

Gwinnett's curriculum for grades K–12 is called the Academic Knowledge and Skills (AKS). The AKS for each grade level spell out the essential things students are expected to know and be able to do in that grade or subject. The AKS offer a solid base on which teachers build rich learning experiences. Teachers use curriculum guides, textbooks, technology, and other materials to teach the AKS and to make sure every student is learning to his or her potential.

The Academic Knowledge and Skills (AKS) were 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 learn more about what your child will learn during 1st grade 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 1ST GRADE!



1ST GRADE PARENT AKS BROCHURE



Academic
Knowledge
and Skills
2009–10

Language Arts



Learning to read and write is the basis for *all* learning. In 1st grade, 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. Students use reading and writing skills throughout the school day as part of Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies classroom activities. Activities include shared reading and writing experiences, choral reading, small-group guided reading, and independent reading and writing times—all within the context of classroom instruction and Writing Workshop.

Learn more about the Language Arts AKS online.

By the end of 1st grade, all students are expected to

- Understand the relationships between sounds and letters and patterns in words, such as consonant and vowel sounds, consonant blends, and word families (-ake, -at, -ed);
- Use grade-appropriate grammar and spelling skills in writing;
- Acquire 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 reading and writing to communicate through listening, speaking, and viewing.

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 appropriate accommodations.
- Knowing where each child is developmentally enables teachers to evaluate, plan, and teach 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.



**Literacy Tips
for Parents**

- Read together every day. Ask your child to make predictions and puzzle out new words, using picture clues.
- Visit the library. Regular trips to the library give your child a wider range of reading materials. Choose books that rhyme, repeat phrases, or have predictable stories.
- Writing opportunities include simple thank-you notes and personal dictionaries. Help your child create an A-to-Z “book” of new words, complete with sentences and drawings or magazine photos.

Listening, Speaking, and Viewing

1st graders listen to and write about a variety of literary forms, such as stories and poems, in a variety of fiction and nonfiction genres. These include fairy tales, fables, and biographies. They learn to listen attentively in order to respond to questions and directions. Students communicate in conversation with descriptive language by relating experiences, retelling stories, and discussing character, plot, and theme.

Reading

Strategies and Comprehension

1st graders read and tell about stories with photographs and illustrations and predict sequence, events, and outcomes. They discuss concepts of *real* and *imaginary* and *compare* and *contrast* within and between stories. Students read a variety of texts for both pleasure and purpose. 1st graders read and discuss their own writings, with or without picture support. They are expected to read grade-level texts with appropriate accuracy, speed, and expression in order to effectively comprehend what they read.

Word Work, Fluency, and Vocabulary

By the end of the year, 1st graders should be able to read and spell common sight words. Ask your child's teacher for a list of these common sight words. During the 1st grade year, teachers assess students' knowledge of these words and their ability to use them easily in their reading and writing.

Writing

Students write fiction and nonfiction stories with appropriate beginning, middle, and end. They begin to develop a sense of their audience and write for a specific purpose. 1st graders use grade-appropriate grammar, spelling, capitalization, and punctuation in their writing. They are able to read their writing to others.

Books to Read with Your 1st Grade Student

You Read to Me, I'll Read to You: Very Short Fairy Tales to Read Together
Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day
Bear Snores On

Ramona the Pest

Henry and Mudge

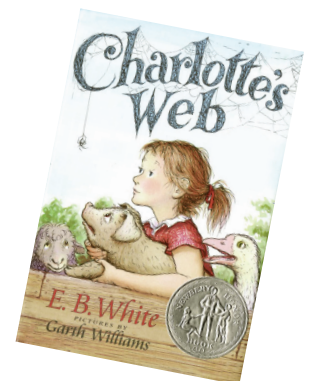
The Hundred Dresses

Charlotte's Web

The Little House

How the Elephant Got Its Trunk

Gail Gibbons' series of nonfiction titles



More Great Books for Children

Georgia Book Award Books:

www.coe.uga.edu/gcba

100 Best Books:

www.teachersfirst.com/100books.cfm

American Library Association Notable Books for Children:

www.ala.org/ala/awardsgrants

Mathematics



Through GCPS' K–12 Mathematics program, students will become confident and competent mathematical problem-solvers. They will be able to compute and have a deep conceptual understanding of numbers. Students will think critically. They will communicate their thoughts and mathematical reasoning appropriately as they prepare to compete globally.

*Learn more
about the Math
AKS online.*

The 1st grade curriculum focuses on the areas of process skills, numbers and operations, geometry (shapes), measurement, algebra (patterns), and data analysis. By the end of 1st grade, students should be able to do the following:

- Explain place value for numbers up to 100;
- Add and subtract numbers less than 100;
- Skip-count by 2's, 5's, and 10's, forward and backward, to and from numbers up to 100 (for example, 2-4-6-8 and 10-20-30-40);
- Use tools for measuring length, weight, and capacity;
- Create geometric shapes (squares, circles, triangles, rectangles, pentagons, hexagons, cylinders, cones, and rectangular prisms) and identify basic shapes within them;
- Tell time to the nearest hour and half-hour and describe how movement of the minute hand relates to the hour hand;
- Solve simple problems, including those involving spatial relationships (for example, near, far, behind, left of, etc.); and
- Record data and interpret simple charts and picture graphs.

1st grade students use a number of strategies and tools as they learn math. They work together to solve problems. They draw pictures and make connections to the real world. Students use hands-on manipulatives, coins, clocks, and number charts. 1st graders use technology in math lessons. They use word and number problems, and problem-solving strategies in the classroom.



Math Tips for Parents

- Keep at least one analog clock (with a standard clock face and hands) available in the house. Talk about the time.
- Look at objects around the house. Estimate size. Use non-standard measuring tools, such as paper clips or coins.
- 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. Themes of study include: Beliefs and ideas influence decisions and laws, and beliefs determine decision-makers; conflict causes change; culture is the product of society; actions affect society; and the movement of ideas and people affects everyone.



Civics Tips for Parents

- Ask your child to help you map out the route for a family trip. Talk about the cities or states that you will pass through in your travels. Look for signs and landmarks noted on the map.
- Talk about current events at an age-appropriate level.

Science



Exploration in Science is nurtured in 1st grade with a hands-on approach. Students explore concepts in the earth, life, and physical sciences. They begin to experience the steps of scientific investigations. In 1st grade, students will develop scientific skills, such as observing, collecting and analyzing data, making measurements, and making conclusions.

Characteristics of Science

1st graders are encouraged to ask questions about the world around them and begin to make predictions to answer those questions. Students use scientific tools to collect data and analyze results. They will learn how to estimate length and weight of various objects. Children develop models that represent scientific discoveries.

Types of Science

Earth Science

Students in 1st grade use weather instruments— such as a thermometer, wind vane, and barometer— to observe, measure, and analyze weather data to determine weather patterns. They explore the changes in water when it freezes and melts and how each phase relates to water temperature. 1st graders will evaluate the role of natural resources in our daily lives and in future generations.

*Learn more
about the Science
AKS online.*

Life Science

Children compare the basic needs of plants and animals. They learn to explain the basic parts of a plant— root, stem, leaf, and flower. 1st graders compare various animals based on their physical appearance, growth, and movement.

Physical Science

1st graders investigate the properties of light and sound by identifying sources of light and recognizing the role of vibrations in sound production. Children also explore the effect of magnets on various objects and demonstrate how magnets attract and repel.



Science Tips for Parents

- Visit a garden center. Ask your child to draw pictures of the plants and flowers and sort them by color, shape, or size.
- In the morning, talk about the weather outside. Ask your child to predict what type of clothing would be best to wear in this type of weather.
- Ask your child to find things around the house and predict whether a magnet will attract, repel, or have no effect on the object.

Interpretive Skills/Where We Live/Personal Finance

1st grade students can locate their city, county, state, nation, and continent on a map. They know the major features of the Earth's surface. Students learn to interpret timelines. They are able to separate fact from opinion. 1st graders identify the main idea, detail, sequence of events, and cause and effect in a Social Studies context. They begin to study the costs and benefits of spending and saving choices.

*Learn more about the
Social Studies AKS online.*

Our Nation

In the K–5 Social Studies program, students focus on Our Heritage. In 1st grade, students learn about American folktales and their place in the story of America. Children learn about the contributions of American Heroes and the positive character traits they displayed. (See the section on Character Education to learn more about this area of emphasis.)

Art and Music



The 1st grade student is a “natural” artist and musician. Teachers encourage children’s natural enthusiasm for music and art.

Learn more about the Fine Arts AKS online.



Fine Arts Tips for Parents

- Encourage your child to draw, paint, or make crafts at home. Keep supplies and a work area available
- Listen to music together. Have a family sing-a-long.
- Visit the art museum.
- Attend a family-friendly concert, outdoor music show, or choral or band concert at the high school.

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. They use imagination in creating art.

1st grade students create works of art using balance, textures, and primary and secondary colors. They use a variety of materials and techniques in composing original art. 1st graders compare similarities, differences, themes, and mood in artworks. They distinguish between different kinds of artwork from many cultures.

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 selected orchestra instruments.

1st grade students participate in musical activities that represent a variety of time periods and cultures. They accompany music with classroom instruments and body percussion. Children identify repeating and contrasting sections in music. They have opportunities to develop their creative skills. Students perform with increasing accuracy in pitch by singing songs in a limited range.

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.

1st grade students learn how to be safe and how to get help in an emergency. Lessons focus on basic practices to promote health and to prevent disease or illness. Children learn basic rules for taking medicines and vitamins. They learn what to do when they encounter unknown or dangerous substances. 1st graders understand the importance of eating healthy foods. They learn strategies for resolving a conflict. Students are able to identify family members and their roles in the family. 1st graders identify the basic internal and external structures of the body.

Learn more about the Health and PE AKS online.

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, 1st grade students become more fit and learn fitness concepts. They learn about physical activities that enhance their health. Students develop skills such as throwing, catching, kicking, and hitting a variety of objects. 1st graders 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 1st grade PE program.



Health & PE Tips for Parents

- Serve a “rainbow” of foods— five to nine servings of a wide variety of colorful fruits and vegetables— each day.
- Set a good example. . . Your own heart-healthy habits will help your child develop the same. Exercise or play together.
- Establish a family emergency plan. Practice an evacuation.

Please sign and return to your child’s teacher. If you have any questions, please contact the teacher and/or administrator at the school.

I understand that my child who is enrolled in 1st grade must successfully master the current grade-level Academic Knowledge and Skills (AKS) in order to earn promotion to the next grade level.* Readiness for the 2nd grade will be determined by my child’s classroom grades and/or input from the school’s Student Support Team (SST). Should my child not earn promotion to 2nd grade, he or she will have the opportunity to attend summer school to learn the AKS not demonstrated during the school year.

* A special education student’s promotion is determined by his or her Individualized Education Program (IEP). Promotion for a student with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) is determined by his or her AKS Modification and Intervention Plan, or by recommendation of the English Language Learner (ELL)/Test Participation Committee.

Student name (please print)

Parent signature

Date

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 and accelerated in pace. All gifted education classes offer experiences that extend GCPS' AKS curriculum. These experiences help students develop 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. Students served in the program have physical, mental, or emotional impairments. 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



English instruction is available for students whose primary or home language is other than English and whose lack of proficiency in English limits their successful participation in the regular classroom. ESOL instruction addresses English listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

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.

Counseling and Advisement



Counselors partner with families and teachers to remove barriers to student achievement. They deliver developmentally appropriate lessons in the areas of academic, career, and life skills. Counselors build strong relationships with their students through classroom guidance, small-group counseling, and individual counseling. Every Gwinnett school has a highly qualified counseling staff.

Technology/Information & Media Literacy



The school Media Center contributes to your child's academic achievement. The school media program supports teaching and learning and encourages lifelong reading. The media specialist works with teachers to help students learn to find, analyze, evaluate, interpret, and communicate information and ideas. These skills prepare students to live and work in our information-based society. In a GCPS Media Center, students will find... a state-certified, full-time media specialist; resources in a variety of formats that appeal to different learning styles; books and magazines for pleasure reading and research; an online catalog for locating materials; and computers that provide access to online resources that are instructional and age-appropriate.



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 excels 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 1st grade 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 1st Grade Experience

- **Read, talk, and listen to your child** often and about a variety of subjects.
- **Encourage your 1st grader's natural love for learning** with praise. Recognize your child's curiosity and hard work. Let your child know that his or 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 1st grade AKS on the school system's web site (www.gwinnett.k12.ga.us).
- **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 important.
- **Stay informed** on school and class happenings. Read newsletters and reports that come home.
- **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.
- **Be sure your child knows important personal information**— your complete name, address, and phone number.
- **Turn errands into field trips.** Talk about the things you see and do at the post office, grocery store, or bank.
- **Share family stories and traditions.** Observation and conversation are important skills for your child to develop.
- **Give your child daily responsibilities,** such as choosing which clothes to wear to school, setting the dinner table, or making his bed.
- **Encourage healthy habits,** such as eating nutritious foods, getting ample rest, having a regular bedtime, and being physically active.
- **Visit local points of interest,** including parks, museums, and the public library. Library cards are free for county residents.

About Promotion to 2nd Grade

A child enrolled in 1st grade must successfully master the current grade-level AKS in order to earn promotion to the next grade level.* Readiness for the 2nd grade will be determined by the child's classroom grades and/or input from the school's Student Support Team (SST). Should a child not earn promotion to 2nd grade, he or she will have the opportunity to attend summer school to learn the AKS not demonstrated during the school year.

* Note: A special education student's promotion is determined by his or her Individualized Education Program (IEP). Promotion for a student with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) is determined by his or her AKS Modification and Intervention Plan, or by recommendation of the English Language Learner (ELL)/Test Participation Committee.



Gwinnett County Public Schools

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For more information about the AKS, please visit www.gwinnett.k12.ga.us and click on the **AKS/Curriculum** link under **Quick Links**.

About Testing

Gwinnett County Public Schools measures student achievement in a number of ways to ensure students are learning the curriculum. 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.

Testing in 1st Grade

All 1st grade students participate in the Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT) assessment in the fall and in the state's Criterion-Referenced Competency Tests (CRCT) in the spring.

CogAT

CogAT is a series of tests that provide information related to the development of general and specific learning skills of students. These skills are important for learning and problem-solving, both in and out of school. This test gives teachers details on how students learn so that teachers can develop appropriate learning objectives for each child.

CRCT

The CRCT measures what students should know and be able to do at the end of 1st grade, based on the state's curriculum, the Georgia Performance Standards (GPS). (Gwinnett's AKS curriculum includes and goes beyond the state's GPS curriculum.) Georgia students in 1st grade take the CRCT in Reading, English/Language Arts, and Mathematics. Students are expected to meet or exceed grade-level expectations on each CRCT subtest to be on track for success in school.