

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 4th 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 4TH GRADE!



4TH 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 4th 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 of fiction and informational (non-fiction) texts. 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 shared reading and writing experiences, small-group guided reading, and independent reading and writing times— all within the context of the balanced literacy classroom.

By the end of 4th grade, all students are expected to:

- Know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words;
- Apply grade-appropriate language skills in writing;
- 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 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 fiction and informational materials they select themselves and write on self-selected topics.
- Reading and writing are integrated into all subject areas.

Speaking and Listening

4th graders listen to and write about a variety of literary forms, such as stories, dramas, and poems, in a variety of fiction and non-fiction (informational) genres. These include folk tales, myths, biographies, and reports. They learn to refer to details and examples in the text when explaining. Students communicate in conversation by engaging in discussions with peers. They analyze various literary and non-literary elements, such as character, setting, point of view, theme, compare/contrast, and main idea and key details.

Reading

4th graders read and analyze a variety of both literary and informational texts. These include legends, folktales, fables, biographies, technical articles and texts, and reports. Students relate themes in what they read to personal experience and make well-developed connections. 4th graders are expected to read grade-level texts with accuracy and fluency in order to effectively comprehend what they read.

Language (Phonics, Spelling, Vocabulary, Grammar, and Handwriting)

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

Writing

At this grade level, students write opinion pieces on topics or texts that support a point of view and write informational and opinion pieces to examine a topic and share information clearly. They write narrative stories to develop real or imagined experiences. 4th 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.



Literacy Tips for Parents

- Your child may enjoy reading and discussing a book with friends. Check your school and public library for opportunities or help your child start his or her own club.
- Read daily as a family. Share your own favorite childhood books with your child.
- Give books as special gifts and help your child build a personal library.

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 4th grade focuses on developing number sense, understanding and using numbers through mathematical operations, fractions, geometry, measurement and data, and algebraic thinking. By the end of 4th grade, students should be able to do the following:

- Use place-value understanding and properties of operations to perform multi-digit arithmetic;
- Solve problems using the four operations with whole numbers;
- Develop understanding of equivalent fractions, addition and subtraction of fractions with like denominators, and multiplication of fractions by whole numbers;
- Analyze and classify geometric figures based on properties such as parallel sides, perpendicular sides, symmetry, and angle measure;
- Generate and analyze patterns; and
- Solve problems involving measurement and conversion of measurements from a larger unit to a smaller unit.

4th 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 graphs, scales, and fractional models. They use technology, data, and problem-solving strategies.



Math Tips for Parents

- Look for graphs in news stories. Talk about how they are used and what they mean.
- When you fill your gas tank, ask your child to calculate gas mileage.



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

- Value talk and talk values. Talk to your children about their day. Our daily lives are rich with opportunities to discuss values such as equity, fairness, and responsibility.
- Use family vacations to learn more about the geography and history of the United States.

Science



4th grade students explore earth, life, and physical science through a hands-on, inquiry approach. Students begin to construct arguments to scientific investigations based on experimental results. They continue to organize their data in tables, charts, and graphs. Students recognize the role of inferences and predictions in scientific investigations. They use data and evidence to support their conclusions.

Science and Engineering Practices

Organizing data and distinguishing the relationships between measured variables is an important inquiry skill in 4th grade. Students use scientific tools to make measurements. They learn to write instructions that can be followed in a scientific procedure. Children develop models to aid in the explanation of scientific observations.

Types of Science

Earth Science

4th graders study components of our solar system. They compare Earth to other planets. Students study constellations and star patterns during the seasons. 4th graders explain the day and night cycle and study the position and sequence of moon phases. They collect data to predict weather events and seasonal changes.

Life Science

4th graders study ecosystems in life science. They construct food chains to identify producers, consumers, and decomposers in a system. Students explore factors that affect the survival or extinction of organisms.

Physical Science

Students investigate the behavior of light using mirrors, lenses, and prisms. 4th graders explore how sound is produced and the ways sound travels through solids, liquids, and gases. Students demonstrate the relationship between force and motion. They will identify the role of simple machines in making work easier.



Science Tips for Parents

- Have your child use a flashlight to explore behaviors of light. Shine a light at different objects, then record the results—*reflection, refraction, or absorption*.
- Watch the weather report with your child. Ask your child to explain the symbols used on the weather maps and to make predictions about the weather for the coming days.

Where We Live/Personal Finance/Civic Engagement

4th graders extend their understanding of maps and the impact of geography on historical and current events. Students formulate appropriate research questions. They interpret political cartoons. Students identify elements of a personal budget and explain the importance of personal spending and savings decisions.

Our Nation

In the K–5 Social Studies program, students focus on Our Heritage, studying the history and geography of the U.S. in 4th grade. The focus is on the American Revolution, the Founding Documents of the United States, westward expansion, the Civil War, and Reconstruction. Stories about the reform movements illustrate positive character traits. (*See the section on Character Education to learn more about this area of emphasis.*)

Fine Arts



Students in elementary school are at a critical age to develop the creative skills that will set the foundation for successful careers. In fact, creativity is ranked as one of the top skills sought by employers. Achievement in both Visual Arts and Music is assessed in 4th grade. Talk to your child about his or her fine arts vocabulary and accomplishments.

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.

4th 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, form, value changes, contrast, design, composition, and texture in their work. They use technology to create art.

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.

4th graders are exposed to music of diverse cultures and time periods. They identify master composers and compositions. Children explore the difference between music in major and minor keys and differences in vocal registers. Students learn how musical elements, such as melody and rhythm, contribute to the character of a composition. They identify families of musical instruments by sound and sight. 4th graders learn how to read music, including notation, scales, and musical symbols.

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. At gift-giving times, encourage your child to make gifts for family and friends using skills learned in art class.
- Watch for orchestra and symphony events especially for children. They often feature the conductor talking about the instruments used in the compositions.

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.

4th grade students understand first aid procedures for emergencies involving bleeding. Lessons focus on the impact of rest, food choices, sleep, and recreation on overall health. Students learn how to develop personal goals to stay healthy. They learn about the role of digestion. Students recognize how to prevent a variety of diseases and illnesses. 4th graders can explain the effects of drugs and tobacco. They understand the appropriate use of over-the-counter drugs. Students identify ways to resolve conflict without fighting. They understand the importance of care, consideration, and respect for oneself and others. 4th graders develop a general understanding of physical and emotional changes during puberty.

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, individually and in game-like situations. 4th graders combine movements in a variety of sequences and patterns. They participate in fitness assessments and goal-setting. Parents will receive a fitness assessment report on their child at the end of the school year.



**Health & PE
Tips for Parents**

- Talk to your child about the food pyramid and making good dietary decisions.
- Encourage your child to be physically active, whether in organized sports, with friends, or on family outings.
- Start the conversation at home with an age-appropriate book about how boys and girls change during puberty.

MYeCLASS Student Portal Information

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

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

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

Specialized Programs and Services

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

Gifted Education



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

Special Education and Psychological Services



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

English to Speakers of Other Languages



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

Character Education



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

Advisement and Counseling



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

Technology/Information & Media Literacy



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



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

BE...

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

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

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



Be There is a national movement that inspires parents to become more involved in their child's education and their public schools. Teachable moments are everywhere. You can be your child's favorite teacher by connecting in meaningful ways as you go through the ordinary routines of the day... driving in the car, preparing a meal, shopping, or doing chores. Below and throughout this brochure, you will find tips for helping your child have a successful 4th 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 4th Grade Experience

- **Read, talk, and listen to your child** often and about a variety of subjects.
- **Encourage your 4th 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 4th 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.
- **Set expectations for appropriate school behavior.** Make sure your child understands the importance of following classroom rules, and knows that you expect good behavior throughout the school day.
- **Give your child daily responsibilities,** such as taking out the trash, feeding or walking pets, folding laundry, 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. 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.
- **Share family stories and traditions.** Encourage your child to talk to older family members about their experiences and family history.



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 4th Grade

The Georgia Department of Education administers the Georgia Milestones Assessment System (Georgia Milestones) which is a comprehensive assessment program. Students in grades 4 take an end-of-grade assessment in Language Arts and Mathematics. Learn more about testing on the GCPS website, or talk to your child's teacher.

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