

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 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 PARENT AKS BROCHURE



Academic
Knowledge
and Skills
2009–10

Language Arts



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. 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 kindergarten, all students are expected to:

- Understand that print carries meaning;
- Begin to understand sound/letter relationships and patterns in words such as consonant and vowel sounds, consonant blends, and word families (-ed, -am, -it);
- Begin to use grammar and spelling skills in writing (capitalization, end punctuation, grade-appropriate spelling);
- Begin to 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 reading and writing to communicate through listening, speaking, and dramatizing.

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.



- 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.

Listening, Speaking, and Viewing

Kindergartners 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, biographies, and reports. 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

Kindergarten students tell stories with pictures and learn to predict sequence, events, and outcomes. They explore concepts of *real* and *imaginary* as they *compare* and *contrast* within stories. They explain their own writings and drawings.

Concepts about Print

In kindergarten, children begin to see similarities and differences in words, and identify capital and small letters, words, and sentences.

Word Work, Fluency, and Vocabulary

By the end of the year, students 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 kindergarten 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 draw pictures, copy shapes and letters, and use phonetically spelled words to write about experiences and tell stories as they explore the stages of writing. Teachers write words, sentences, and stories as told by their students.

Kindergartners learn to write from left to right and from top to bottom on the page. They use capitalization at the beginning of sentences and punctuation at the end.

Books to Read with Your Kindergarten Student

Traditional nursery rhymes and folktales

The Cat in the Hat (and other “Beginning to Read” books by Dr. Seuss)

Kitten's First Full Moon

The Kissing Hand

Knuffle Bunny

Corduroy

Curious George

Olivia

George and Martha

Little Bear

Madeline

The Very Hungry Caterpillar

Where the Wild Things Are

Guess How Much I Love You

Chicka Chicka Boom Boom

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 kindergarten curriculum focuses on the areas of process skills, numbers and operations, geometry (shapes), measurement and time, and algebra (patterns). By the end of kindergarten, students should be able to do the following:

- Count objects up to 30;
- Write numerals through 20;
- Sequence and identify using ordinal numbers (1st-10th);
- Compare two or more sets of objects;
- Estimate quantities to 5 or 10;
- Identify coins by name and value (penny, nickel, dime, and quarter);
- Count out pennies to buy items that together cost less than 30 cents;
- Know the names of the days of the week, the months of the year, and the four seasons;
- Tell the time of day— morning, afternoon, and night— when daily events occur; and
- Recognize and name triangles, rectangles, squares, circles, spheres (balls), and cubes.

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. 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**

- 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 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 scientific strategies for making observations, collecting and analyzing data, making measurements, and describing the world around them.

Characteristics of Science

Students use scientific tools for observing, measuring, and manipulating objects in scientific 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 observable 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 the earth.

Life Science

Learn more about the Science AKS online.

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. Kindergartners recognize similarities and differences between themselves and other students.

Physical Science

Students learn to use their five senses to observe 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).
- Talk about the day sky and the night sky. Point out objects and movement in the night sky together.

Interpretive Skills/Where We Live/Personal Finance

Kindergarten students learn to use cardinal directions of East, West, North, and South. They learn about maps and globes and can identify their own geographic location. Students use words and phrases related to chronology and time. Kindergartners learn about good citizenship. They begin their economic education talking about choices.

Learn more about the Social Studies AKS online.

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.*)

Art and Music



The kindergarten 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

- Keep art and craft supplies and scrap paper on hand. Display your child’s creations.
- Listen to different types of music together.
- Visit the children’s art museum. Family “passes” are available for checkout from the county library.
- Share the songs that were your childhood favorites with your child.

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 2-D and 3-D mediums. 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, autoharp, 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.

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 kindergarten 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 1st 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 1st 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.

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.

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, kindergarten 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. 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.

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 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 her 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 kindergarten 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.
- **Help your child learn important personal information**— her complete name (and yours) and your 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.
- **Help your child learn self-care skills,** such as toileting, washing, eating, and dressing.
- **Visit local points of interest,** including parks, museums, and the public library. Library cards are free for county residents.

About Promotion to 1st Grade

A child enrolled in Kindergarten must successfully master the current grade-level AKS in order to earn promotion to the next grade level.* Readiness for the 1st 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 1st 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
 437 Old Peachtree Road, NW
 Suwanee, GA 30045
www.gwinnett.k12.ga.us

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.

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 curriculum— also called the Georgia Performance Standards or GPS. (Gwinnett's AKS curriculum includes and goes beyond the state's GPS curriculum.) 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. (See the box to the left.)

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.