

Gwinnett's curriculum for grades K-12 is called the Academic Knowledge and Skills (AKS) and is aligned to the state-adopted Georgia Standards of Excellence in Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies for elementary school students. Gwinnett's AKS is a rigorous curriculum that prepares students for college and 21st century careers in a globally competitive future.

The AKS for each grade level spells out the essential concepts students are expected to know and skills they should acquire in that grade or subject. The AKS offers a solid base on which teachers build rich learning experiences. Teachers use curriculum guides, technology, and instructional resources to teach the AKS and to make sure every student is learning to his or her potential.

The Academic Knowledge and Skills curriculum was developed by our teachers, with input from our parents and community, in response to Gwinnett County Public Schools' mission statement:

The mission of Gwinnett County Public Schools is to pursue excellence in academic knowledge, skills, and behavior for each student resulting in measured improvement against local, national, and world-class standards.

Read on to find out more about what your child will learn during kindergarten and how you can support your child's learning at home. We encourage you to talk to your child about what he or she is learning.

WELCOME TO KINDERGARTEN!



KINDERGARTEN

2020-21 PARENT AKS BROCHURE



ACADEMIC KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS
GWINNETT COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS



Learning to read and write is the basis for *all* learning. In kindergarten, students work on beginning reading and writing skills that will lead to success in subsequent grade levels. Specifically, the focus is on letters, sounds, and words, as well as reading and writing with accuracy and expression to support comprehension. Students use reading and writing skills throughout the school day as part of Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies classroom activities. The AKS emphasizes literacy skills across the content areas. Activities include interactive read-alouds, shared reading and writing experiences, small-group guided reading, and independent reading and writing times— all within the context of a balanced literacy classroom.

By the end of kindergarten, all students are expected to:

- Understand that print carries meaning;
- Understand sound/letter relationships and patterns in words such as consonant and vowel sounds, consonant blends, and word families (for example, -ed, -am, -it);
- Apply grade-appropriate phonics, language, and word analysis skills in writing and reading;
- Acquire the skills to become lifelong readers and writers, such as self-selection of books, self-monitoring to correct errors when reading and writing, and talking with and listening to peers about one's reading and writing; and
- Use listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills to communicate throughout the day.

Balanced Literacy

Teachers follow these principles to determine the best teaching methods, strategies, and materials to meet the needs of our students:

- Learning to read and write is a complex process with many facets.
- Reading and writing are about experiencing language, not merely practicing isolated skills.
- Reading and writing are interconnected forms of communication that emerge from listening and speaking.
- There is no “one way” to teach reading or writing. Teachers will incorporate a wide variety of strategies to teach every student.
- Learning to read and write occurs along a developmental progression of stages.
- All children can learn to read and write along this developmental progression with modeled and guided instruction.
- Knowing where each child is developmentally enables teachers to plan, teach, and evaluate appropriately.
- Children should be immersed in a print-rich environment.
- Reading and writing to, with, and by children should occur daily.
- Each day, children should have opportunities to read materials they select themselves and write on self-selected topics.
- Reading and writing are integrated into all subject areas.

Speaking and Listening

Kindergartners listen to and write about a variety of literary forms, such as stories and poems, in a variety of fiction and informational (non-fiction) genres. These include fairy tales, fables, biographies, and reports. They learn to listen attentively in order to ask and answer questions and directions. Students communicate in conversation with descriptive language by relating experiences, retelling stories, and discussing character, setting, and major events in a story.

Reading

Kindergarten students tell stories with pictures and learn to predict and sequence events and outcomes. They explore the concepts of *real* and *imaginary* as they compare and contrast the adventures and experiences of characters in familiar stories. With support, students read a variety of texts for pleasure and purpose. In kindergarten, children know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis to decode words.

Language (Phonics, Spelling, Vocabulary, and Handwriting)

By the end of the year, students should be able to read and spell words with selected patterns and common high-frequency words. During the year, teachers assess students' ability to use these words correctly in reading and writing. Students also learn how to print clearly and legibly.

Writing

At this age, students will use a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing to compose opinion pieces, informational text, and personal stories (narrative) to relay a powerful message. Teachers help students understand how to think of a topic, draw a picture to reflect that topic, and do their best to write about it. Students will add details to their writing and sound out words for more accurate spelling.



- Reading is everywhere... Point out and read store and road signs, menus, game directions, movie listings, and more.
- Set aside daily reading time at home.
- Be a good example. Let your child see you reading... both for information and for pleasure.
- Help your child apply for his or her own library card.

Mathematics



In the Mathematics classroom, students grow into confident, competent problem-solvers. They develop their understanding and use of numbers as they explore how mathematics connects to the real world. As they apply their learning in context, students develop their ability to think critically, reason mathematically, and communicate effectively.

Learning in kindergarten focuses on developing number sense, understanding and using numbers through mathematical operations, geometry, measurement and data, and algebraic thinking. By the end of kindergarten, students should be able to do the following:

- Know number names and the count sequence;
- Represent and compare whole numbers, initially with sets of objects;
- Analyze, compare, create, and compose shapes;
- Solve addition and subtraction word problems within 10, using drawings and objects; and
- Gain foundations of place value with numbers 11–19.

Kindergarten students use a number of strategies and tools as they learn math. They use hands-on manipulatives, technology, and real-world examples. Students use pictures, word and numeric problems, data, graphs, symbols, and problem-solving strategies.



Math Tips for Parents

- Sort and count objects together, including pocket change.
- Point out patterns.
- Play card and board games that require counting skills.



Social Studies

GCPS' Social Studies program prepares students to participate as constructive citizens in a democratic society. Students understand their role and responsibility as citizens. They discover America's heritage and its role and responsibility in the world. Students relate the past to the present. They learn the similarities and differences between nations, cultures, and peoples of the world. Students interpret maps and globes, process information, and solve problems. Students will learn how beliefs and ideas influence decisions and laws, how conflict causes change, how actions affect society, and how the movement of people and the spreading of ideas affect everyone.



Civics Tips for Parents

- Serve others together. Contact United Way (dial 2-1-1) or other community agencies to connect with a worthwhile project.
- Take part in community celebrations of civic and cultural holidays, including parades and festivals.

Science



The foundation for science literacy begins in kindergarten with a hands-on approach. Through inquiry-based exploration, students learn content in the earth, life, and physical sciences. Students also are introduced to strategies for asking questions, collecting and analyzing data, making measurements, and describing the world around them.

Science and Engineering Practices

Students use scientific tools for observing, evaluating, and communicating information in science and engineering activities. They use diagrams and models to represent features of their scientific discoveries. Students learn how to describe the similarities and differences of objects and how to sort groups of objects, based on physical characteristics.

Types of Science

Earth Science

Kindergartners identify objects and patterns in the sky. They investigate the changes that occur as the day sky turns into the night sky. Students also explore the physical attributes of rocks and soils and recognize the materials that make up Earth.

Life Science

Children learn to distinguish between living and non-living things. They group animals and plants according to their observable features. Students explore the common needs among living things. They recognize how animal parents and their offspring are the same and different. They will learn how organisms and humans cause changes to the local environment.

Physical Science

Students learn to use their five senses as a basis to ask questions about the characteristics of things and to classify by physical attributes. Students investigate motion (push/pull), explore the composition of different substances, and investigate the concept of gravity.



Science Tips for Parents

- Take a walk in your neighborhood or the woods. Talk about plants and animals and the changes that occur in living things.
- Observe the weather and how it affects your neighborhood (new flowers, changing leaves, ice in puddles).

Where We Live/Personal Finance/Civic Engagement

Kindergarten students learn about maps and globes. They learn that maps and globes show features in a smaller scale. Students use words and phrases related to chronology and time. Kindergartners learn about good citizenship. They begin their economic education talking about choices.

Our Nation

In the K–5 Social Studies program, students focus on Our Heritage, learning about Symbols of America in kindergarten. Students learn about our nation and American culture through the holidays we celebrate as a country and through diverse community and family celebrations and customs. Stories illustrate positive character traits. (*See the section on Character Education to learn more about this area of emphasis.*)

Fine Arts



Students in elementary school are at a critical age to develop the creative skills that will set the foundation for successful careers. In fact, creativity is ranked as one of the top skills sought by employers. The kindergarten student is a “natural” artist and musician. Teachers encourage children’s natural enthusiasm for the fine arts.

Visual Arts

Teachers emphasize joyful exploration and discovery in the Visual Arts program. Through repetition in the elementary grades, students master art concepts. Elementary students learn the elements of art and the principles of design that are found in all artworks. Students are introduced to artists and artworks from around the world and across the centuries. As students learn about art, they will create works of their own, such as drawings, paintings, and sculptures.

Kindergarten students explore a variety of two- and three-dimensional media. They use color to indicate mood in works of art. Students create art with different subjects and themes and from personal experiences. Kindergartners recognize textures, shapes, colors, and patterns in art and nature. They use art vocabulary to express preferences when viewing artworks.

General Music

The processes of learning, creating, performing, responding to, and understanding music are the primary goals of the elementary school General Music program. Through singing, playing instruments, creating, moving to music, guided listening, and other involvement, young children discover and develop their musical abilities. Students learn to recognize and demonstrate the basic musical elements of rhythm, beat, melody, harmony, texture, tempo, dynamics, timbre, and form. Children learn to distinguish between vocal and instrumental sounds, including selected instruments such as drum, violin, piano, and guitar.

Kindergarten students participate in song stories, singing games, chants, poems, and musical dramatizations. Students learn about expressive qualities and various musical styles from different time periods and cultures. They have opportunities to develop their creative skills.

Theatre and Dance

A number of our elementary schools offer theatre and dance programs.

The essentials and foundations of literacy start at an early age and theatre programs support these skills through the use of the individual and expressive voice of the student.

Dance courses support the study of music as well as movement and exercise which is imperative for young bodies and minds to develop.



**Fine Arts Tips
for Parents**

- Embrace your child’s creativity. Keep art and craft supplies and scrap paper on hand. Display your child’s creations.
- Visit the children’s art museum at the Hudgens Center for the Arts. Family “passes” are available for checkout from the county library.
- Share the songs that were your childhood favorites with your child.

Health and Physical Education



Health

In Health, students learn how to live a healthy lifestyle and reduce the risks linked with illness and injury. They also learn the consequences of unhealthy behaviors. Students learn to be responsible for their decisions and actions, and to understand the influence they have on others. Each year, students learn grade-appropriate lessons about emotional health, relationships, nutrition, the benefits of physical activity, substance abuse prevention, basic human anatomy, personal health, and safety.

Kindergarten students learn how to be safe and how to get help in an emergency. Lessons focus on basic practices to promote health or to prevent disease or illness. Children learn basic rules for taking medicines and what to do when they encounter unknown or dangerous substances. Kindergartners begin to see the link between food and health. They recognize emotions and the appropriate ways to express themselves. Students are able to identify family members and their roles in the family. Basic anatomy and the use of the five senses are part of the kindergarten curriculum.

Physical Education (PE)

Physical Education emphasizes lifetime fitness, physical activity, and skill development. Through carefully planned classes, students learn the importance of physical activity— for their health and for their success in school. The curriculum promotes increased fitness as students acquire skills and develop physically.

In PE, students learn about physical activities that enhance their health. Students develop skills such as throwing, catching, kicking, and hitting a variety of objects. Kindergartners are able to identify personal and shared space. They use acceptable behaviors in groups. Movement and motor skills— including jumping, rolling, balancing, stopping and starting, and changing direction— are important parts of the kindergarten PE program.



**Health & PE
Tips for Parents**

- Talk to your child about what to do in an emergency. Make sure your child knows when to call 9-1-1.
- Daily movement— both structured and free play— is an important part of your child’s physical development.
- Play “I Spy” together and talk about the sense of sight. Play games with your child to identify common objects by sound, touch, taste, and smell.

MYeCLASS Student Portal Information

Gwinnett County Public Schools’ Student Portal is MYeCLASS. The Student Portal is an online environment that gives students access to their online course pages; a selection of digital textbooks that correspond to the individual student’s class schedule; additional resources, such as the Student/Parent Handbook; links to websites that support what students are learning; the online research library; a media catalog; databases of general reference materials; eBooks; and the student’s grades.

Students log into MYeCLASS using their GCPS student number and the password they create at the beginning of the school year.

MYeCLASS is available around the clock, from any device with an Internet connection. Find a link from the GCPS home page at www.gcpsk12.org.

Specialized Programs and Services

The school system provides a variety of specialized programs and services, including Title I, English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), Special Education, Gifted Education, and alternative education programs. Guidance, social work, and psychological services provide for students' emotional and physical needs, along with limited clinic services for all students and specialized nursing support for medically fragile children. The School Nutrition Program operates cafeterias in every GCPS school. Some programs and services have eligibility requirements and require testing for admission. On this page, learn more about some of these programs and services.

Gifted Education



The GCPS Gifted Education program, called FOCUS at the elementary level, provides academic challenges for children who are intellectually advanced. The program offers valuable learning opportunities that are advanced in content. Gifted education classes offer experiences that extend GCPS' AKS curriculum, and develop students' thinking strategies and processes. Classes are taught by teachers with gifted certification. Students served through the Gifted Education program meet eligibility requirements set by the state. Both student performance and results on national assessments are used to determine a child's participation in the program.

Special Education and Psychological Services



GCPS' Department of Special Education and Psychological Services focuses on meeting the educational needs of students with disabilities, beginning at age 3. They must meet the eligibility requirements set by the Georgia Department of Education. GCPS provides comprehensive special education programs and services, including assessment and interventions.

English to Speakers of Other Languages



Students whose primary or home language is other than English and who are not yet proficient in English are provided with support services through the English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) program until they attain proficiency. ESOL instruction develops skills in listening, speaking, reading, and writing in social and instructional language as well as in the academic language of language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. Students learning English are taught by highly qualified teachers who are fully certified experts in their field.

Character Education



The school system supports a mandate from the Georgia General Assembly requiring all schools to teach character education. Society and culture are tied together through common threads that guide the way we live, work, and learn. These common beliefs are taught at home and reinforced by the community, schools, religious institutions, and youth service groups. These basic tenets guide the way Gwinnett County teachers teach and the way the school system conducts the business of teaching and learning. Character education is thoroughly embedded in the AKS curriculum.

Advisement and Counseling



Through a collaborative partnership with administrators, teachers, and families, school counselors design and deliver a comprehensive, data-driven, and developmentally appropriate program that promotes a positive learning environment for students. Counseling activities and interventions support all students in the areas of academic achievement, career development, and social-emotional development. Through core lessons in the classroom, small-group counseling, and individual counseling, school counselors build strong relationships with their students.

Technology/Information & Media Literacy



The school media program contributes to your student's academic achievement and provides the tools necessary to successfully navigate our information-rich society. All GCPS media centers are staffed with a full-time, state-certified media specialist who supports instruction and promotes reading as a foundational skill for learning, personal growth, and enjoyment. Media collections contain current, high-quality materials in multiple formats that are relevant to the community they serve. Students learn the importance of digital citizenship and are provided with home and school access to online resources aligned with GCPS standards. Media center spaces are designed for flexibility to accommodate large-group instruction, small-group collaboration, and individual exploration and discovery.



Tips for Parents on 10 Things You Can Do to "Be There" for Your Child

BE...

- **An Involved Parent...** *Be attentive, aware, together*
- **A Role Model...** *Be caring, engaged, influential*
- **A Cheerleader...** *Be supportive, positive, fun*
- **A Partner...** *Be encouraging, working together*
- **Their Favorite Teacher...** *Be there for teachable moments*

- **A Friendly Critic...** *Be patient, accepting, flexible*
- **An Advisor...** *Be ready to help, share your experiences*
- **A Good Communicator...** *Be a talker, a listener, stay connected*
- **A Lifelong Learner...** *Be inquisitive, share, read together*
- **An Advocate...** *For your child, school, community, public education*

Research shows that when parents are involved in their children's education at home, their children do better in school. When parents are involved at school, their children's achievement increases and the schools they attend become even stronger.



Be There is a national movement that inspires parents to become more involved in their child's education and their public schools. Teachable moments are everywhere. You can be your child's favorite teacher by connecting in meaningful ways as you go through the ordinary routines of the day... driving in the car, preparing a meal, shopping, or doing chores. Below and throughout this brochure, you will find tips for helping your child have a successful kindergarten experience. Look for more helpful tipsheets and other resources on the school system web site and your local school web site.



Tips for Parents on Helping Your Child Have a Successful Kindergarten Experience

- **Read, talk, and listen to your child** often and about a variety of subjects.
- **Encourage your kindergartner's natural love for learning** with praise. Recognize your child's curiosity and hard work. Let your child know that her academic success is important to you.
- **Stay in touch with your child's teacher.** Participate in parent-teacher conferences— in fall and in spring— to discuss your child's progress.
- **Talk to your child about what he is learning at school.** Use this brochure as a reference. You can find a complete listing of the kindergarten AKS on the school system's website (www.gcpsk12.org).
- **Promote the importance of regular school attendance** and being on time. Stress that school is a family priority and being in class each day is very important.
- **Stay informed** on school and class happenings. Read newsletters and reports that come home. Check the school website and district website for updates.
- **Learn how you can help at home,** using resources posted to the district's Early Learning web page.
- **Ask to see your child's work.** Keep samples so you can see and celebrate the growth your child makes this year.
- **Become involved** in the PTA and attend school events. Be a school volunteer if you are able.
- **Help your child learn important personal information**— her complete name (and yours) and your address and phone number.
- **Help your child develop important observation and conversation skills.** During errands, talk about what you see and do at the post office, grocery store, or bank. Share family stories. Make the most of time on the road. Point out words and symbols on signs. Ask your child to find letters and numbers on billboards and license plates. Sing songs together. Keep his favorite books in the car.
- **Give your child daily responsibilities,** such as choosing which clothes to wear to school, setting the dinner table, or making the bed.
- **Encourage healthy habits,** such as eating nutritious foods, getting ample rest, having a regular bedtime, waking up on time, and being physically active.
- **Prepare your child to handle personal needs,** such as going to the bathroom without help, washing his hands, blowing his nose, feeding himself, tying his shoes, and buttoning and zipping his clothes. Until your child has mastered tying shoelaces, consider athletic shoes that slip on or have other fasteners for school days.
- **Visit local points of interest,** including parks, museums, and the public library. Library cards are free for county residents.



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About Testing

Gwinnett County Public Schools measures student achievement in a number of ways to ensure students are learning the AKS curriculum. Students participate in classroom, district, and state assessments. Our assessment program helps teachers monitor students' academic progress. Assessment data and information pinpoints students' strengths and weaknesses. This focus allows teachers to plan targeted instruction that promotes each student's success.

GKIDS Testing

The Georgia Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (GKIDS) is a year-long, performance-based assessment used statewide. GKIDS will document your child's progress this year in mastering the state's standards— the Georgia Standards of Excellence in Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies. (Gwinnett's AKS curriculum is aligned to the state's standards.) This ongoing assessment serves as a diagnostic tool during the school year and is not an assessment with a "score" that determines a child's promotion to 1st grade.

A number of areas or domains of learning are assessed as part of GKIDS. The four academic areas include English Language Arts, Mathematics, Social Studies, and Science. The three non-academic areas— Approaches to Learning, Personal and Social Development, and Motor Skills— also contribute to a child's readiness for 1st grade.

The Georgia Department of Education is seeking a waiver of federal testing requirements. GCPS will communicate to families should the state's assessment program change due to this request.