

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 5th 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 5TH GRADE!**



## 5TH GRADE PARENT AKS BROCHURE



Academic  
Knowledge  
and Skills  
2009–10

# Language Arts



Learning to read and write is the basis for *all* learning. In 5th grade, students work on reading and writing skills that will lead to success in subsequent grade levels. Specifically, the focus is on word analysis, 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 5th grade, all students are expected to:

- Use words, patterns in words, and word meanings to read fluently and comprehend effectively;
- 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

- Encourage your student to select his or her own reading material— whether that's a how-to book, a joke book, a special-interest magazine, or a graphic anime novel.
- Watch for reading problems. If your student has trouble with routine reading (signs or instructions), reads at a very slow pace on assigned reading, or avoids pleasure reading, he or she may benefit from extra reading support at school and at home.

## Listening, Speaking, and Viewing

5th 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 historical fiction, drama, biographies, reports, and media. They learn to listen attentively in order to respond to questions and directions. They communicate in conversation with descriptive language by relating experiences and retelling stories. Students analyze various literary and nonliterary elements, such as character, setting, plot, and theme, cause/effect, and main idea and supporting details.

## Reading

### Strategies and Comprehension

5th graders read and analyze a variety of both literary and informational texts. These include drama, poetry, and nonfiction texts. Students relate themes in what they read to personal experience. They make well-developed connections and analyze authors' use of various elements of writing for effect and purpose. 5th graders 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, 5th graders should be able to read and spell all common sight words and words frequently occurring in writing. Ask your child's teacher for a list of these common sight words. During the 5th grade year, teachers assess students' knowledge of these words and their ability to use them easily in their reading and writing.

## Writing

At this age, students write fiction and nonfiction stories and reports with well-defined ideas and organizational structures. 5th graders use the elements of writing style— audience awareness, voice, and rich, descriptive language— to make their writing interesting and informative. They use grade-appropriate grammar, spelling, capitalization, and punctuation in their writing. Students revise and edit their own work. These rigorous learning opportunities help prepare students for the state writing assessment in 5th grade.

## Recommended Reading for Your 5th Grade Student

*Sir Cumference and the First Round Table: A Math Adventure*  
*From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler*  
*Hatchet*

*The Phantom Tollbooth*

*The Secret Garden*

*Island of the Blue Dolphins*

*Pollyanna*

*The Grapes of Math*

## More Great Books for Children

Georgia Book Award Books:

[www.coe.uga.edu/gcba](http://www.coe.uga.edu/gcba)

100 Best Books:

[www.teachersfirst.com/100books.cfm](http://www.teachersfirst.com/100books.cfm)

American Library Association Notable

Books for Children:

[www.ala.org/ala/awardsgrants](http://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 5th grade curriculum focuses on the areas of process skills, numbers and operations, geometry (shapes), algebra (patterns), and data analysis. By the end of 5th grade, students should be able to do the following:

- Further develop their understanding of multiplication and division of whole numbers, decimals, and fractions;
- Find multiples and factors;
- Analyze and use divisibility rules;
- Use  $>$ ,  $<$ , or  $=$  to compare fractions justify comparisons;
- Investigate algebraic mathematical expressions;
- Compute the area and volume of simple geometric figures;
- Understand the meaning of congruent geometric shapes;
- Explain the relationship of the circumference of a circle, its diameter, and pi; and
- Use percentages and circle graphs to interpret statistical data.

5th grade students use a number of strategies and tools as they learn math. They use a variety of representations to demonstrate their knowledge, such as concrete/pictorial, verbal/written, and numeric/data-based. Students use fraction manipulatives, protractors, and rulers. They use technology, data, and problem-solving strategies.



**Math Tips  
for Parents**

- Discuss fractions used in daily life (recipes, interest rates, carpentry, etc).
- Ask your child to explain his or her answers on math problems. How does your student know the answer is correct?
- Compare and contrast the volume of different household items (cereal boxes, buckets, refrigerator, etc.).



## 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**

- Help your child to connect votes in Atlanta and Washington, D.C., with everyday life. How does a vote on college tuition affect your family? How about a local zoning decision?
- Use family vacations to learn more about the geography and history of the United States.

## Science



5th grade students study earth, life, and physical science through inquiry and investigation. Students design and conduct experiments using the scientific method. They formulate conclusions based on their results. Students demonstrate the relationships discovered in their experiments through graphs and charts. They explore jobs in science.

### Characteristics of Science

5th graders use scientific equipment to make observations and measurements while conducting experiments. They recognize which equipment to use for a specific measurement. Students understand the importance of metric measurements in science. They practice safety in the science lab and use scientific tools.

### Types of Science

#### Earth Science

5th graders analyze the Earth's surface and explain how features are caused by constructive and destructive processes. Students explain the role of technology— for instance, dams, levees, and storm drain management— in the control of these processes.

#### Life Science

Students classify organisms to simplify the study of living things. They sort animals and plants into groups, based on external features. Students study beneficial and harmful microorganisms. They identify the cell as the building block of living organisms. 5th graders use microscopes and hand lenses to observe cell structure. Students compare and contrast learned behaviors and inherited traits and the role genes play in the transfer of traits.

*Learn more about the Science AKS online.*

#### Physical Science

5th graders distinguish between physical and chemical changes. They investigate the properties of substances before, during, and after a change. Students investigate electricity, magnetism and circuits.



**Science Tips  
for Parents**

- Bake a cake together. Discuss the difference in the substances before and after they are baked. At which point did a chemical change occur in the ingredients?
- Look through family photographs with your child. Point out common features of family members. Inherited traits— such as eye color, height, and the shape of the nose or ear— are passed through generations of families and can be observed by looking at external features.

### Interpretive Skills/Where We Live/Personal Finance

5th grade students draw conclusions and make generalizations in comparing information on maps. They review information critically, checking for consistency and relevancy. Students learn about basic economic concepts. They focus on events in the U.S. economy throughout history.

*Learn more about the Social Studies AKS online.*

### Our Nation

In the K–5 Social Studies program, students focus on Our Heritage, studying the history and geography of the U.S. in 5th grade. Students focus on key events, people, and places of the United States— from the Civil War to modern times. 5th graders study causes and consequences of wars and key economic developments. They focus on citizens' rights and responsibilities and the importance of being good citizens. (*See the section on Character Education to learn more about this area of emphasis.*)

## Art and Music



### Visual Arts

In grades 3–5, visual arts students sharpen observational skills and increase technical skills. Through repetition in the elementary grades, students master art concepts. They distinguish differences between artworks from around the world and across the centuries. Children study the movements of Realism, Expressionism, and Structuralism in art history. Students explore art careers. They interpret and analyze works of art.

*Learn more about the Fine Arts AKS online.*

5th graders use a broader range of subject matter and media. As students learn about art, they create works of their own. They make drawings, paintings, sculptures, prints, pottery, fiber art, mixed media, and digital images. Students explore color, texture, value changes, contrast, and contour. They focus on design, composition, and form in their work. They use technology to create art.



#### Fine Arts Tips for Parents

- “Commission” a portrait by your student.
- Play “Name that Tune” with popular music.
- Ask your child to serve as the family photographer on vacation. Work together on a scrapbook of the photos.
- Talk to your child about playing an instrument in the middle school band or orchestra.

### General Music

The music program for grades 3–5 creates a foundation for further music study in middle school. Students experience a variety of music styles through listening, moving, creating, singing, and playing instruments. Discussion and reflection support their musical understanding.

Students learn to perform harmonies through rounds, echo songs, and partner songs. They perform alone and in groups. Children create simple compositions and accompaniments. They create movements for musical dramatizations and interpretations.

5th graders are exposed to music of diverse cultures and time periods. They explore careers in music. Children demonstrate melodic direction. They recognize phrases and structures in musical form. Students explore differences in register and tone quality. They demonstrate expressive qualities of music. Students identify families of musical instruments by sound and sight. 5th graders learn how to read music, including standard notation, scales, and musical symbols.

## 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.

5th grade students know first aid for a variety of emergencies. Lessons focus on risk factors and choices that might cause or prevent health problems. Students identify refusal skills needed to resist peer pressure. They understand the effects and consequences of substance abuse. Children understand how to read food labels to make healthy choices. They identify ways to manage stress. Students develop a better understanding of the physical and emotional changes during puberty. The immune and endocrine systems and reproductive anatomy are part of the 5th grade curriculum.

*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, 5th 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. 5th graders use acceptable behaviors in groups. Movement and motor skills—including jumping, rolling, balancing, stopping and starting, and changing direction— are important parts of the 5th grade PE program.



#### Health & PE Tips for Parents

- Take your child grocery shopping. Ask your child to check labels and help you make healthy choices.
- Give your child chores requiring physical exertion. Keep in mind his strength, coordination, and maturity.
- Reinforce what your child is learning about peer pressure. Share your expectations. Role-play situations your child might encounter.

**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 5th grade must score in the “Meets Standards” (Level 2) range or higher on the Reading and Mathematics subtests of the Criterion-Referenced Competency Tests (CRCT) to earn promotion under state guidelines. I understand that my child also must earn a passing score on the Georgia Grade 5 Writing Assessment, which, in Gwinnett, is a Gateway Test. My student also must successfully master the current grade-level Academic Knowledge and Skills (AKS) in order to earn promotion to the next grade level.\* Should my child not earn promotion to 6th grade, he or she will have the opportunity to attend summer school to learn the AKS not demonstrated during the school year and have the opportunity to take needed retests. A student who does not meet all promotion requirements after summer school and retests will not be promoted to 6th grade. Instead, the student will receive extra help the next year through a transition program. \*A special education student's promotion is determined by his or her Individualized Education Program (IEP). If a student learning English is not successful on the Reading and Mathematics CRCT subtests (a state promotion requirement), the student must take a retest for the failed subtest(s) during summer school. If the student does not pass the retest(s), a Student Support Team will determine the student's placement for the next school year.

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 area 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 5th 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 5th Grade Experience

- **Read, talk, and listen to your child** often and about a variety of subjects.
- **Let your child know that his or her academic success is important to you.** If your child struggles, be encouraging. Praise progress made.
- **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 5th grade AKS on the school system's web site ([www.gwinnett.k12.ga.us](http://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.
- **Give your child daily responsibilities**, such as washing the dishes, folding laundry, helping with yard work, keeping an eye on a younger sibling for a few minutes, or helping make meals.
- **Encourage healthy habits**, such as eating nutritious foods, getting ample rest, having a regular bedtime, and being physically active. Talk to your child about personal hygiene.
- **Visit local points of interest**, including parks, museums, and the public library. Library cards are free for county residents.

#### About Promotion to 6th Grade

The state requires that Georgia 5th graders score in the "Meets Standards" (Level 2) range or higher on the Reading and Mathematics subtests of the CRCT to earn promotion. In addition, GCPS students must earn a passing score on the Georgia Grade 5 Writing Assessment, which, in Gwinnett, is a Gateway test. Students also must successfully master the current grade-level AKS in order to earn promotion to the next grade level.\* Should a child not earn promotion to 6th grade, he or she will have the opportunity to attend summer school to learn the AKS not demonstrated during the school year. Students also have the opportunity to take needed retests. A student who does not meet all promotion requirements after summer school and retests will not be promoted to 6th grade. Instead, the student will receive extra help the next year through a transition program.

\* Note: A special education student's promotion is determined by his or her Individualized Education Program (IEP). If a student learning English is not successful on the Reading and Mathematics CRCT subtests (a state promotion requirement), the student must take a retest for the failed subtest(s) during summer school. If the student does not pass the retest(s), a Student Support Team will determine the student's placement for the next school year.



#### Gwinnett County Public Schools

437 Old Peachtree Road, NW  
Suwanee, GA 30045  
[www.gwinnett.k12.ga.us](http://www.gwinnett.k12.ga.us)

For more information about the AKS, please visit [www.gwinnett.k12.ga.us](http://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 program helps teachers monitor students' academic progress. Assessment data and information pinpoints strengths and weaknesses. This focus allows teachers to plan targeted instruction that promotes each student's success.

### Required Testing for 5th Grade

All 5th grade students participate in the Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT) assessment and the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS) in the fall and the CRCT in the spring. 5th graders also take the Georgia Grade 5 Writing Assessment in March.

**CogAT** provides information related to skills that 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.

The **ITBS** is a national, norm-referenced test that provides information on student achievement, based on common knowledge and skills. Norm-referenced tests allow scores to be compared to other students who took the same test following the same testing procedures. This test identifies strengths and weaknesses in basic skills so teachers can provide support.

The **CRCT** measures what students should know and be able to do at the end of 5th 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.) 5th graders take the CRCT in Reading, English/Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies. Students are expected to meet or exceed grade-level expectations. Students must pass the CRCT in Reading and Mathematics for promotion.

The **Writing Assessment** evaluates the student's response to an assigned topic from one of three types of writing— narrative, informational, or persuasive. The student's score reflects his or her command of the topic and the English language. The scoring report indicates the student's writing strengths and areas that need improvement.