Review Committee's discretion to limit rights and privileges to fit a particular case.

Suspension. Prohibits, during the specified suspension period, the suspended student from entering DLA's campus or facility utilized by the School without prior written approval from the Administrator.

Expulsion. Permanent severance from Duane Lake Academy.

Academic Consequences

Academic Consequences include, but are not limited to the following:

Requirement that certain course work be done under circumstances different from those previously announced or those required of other students.

Requirement that specific course work be redone.

Withdrawal from course.

Grade penalty for final course grade to a student in a course where he/she is found guilty of scholastic dishonesty.

Denial of diploma and/or certificates-a student found guilty of scholastic dishonesty may be denied official diploma and/or certificates.

Dispute Procedure

A student accused of any violation of Duane Lake Academy's Code of Responsible Behavior by a faculty or staff member, parent, peer or volunteer may:

1. Acknowledge the facts of the offense and accept the consequences.
2. Dispute in writing to the Administrator the facts of the offense.

If the student or parent disputes the accusation, the Administrator shall proceed to investigate. If the student is found to have violated the Code of Responsible Behavior and engage in misconduct, the Faculty Review Committee after final review, shall make a final determination in the case and assign appropriate disciplinary and/or academic consequences.

Appeal Process

If a student or parent chooses to appeal the Review Committee's decision a request for appeal must be made in writing to the DLA Board of Directors within two (2) school days of the decision, exclusive of weekends. In the case of suspension or expulsion, students may not return to the school environment until the appeal has been heard and acted upon by the board. The board of directors will consider the request for appeal and respond to the student or parent within two (2) school days, exclusive of weekends, whether or not they will hear the appeal. A hearing date will be set for the earliest possible time, not to exceed five (5) school days, exclusive of weekends. Board decisions are final.

DRESS CODE

Students, parents and staff are expected to dress appropriately while on campus.

The following are NOT permitted:

- Halter tops, midriff-baring tops, underwear-baring clothing, tank tops (except worn as underwear)

- Short shorts, extremely short or tight skirts

- Clothing with alcohol, cigarette, profane, lewd or offensive pictures or sayings

- Bare feet

- Clothing determined to in any way detract from the learning process

Anyone dressed inappropriately, will be provided with other clothing (if possible), or asked to go home and return appropriately dressed. Repeated infractions of the dress code may result in a student's suspension.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Abuse/Neglect

The State Family Code requires that a person having cause to believe that a child's physical or mental health or welfare has been or may be adversely affected by abuse or neglect by any person shall report it.

The State requires that an oral report be made by ANY citizen, immediately on learning of the abuse or neglect, or likelihood of abuse or neglect. The mandate for professional educators to report such incidents is even more compelling. Notice of this report need not be made to DLA. If it made known to the school's administrator, it must be held in the strictest confidence. A formal report must be transmitted to the New York State Department of Human Services, utilizing appropriate reporting forms available in the school office.

Definitions of 'abuse' and 'neglect' are available in the Family Code provided to DLA by Child Protective Services and may be accessed in the school office. Please consult the Family Code in reporting suspected abuse or neglect.

Emergency School Closings

DLA will observe the same emergency closings as the Pawling School District.

Fire Safety Codes and Health Standards

The New York State Department of Health Resources provides guidelines for assessment of environmental health practices within schools. DLA will make available, on request, proof of compliance with fire safety codes and health standards.

Holidays

DLA honors our multi-cultural diverse population. Out of respect to DLA's multi-cultural, multi-ethnic population, no religious holidays are observed within the school, either by way of costume, decoration, song, gift exchange, or other demonstrations. Absences due to observances of personal religious convictions will be honored.

All birthday celebrations are to be conducted OFF CAMPUS, during non-school hours or on non-school days.

Immunization

All students attending DLA must provide a current immunization history and/or serologic confirmation as required by New York State law.

Medications

Prescription drugs are controlled substances. Students may not keep them in their possession, but must leave them in the care of their on-site parent, or, in their absence, turn them in to the office. Medication must be in the original bottle from the pharmacy. A note must accompany all prescriptions including the name of the student, the dosage, and time dosages are due.

School personnel will not remind the student of a dosage. The student is expected to be responsible for requesting the prescription bottle at the correct time and for taking the appropriate amount of the medication before returning it to the locked cabinet. Students are asked to sign a medications list in order to keep track of time and dosage in the event that the student experiences a reaction to the medication. Medications left overnight will be disposed of.

Personal Electronic Devices

Students are not allowed to use cellular phones, tablets, or laptops in the school during the day unless approved by individual teachers.

Political or Religious Proselytizing

DLA maintains a policy of respect for religious and political differences. We recognize that students, staff, and instructors may talk about their religious or political beliefs, but this should be done respectfully without proselytizing or coercion.

Visitors

The Administrator must approve all visitors on campus. Parents and students may NOT invite friends, other children, or siblings to attend school with them. This policy is for the protection of students and the learning environment. DLA's unique instructional program makes it difficult for a teacher/resource or a parent/volunteer resource to spend appropriate time with the DLA student while also meeting to the needs or managing the behavior of non-students.

If a friend or relative is interested in becoming a student at DLA, their parent(s) should contact the Admissions Coordinator for an interview appointment and arrange to sit in on classes.