

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 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

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 1st grade, students work on reading and writing skills that will lead to success in subsequent grade levels. Specifically, the focus is on reading with sufficient accuracy, rate, 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 1st grade, all students are expected to:

- Demonstrate understanding of spoken words, symbols, and sounds;
- Apply grade-appropriate phonics, language, and word analysis skills in writing and reading;
- Self-select books, self-monitor to correct errors when reading and writing, and talk with and listen to peers about one's reading and writing to become lifelong readers and writers; 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

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

Reading

1st graders read and tell about stories and informational books with photographs and illustrations to retell key details in a story or identify the main topic and retell key details of an informational text. They discuss concepts of *real* and *imaginary* and *compare* and *contrast* within and between books. Students read a variety of texts for both pleasure and purpose. They are expected to read grade-level texts with accuracy and fluency in order to effectively comprehend what they read.

Language (Phonics, Spelling, Vocabulary, and Handwriting)

By the end of the year, 1st graders 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 practice clear and legible handwriting.

Writing

Students write opinion pieces, informational text, and personal stories (narrative) that contain an ending. 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.



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.

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 1st grade focuses on developing number sense, understanding and using numbers through mathematical operations, geometry, measurement and data, and algebraic thinking. By the end of 1st grade, students should be able to do the following:

- Develop understanding of addition, subtraction, and strategies for addition and subtraction within 20;
- Develop understanding of whole number relationship and place value, including grouping in tens and ones;
- Develop understanding of linear measurement and measuring lengths;
- Tell and write time; and
- Solve problems using attributes of shapes and by putting together and taking apart shapes.

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. They solve word and number problems, and use 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. 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

- 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 constructing explanations.

Science and Engineering Practices

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 and use models that represent scientific concepts and design solutions to problems.

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 identify weather patterns. They explore the changes in water when it freezes and melts and how each phase relates to water temperature.

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 carrying out an investigation into 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.

Where We Live/Personal Finance/Civic Engagement

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.

Our Nation

In the K–5 Social Studies program, students focus on Our Heritage. In 1st grade, children learn about the contributions of American figures from our past and the positive character traits they displayed. (*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 1st grade 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. 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.

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. 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 an art museum.
- Attend a family-friendly concert, outdoor music show, or band, chorus, or orchestra concert at the high school.

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.

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, and striking a variety of objects with a body part and with other equipment. 1st graders learn to move in a variety of patterns and directions at different levels, practicing balance and weight transfer. They develop awareness of personal space, practice fitness assessments, and set goals.



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.

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.



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*

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.

- **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 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 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 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.
- **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.
- **Visit local points of interest**, including parks, museums, and the public library. Library cards are free for county residents.
- **Set expectations for appropriate school behavior.** Children love to move and enthusiastic learners like to share what they're learning. However, it's important to know *when* to move and share. Make sure your child understands the importance of following classroom rules, and knows that you expect good behavior throughout the school day.
- **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. 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.



Gwinnett County Public Schools

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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.

Testing in 1st Grade

All 1st grade students participate in the Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT) assessment in the fall.

CogAT

CogAT provides information related to the 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.