

Gwinnett's curriculum for grades K–12 is called the Academic Knowledge and Skills (AKS) and is aligned to the state-adopted Common Core Georgia Performance Standards (CCGPS) in Language Arts and Mathematics 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 spell out the essential things students are expected to know and be able to do in that grade or subject. The AKS offer a solid base on which teachers build rich learning experiences. Teachers use curriculum guides, textbooks, technology, and other materials to teach the AKS and to make sure every student is learning to his or her potential.

The Academic Knowledge and Skills (AKS) were developed by our teachers, with input from our parents and community, in response to Gwinnett County Public Schools' mission statement:

The mission of Gwinnett County Public Schools is to pursue excellence in academic knowledge, skills, and behavior for each student resulting in measured improvement against local, national, and world-class standards.

Read on to learn more about what your child will learn during 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

2012-13 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 word analysis, as well as reading and writing with accuracy and expression. Students use reading and writing skills throughout the school day as part of Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies classroom activities. The Common Core-aligned AKS emphasizes literacy skills across the content areas. Activities include shared reading and writing experiences, choral reading, small-group guided reading, and independent reading and writing times— all within the context of classroom instruction.

Learn more about the Language Arts AKS online.

By the end of 3rd grade, all students are expected to:

- Use words, patterns in words, and word meanings to read fluently and comprehend effectively;
- Use grade-appropriate grammar and spelling skills in writing;
- Acquire skills to become lifelong readers and writers, such as self-selection of books, self-monitoring to correct errors when reading and writing, and talking with and listening to peers about one's reading and writing;
- 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 about experiencing language, not merely practicing isolated skills.
- Reading and writing are interconnected forms of communication that emerge from listening and speaking.
- There is no “one way” to teach reading or writing. Teachers will incorporate a wide variety of strategies to teach every student.
- Learning to read and write occurs along a developmental progression of stages.
- All children can learn to read and write along this developmental progression with appropriate accommodations.
- Knowing where each child is developmentally enables teachers to evaluate, plan, and teach appropriately.
- Children should be immersed in a print-rich environment.
- Reading and writing to, with, and by children should occur daily.
- Each day, children should have opportunities to read materials they select themselves and write on self-selected topics.
- Reading and writing are integrated into all subject areas.



- 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 books on tape) 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.

Speaking and Listening

3rd graders listen to and write about a variety of literary form, such as stories and poems, in a variety of fiction and non-fiction genres. These include drama, biographies, reports, and media. They learn to listen attentively in order to respond to questions and directions. Children communicate in conversation with descriptive language by relating experiences and retelling stories. 3rd graders discuss various literary and non-literary elements, such as character, setting, plot, theme, cause/effect, and main idea and supporting details.

Reading

3rd graders read a variety of 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, appropriate speed, and expression in order to effectively comprehend what they read.

Word Study

(Phonics, Spelling, Vocabulary, and Handwriting)

By the end of the year, 3rd graders should be able to read and spell words with selected patterns and common high-frequency words. During the 3rd grade year, teachers assess students' ability to use these words correctly in their reading and writing, and teach clear, legible handwriting.

Writing

At this age, students write fiction and non-fiction stories and reports with well-defined ideas and organizational structures. 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 and revise and edit their own work. These rigorous learning opportunities help prepare students as they develop their portfolios for the state writing assessment.

Suggested Reading for Your 3rd Grade Student

The Stories Julian Tells

“Who Has Seen the Wind?”

Something Told the Wild Geese

Bud, Not Buddy

Fireflies

Moonshot: The Flight of Apollo 11

Lincoln: A Biography

More Great Books for Children

Georgia Book Award Books:

www.coe.uga.edu/gcba

100 Best Books:

www.teachersfirst.com/100books.cfm

American Library Association Notable Books for Children:

www.ala.org/ala/awardsgrants



Mathematics



Through GCPS' Mathematics AKS, aligned with the Common Core Georgia Performance Standards, students will become confident and competent mathematical problem-solvers. They will be able to compute and have a deep conceptual understanding of numbers and mathematical processes. Students will think critically. They will communicate their thoughts and mathematical reasoning appropriately as they prepare to compete globally.

[Learn more about the Math AKS online.](#)

The 3rd grade curriculum focuses on the areas of mathematical practice, number and operations in base ten, fractions, geometry, measurement and data, operations, 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.
- Practice multiplication and division facts.
- 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. Themes of study include: Beliefs and ideas influence decisions and laws, and beliefs determine decision-makers; conflict causes change; culture is the product of society; actions affect society; and the movement of ideas and people affects everyone.



Civics Tips for Parents

- 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 the scientific method and the process for investigating the world around them. Through exploration and inquiry, students ask questions and make predictions. They develop their understanding of the earth, life, and physical sciences. Students experiment with scientific tools to experience science in these content areas.

Characteristics of Science

3rd graders learn to record their observations and develop conclusions about 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 cautious and careful work in science investigations.

Types of Science

Earth Science

Students in 3rd grade investigate physical attributes of rocks and soils through observations and measurements.

[Learn more about the Science AKS online.](#)

Children classify rocks by the manner in which they were formed. 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. Students identify examples of extinct species.

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 motion (push/pull) and the concept of gravity. They explore the composition of different substances.



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.

Interpretive Skills/Where We Live/Personal Finance

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.

[Learn more about the Social Studies AKS online.](#)

Our Nation

In the K–5 Social Studies program, students focus on Our Heritage. Our Democratic Heritage is the focus for 3rd grade. Students learn about the roots of our form of government. They discuss the life and times of historical figures and their efforts to expand people's rights and freedoms in our representative democracy. Stories illustrate the positive character traits they displayed. *(See the section on Character Education to learn more about this area of emphasis.)*



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.

Learn more about the Fine Arts AKS online.

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.



Fine Arts Tips for Parents

- Check out art books at the library. Learn more about composers through biographies.
- 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.

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.

Please sign and return to your child’s teacher. If you have any questions, please contact the teacher and/or administrator at the school.

I understand that my child who is enrolled in 3rd grade must score in the “Meets Standards” (Level 2) range or higher on the Reading subtest of the Criterion-Referenced Competency Tests (CRCT) to earn promotion under state guidelines. In addition, my child must successfully master the current grade-level Academic Knowledge and Skills (AKS) in order to earn promotion to the next grade level.* Readiness for the 4th grade will be determined by my child’s classroom grades and/or input from the school’s Student Support Team (SST). Should my child not pass the CRCT Reading subtest to earn promotion to 4th grade, he or she will have the opportunity to attend summer school and to take the CRCT retest.

* Note: A special education student’s promotion is determined by his or her Individualized Education Program (IEP). If a student learning English is not successful on the Reading CRCT subtest (a state promotion requirement), the student must take a retest during summer school. If the student does not pass the retest, a Student Support Team will determine the student’s placement for the next school year.

Student name (please print)



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.

Learn more about the Health and PE AKS online.

Physical Education (PE)

Physical Education emphasizes lifetime fitness, physical activity, and skill development. Through carefully planned classes, students learn the importance of physical activity— for their health and for their success in school. The curriculum promotes increased fitness as students acquire skills and develop physically.

In PE, students learn about physical activities that enhance their health. Students develop skills such as throwing, catching, kicking, and hitting a variety of objects. 3rd graders use acceptable behaviors in groups. Movement and motor skills—including jumping, rolling, balancing, stopping and starting, and changing direction— are important parts of the 3rd grade PE program.



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.

Parent signature

Date

Specialized Programs and Services

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

Gifted Education



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

Special Education and Psychological Services



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

English to Speakers of Other Languages



English instruction is available for students whose primary or home language is other than English and whose lack of proficiency in English limits their successful participation in the regular classroom. ESOL instruction addresses English listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

Character Education



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

Counseling and Advisement



Counselors partner with families and teachers to remove barriers to student achievement. They deliver a comprehensive and developmentally appropriate program which includes lessons in the areas of academic, career, and life skills. Counselors build strong relationships with their students through classroom guidance, small-group counseling, and individual counseling.

Technology/Information & Media Literacy



The school media program contributes to your child's academic achievement and prepares him or her to live and work in our information-rich society. Available resources include books and magazines for pleasure reading and research, an online catalog for locating materials, and computers that provide access to online instructional resources that are age-appropriate. In a GCPS Media Center, your child will find a state-certified, full-time media specialist who supports teaching and learning and encourages lifelong reading. The media specialist collaborates with teachers to help your child learn to locate, analyze, evaluate, interpret, and communicate information and ideas.



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

BE...

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

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

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



Be There is a national movement that inspires parents to become more involved in their child's education and their public schools. Teachable moments are everywhere. You can be your child's favorite teacher by connecting in meaningful ways as you go through the ordinary routines of the day... driving in the car, preparing a meal, shopping, or doing chores. Below and throughout this brochure, you will find tips for helping your child have a successful 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 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.gwinnett.k12.ga.us).
- Promote the importance of regular school attendance and being on time. Stress that school is a family priority and being in class each day is important.
- Stay informed on school and class happenings. Read newsletters and reports that come home.
- Ask to see your child's work. Keep samples so you can see and celebrate the growth your child makes this year.
- Become involved in the PTA and attend school events. Be a school volunteer if you are able.
- 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, 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.

About Promotion to 4th Grade

The state requires that Georgia 3rd graders score in the "Meets Standards" (Level 2) range or higher on the Reading subtest of the Criterion-Referenced Competency Tests (CRCT) to earn promotion. In addition, Gwinnett students must successfully master the current grade-level AKS in order to earn promotion to the next grade level.* Readiness for the 4th grade will be determined by the child's classroom grades and/or input from the school's Student Support Team (SST). Should a child not pass the CRCT Reading subtest to earn promotion to 4th grade, he or she will have the opportunity to attend summer school and to take the CRCT retest.

* Note: A special education student's promotion is determined by his or her Individualized Education Program (IEP). If a student learning English is not successful on the Reading CRCT subtest (a state promotion requirement), the student must take a retest during summer school. If the student does not pass the retest, a Student Support Team will determine the student's placement for the next school year.



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 curriculum. Our assessment program helps teachers monitor students' academic progress. Assessment data and information pinpoints students' strengths and weaknesses. This focus allows teachers to plan targeted instruction that promotes each student's success.

Required Testing for 3rd Grade

All 3rd grade students participate in the Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT) assessment and the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS) in the fall and the CRCT in the spring. In addition, 3rd grade students develop a writing portfolio during the year which is scored by teachers in March.

CogAT provides information related to 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.

The ITBS is a national, norm-referenced test that provides information on student achievement, based on common knowledge and skills. Norm-referenced tests allow scores to be compared to other students who took the same test following the same testing procedures. This test identifies strengths and weaknesses in basic skills so teachers can provide support.

The CRCT measures what students should know and be able to do at the end of 3rd grade, based on the state's curriculum—the Common Core Georgia Performance Standards (CCGPS) in Language Arts and Mathematics, and the Georgia Performance Standards (GPS) in other content areas. (Gwinnett's AKS curriculum includes and goes beyond the state's curriculum.) 3rd graders take the CRCT in Reading, English/Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies. Students are expected to meet or exceed grade-level expectations on each CRCT to be on track for success in school. The state requires students to pass the CRCT Reading subtest for promotion.

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For more information about the AKS, please visit www.gwinnett.k12.ga.us and click on the *AKS/Curriculum* link under *Quick Links*.