

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 3rd 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 3RD GRADE!**



## 3RD 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 3rd 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 3rd 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

3rd 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 dramas, biographies, reports, and media. They learn to listen attentively in order to ask and respond to questions and directions. Children communicate in conversation with descriptive language by relating experiences and retelling stories, using details found in the text. 3rd graders discuss various literary and non-literary elements, such as character, point of view, moral, compare and contrast, and main idea and key details.

## Reading

3rd graders read a variety of fiction and informational texts for both pleasure and purpose. They use a variety of strategies for support when they encounter difficult texts. Strategies include retelling, summarizing/paraphrasing, and using evidence from the text to support their inferences. Students make and defend opinions about a text. 3rd 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. 3rd 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.



- Set aside daily reading time at home. Take turns reading a chapter in a favorite chapter book.
- Don't take a holiday from reading. During car trips, take along books (or audiobooks) that the whole family will enjoy.
- Be a good example. When it's reading time for your child, pick up a book or magazine yourself.
- Go to the library regularly.

## 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 3rd 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 3rd grade, students should be able to do the following:

- Represent and solve problems with multiplication and division within 100;
- Solve two-step problems involving the four operations, and identify and explain patterns in arithmetic;
- Develop understanding of fractions as numbers, especially unit fractions (fractions with numerator 1);
- Develop understanding of area models and area, and relate area to multiplication and to addition;
- Describe and analyze two-dimensional shapes and their attributes; and
- Solve problems involving measurement and estimation of liquid volume, mass, and time intervals.

3rd 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 base ten pieces, rulers, and charts. They use technology, data, graphs, and problem-solving strategies.



### Math Tips for Parents

- Measure with cups, pints, quarts, gallons, and liters.
- Household chores offer opportunities to practice math skills. Ask your child to use measuring cups and spoons to show fractions while you cook dinner. Discuss fractional portions as you fold laundry, especially towels and sheets.



## 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

- Vote and wear that "I voted" sticker with pride. Explain to your child why you vote.
- Talk to your child about your civic duties and experiences in a positive way.

## Science



In 3rd grade, students begin to develop an understanding of science and engineering practices. Through exploration and inquiry, students ask questions, make predictions, and construct explanations. They develop their understanding of the earth, life, and physical sciences. Students use scientific tools to experience science in these content areas.

### Science and Engineering Practices

3rd graders learn to record their observations, create charts and graphs, and develop explanations for their results. Children use scientific tools to measure and develop sketches and models to represent complex or abstract concepts. They are trained in safe practices and learn to recognize the need for careful work in science investigations.

### Types of Science

#### Earth Science

Students in 3rd grade investigate physical attributes of rocks and soils through asking questions and making observations. Children classify rocks by their physical properties. They learn the role of weathering in the condition of rocks and soil over time. 3rd graders investigate fossils and explain how they are formed and uncovered.

#### Life Science

3rd grade students study Georgia habitats. They explore what happens to organisms when habitats change and identify features that allow animals and plants to live and thrive within their habitats. Children explain the effects of pollution and ways to protect the environment through conservation.

#### Physical Science

Students learn to use their five senses to observe characteristics of objects and to classify by physical attributes. 3rd graders investigate heat energy and measuring temperature.



### Science Tips for Parents

- Take a walk in the park with your child. Discuss the types of birds, animals, and insects that you observe. Talk about why those animals live in the park and not in a parking lot or near a lot of houses.
- When packing a lunch, ask your child to suggest materials or containers that would be better insulators and would help keep the food cold for a longer time.

### Where We Live/Personal Finance/Civic Engagement

3rd grade students can explain the impact of geography on events. They learn to use longitude and latitude to determine location. Students can draw conclusions and generalizations, based on maps. 3rd graders understand productive resources. They learn how the government uses taxes to provide some goods and services in a market economy.

### Our Nation

In the K–5 Social Studies program, students focus on Our Heritage. 3rd grade students begin their study of our American Heritage, with a focus on American Indians, exploration, and Colonial America. Students learn about the three branches of government at the state and federal levels. (*See the section on Character Education to learn more about this area of emphasis.*)



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.

### 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.

3rd 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.

3rd 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 register. 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. 3rd graders begin to 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.



- Embrace your child's creativity. Give him opportunities and provide art supplies so he can explore and create at home.
- Ask your child to listen to the soundtrack when you watch movies or shows from a different time period or country.
- Visit art museums around metro Atlanta. Watch for shows and events that feature art from local high school artists.



### 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.

3rd grade students understand how to report and treat common emergencies. They analyze how personal decisions and actions can affect the chance for injury. Lessons focus on proper hygiene to promote health and prevent illness. Children develop a basic understanding of circulatory and respiratory systems and illnesses. They develop an understanding of taking responsibility for health choices. Students assess the consequences of using drugs, alcohol, and tobacco. 3rd graders identify healthy expression of emotions. They learn how conflicts are resolved within the family.

### 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. 3rd 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

- Ask your child to help you to plan and prepare healthy meals for the family.
- Limit "stationary" leisure time— television, video and computer games, etc.— and substitute physical activity.
- Talk about good hygiene habits.

## 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](http://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 3rd 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 3rd Grade Experience**

- **Read, talk, and listen to your child** often and about a variety of subjects.
- **Encourage your 3rd 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 3rd grade AKS on the school system's website ([www.gcpsk12.org](http://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.
- **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 3rd Grade

The Georgia Department of Education administers the Georgia Milestones Assessment System (Georgia Milestones) which is a comprehensive assessment program. Students in grade 3 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.*