

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 (GSE) in Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies for middle 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 6th 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 6TH GRADE!**



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## 6TH GRADE

### 2020-21 PARENT AKS BROCHURE



ACADEMIC KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS  
GWINNETT COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

## Language Arts



Learning to read and write is the basis for all learning. In 6th grade, students work on reading and writing skills that will support them in learning all subjects. Specifically, students focus on reading with sufficient accuracy, rate, and expression to support comprehension of literary (fiction) and informational (non-fiction) texts. 6th graders use reading and writing skills throughout the school day as part of activities in all classrooms. The AKS emphasizes literacy skills across content areas, including technical subjects.

By the end of 6th grade, all students are expected to:

- Use words, patterns in words, and word meanings to read fluently and comprehend effectively in all texts and activities;
- Apply grade-appropriate language skills in writing;
- 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 reading and writing to communicate through listening, speaking, and viewing.

### Balanced Literacy

Teachers follow these principles to determine the best teaching methods, strategies, and materials to meet the needs of our students:

- Learning to read and write is a complex process with many facets.
- Reading and writing are integrated into all subjects— Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, and Connections classes.
- Reading and writing are about experiencing language in all aspects of learning and real-world experiences, 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 teaching strategies to teach every student.
- Learning to read and write occurs along a developmental progression of stages.
- All students can learn to read and write along this developmental progression with guided instruction.
- Knowing where each student is developmentally enables teachers to plan, teach, and evaluate appropriately.

- Students should be immersed in a literacy-rich environment in every subject area.
- Reading and writing to, with, and by students should occur daily, regardless of their ages or grade levels.
- Each day, students should have opportunities to read and write in a variety of genres.

### Speaking and Listening

6th graders read and write to communicate through a variety of forms, including interactions with peers and adults. They work to become critical readers and viewers of media resources. Students have a variety of learning experiences, including group work, presentations, and multimedia viewing, in order to prepare them as competent communicators.

### Reading

6th graders read and analyze a variety of both literary and informational texts. These include drama, poetry, and non-fiction texts. Students relate themes in what they read to personal experience. They make well-developed connections and analyze authors' use of various elements of writing for effect and purpose. 6th graders are expected to read grade-level texts with accuracy and fluency in order to effectively comprehend what they read.

### Language (Grammar, Spelling, and Vocabulary)

By the end of the year, students should demonstrate a command of Standard English in reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Students should be able to determine the meanings of words based on the context provided. Students should understand and be able to apply grade-appropriate, academic vocabulary.

### Writing

At this grade level, students write narrative, informational, and argumentative pieces with well-defined ideas and organizational structures. 6th 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

- The average U.S. student spends hours each day with electronic media (TV, computer, game systems), but only minutes reading. Set aside at least 15 to 30 minutes of daily reading time each day for your 6th grader.
- If your student is a reluctant reader, encourage him or her to select reading materials tied to a special interest. Reading is reading, whether a book, fashion magazine, the sports page, or a graphic novel.

## 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).

## 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 6th grade focuses on developing an understanding of the number system, ratio and proportional relationships, geometry, statistics and probability, and expressions and equations. By the end of 6th grade, students should be able to do the following:

- Apply and extend previous understanding of numbers to include the system of rational numbers;
- Understand ratio concepts and use ratio reasoning to solve problems;
- Reason about and solve one-variable equations and inequalities;
- Represent and analyze quantitative relationships between dependent and independent variables;
- Apply and extend previous understanding of multiplication and division to divide fractions by fractions;
- Summarize and describe distributions;
- Develop understanding of statistical variability; and
- Solve real-world problems involving area, surface area, and volume.

6th grade students use a number of strategies and tools as they learn math. They use a variety of representations to demonstrate their knowledge— concrete/pictorial, verbal/written, numeric/data-based, graphical, and symbolic. Students use technology, analyze data, and apply graphs to solve problems.



### Math Tips for Parents

- If your student has his eye on a new game, ask him to calculate the savings if the item is on sale— at 10%, 25%, or 50% off.
- Ask your student to determine the best deal between a product that comes in two sizes, comparing overall cost and cost by unit (for instance, by the ounce or pound).



## 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

- Look for opportunities to attend cultural festivals or events that celebrate regions your student is studying.
- Help your student keep up with world news in the paper or online. Talk about how events in one place affect people in another region— for instance, a trade dispute or regional conflict.

## Science



Exploration in Earth science is nurtured through a hands-on approach in 6th grade. Students explore concepts in the many branches of Earth science. They develop their lab experience using the steps of the scientific method. Students further develop scientific skills— observing, collecting and analyzing data, making measurements, and making conclusions.

### Science and Engineering Practices

6th graders use scientific-process skills. Students ask questions, analyze and interpret data, and communicate their explanations. They revise investigations based on their findings. The lab experience in 6th grade emphasizes safe practice. Students learn the value of scientific research in developing scientific theory.

### Types of Earth Science

#### Astronomy

Students in 6th grade study the effects of the relative position of the sun, Earth, and moon. They explore the composition of our solar system. Students identify and classify stars and star systems. 6th graders analyze current scientific views about the formation of the universe. They discuss how those views developed.

#### Hydrology and Meteorology

6th graders analyze the role of water in Earth processes— atmospheric conditions; river systems; water distribution; and waves, currents, and tides. They explore how the distribution of land and oceans affects climate and weather. They interpret weather maps, analyze data, investigate types of weather phenomena, and understand weather prediction.

#### Geology, Paleontology, and Ecology

Students investigate the composition and formation of Earth's surface and gradual changes over time. 6th graders study Earth's geological history. They use models of fossils to investigate the history of changing life forms.



### Science Tips for Parents

- Over several months, have your student keep a journal record of night sky observations. Note the date and time, the shape and size of the moon, and the position in the sky. Encourage your child to draw a diagram of the moon in the journal and indicate where the stars are around the moon.

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

6th grade students draw conclusions and make generalizations in comparing information on maps. They review information critically, checking for consistency and relevancy. Students analyze graphs and diagrams. 6th graders explain personal money management choices.

### Our Global Society

Middle school students examine challenges in a global society. 6th graders study contemporary and traditional issues affecting Europe, Canada, Latin America, and Australia. Students look at early civilizations and major developments in the regions studied. They compare and contrast governments, economic systems, and cultural characteristics. Students explain how location, climate, resources, population, and other characteristics make an impact on a region's development.

## Health and Physical Education Connections



Each year, middle school students are encouraged to take one semester of Health and one semester of Physical Education as Connections classes.

### Health

In Health classes, students learn how to live a healthy lifestyle and reduce the risks linked with illness and injury. They learn the consequences of unhealthy behaviors. At a grade-appropriate level, students explore these issues— relationships with others, drug use and misuse, personal and community safety, Internet safety, nutrition, disease prevention, family interactions, the influence of peer groups, anatomy, and physiology. Students develop tools needed to make healthy choices when facing the difficult decisions of a maturing adolescent.

6th graders set personal health goals and understand hygiene issues associated with puberty. Students learn prevention, detection, and control of noninfectious diseases. They analyze the physical effects of tobacco, marijuana, and inhalants on a variety of body systems. Students also examine media influence, local school policies, and laws related to these drugs. 6th graders analyze barriers to healthy eating and explore healthy choices. They demonstrate conflict-resolution skills. Students assess risk factors and explore responsible decision-making. They also recognize the relationship between sexual activity and peer pressure. Students learn about sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and identify ways to prevent STDs and pregnancy. The reproductive and endocrine systems and the process of reproduction are part of the 6th grade curriculum.

### 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 fitness as students acquire skills and develop physically. They understand physical and anatomical changes during the formative years.

In PE, 6th grade students learn fitness concepts and participate in fitness assessments. Each student's fitness assessment report will be distributed to his or her parents during the school year, depending on the student's schedule. 6th grade students learn how physical activities enhance their health. Students develop movement and motor skills, such as throwing, catching, kicking, and hitting a variety of objects. They practice conditioning principles to enhance performance. Students learn offensive and defensive strategies and cooperation through a variety of activities.

## Fine Arts, Academic, and Career and Technical Connections



Through the Connections Program, middle school students explore areas of study outside the core academic areas. Each quarter, students take two Connections classes. Options vary from school to school, but generally fall into three areas— fine arts, academic, and career/technical. Schools also may offer enrichment classes that extend learning in a core area, such as Language Arts or Mathematics, or classes that enhance study skills. Following are general descriptions of some Connections classes. Talk to your child's school to learn more about available programs.

### Music

Students have many and varied opportunities to experience Music at the middle school level. They may choose to participate in Band, Chorus, General Music, Guitar, Piano, Music Technology, or Orchestra. Music instruction builds on prior knowledge and skills from previous grade levels. Content, instruction, student performance, and evaluation methods become increasingly sophisticated at each grade or skill level. Students learn through performing. Middle school musicians learn to respond to and critique music. They understand music in relation to history and culture. Students demonstrate expressive and technical skills in vocal or instrumental performance. They improvise, compose, and arrange music. The middle school Music program prepares students for Music studies in high school.

### Visual Arts

The middle school Visual Arts program addresses the diverse abilities, experiences, and exposure that students bring to the classroom. The program offers experiences in the arts that promote creativity as well as problem-solving and critical-thinking skills. In class, students create artwork in various media with numerous techniques. They use the elements and principles of art in their work. Students have opportunities to exhibit their work. Research shows that experience in the Visual Arts improves Math achievement, analytical reasoning, and other learning skills.

### Theatre Arts

Theatre Arts students explore acting and improvisation. They learn the basic techniques of acting and character and voice development as well as presentation skills and scriptwriting. Older students learn beginning technical theatre skills, such as lighting and staging. Students may choose to perform in local school productions and participate in clubs and workshops.

### Dance

Dance is offered at some Gwinnett middle schools and encourages students to study movement, physical fitness, and health through the Fine Arts. Opportunities to perform are provided regularly for students in these programs. Students can study at beginning and advanced levels. They also are encouraged to explore these skills through programs in our community.

*(continued)*

## Connections *(continued)*



### Foreign Language

This introductory class focuses on language, customs, cultures, and geography for the areas where the language is spoken. Students learn practical vocabulary through a variety of written and oral activities. While language offerings vary, schools may choose to offer Spanish, French, German, and/or Latin at one or more grade levels, usually as an 18-week class.

### Journalism

This writing-centered course exposes students to a variety of media formats. Students learn the skills to communicate clearly and concisely. The curriculum draws heavily on 6th grade Language Arts skills. The class covers standards for publication, knowledge of ethics in journalism, and career opportunities.

### Career and Technical Education

Connections classes in Career and Technical Education expose middle school students to college and career options. The courses are exploratory in nature so students can identify a career or field that interests them. Each course introduces students to a variety of career pathways through hands-on, real world projects. Students learn transferable skills for success in high school and beyond. Connections that may be available at your student's middle school include:

- Business Administration and Finance
- Career Connections
- Computer Science
- Engineering and Technology
- Family and Consumer Science
- Junior Leadership Corps
- Marketing

### Other Connections Opportunities

Connections offerings vary from school to school. These and other classes also may be available at your student's middle school:

- Peer Leadership
- Academic Support and Enrichment in core subjects
- Research
- Study Skills

## 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.

## Gifted Education



The GCPS Gifted Education program, called PROBE at the middle school level, provides academic challenges for students 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.

## 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.

### 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 and the next, learn more about some of these programs and services.



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

### 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 student, school, community, public education*

## 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



School counselors support students in their overall academic success. Counselors build strong relationships with their students by delivering comprehensive, data-driven programming through core lessons in the classroom, small-group counseling, and individual counseling sessions. In addition, counseling programs focus on students' postsecondary planning and career readiness. They help students explore and plan for high school and career options, develop social/emotional life skills, and have a successful school experience. Gwinnett middle school students participate in an advisement program. This program builds meaningful connections between adults and students and promotes success in the areas of academic achievement, career and postsecondary planning, and social/emotional learning. Grade-level lessons address relevant concepts designed around the four pillars of Advisement— Relationships, Respect, Resilience, and Careers.

## 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.



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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 6th Grade

The Georgia Department of Education administers the Georgia Milestones Assessment System (Georgia Milestones) which is a comprehensive assessment program. Students in grade 6 take an end-of-grade assessment in Language Arts and Mathematics. Learn more about testing on the GCPS website, or talk to your student'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.*