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, Mathematics, and literacy skills in Science, Social Studies, and Technical Education 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 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 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 student will learn during 7th grade and how you can support your child’s learning at home. We encourage you to talk to your student about what he or she is learning.

WELCOME TO 7TH GRADE!
Learning to read and write is the basis for all learning. In 7th grade, students work on reading and writing skills that will support them in learning all subjects. Specifically, students focus on word analysis, as well as reading and writing with accuracy and expression. 7th graders use reading and writing skills throughout the school day as part of activities in all classrooms. The Common Core-aligned AKS emphasizes literacy skills across content areas, including technical subjects.

By the end of 7th 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;
- 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; 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 children can learn to read and write along this developmental progression with appropriate accommodations.
- Knowing where each student is developmentally enables teachers to evaluate, plan, and teach 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**

7th 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**

7th 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. 7th graders are expected to read grade-level texts with accuracy, appropriate speed, and expression in order to effectively comprehend what they read.

By the end of the year, 7th graders should be able to read and spell words most frequently occurring in writing. Ask your student’s teacher for a list of these common words. Teachers assess students’ ability to use these words correctly in their reading and writing. Students learn vocabulary with a focus on word analysis. They analyze key words in every subject area.

**Writing**

At this age, students write fiction and non-fiction stories and reports with well-defined ideas and organizational structures. 7th 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. These rigorous learning opportunities help prepare students for the state writing assessment in 8th grade.

**Suggested Reading for Your 7th Grade Student**

*The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*
*A Wrinkle in Time*
*“O Captain! My Captain!”*
*The Building of Manhattan*
*The Great Fire*
*The Number Devil: A Mathematical Adventure*

**More Great Books for Children**

Georgia Book Award Books: [www.coe.uga.edu/gcba](http://www.coe.uga.edu/gcba)
100 Best Books: [www.teachersfirst.com/100books.cfm](http://www.teachersfirst.com/100books.cfm)
American Library Association Notable Books for Children: [www.ala.org/ala/awardsgrants](http://www.ala.org/ala/awardsgrants)

- Writing poetry and keeping a journal are great creative outlets and writing exercises.
- Encourage your student to expand reading tastes and explore new genres. Recommended book lists from school are a great place to start.
- Look for opportunities for your student to enter writing contests.
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.

The 7th grade curriculum focuses on the areas of mathematical practice, the number system, ratios and proportional relationships, geometry, statistics and probability, expressions, and equations. By the end of 7th grade, students should be able to do the following:

• Apply and extend previous understanding of operations with fractions to add, subtract, multiply and divide rational numbers;
• Analyze proportional relationships and use them to solve real-world and mathematical problems;
• Use numerical and algebraic expressions and equations to solve real-world and mathematical problems;
• Use properties of operations to generate equivalent expressions;
• Investigate, develop, use, and evaluate probability models;
• Describe the relationships between geometric figures; and
• Use random sampling to draw population inferences.

7th 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 verbal/written, numeric/data-based, graphical, and symbolic. Students use protractors, technology, data, and problem-solving strategies.

Math Tips for Parents

Total, look for and identify similar shapes in architecture, fashion, and printed materials.
• Discuss integers (both positive and negative numbers) in real-world financial situations, including economic news about credit cards, debt, and mortgages.
• Encourage your student to find graphs and tables in newspapers and magazines. Ask your child to interpret what he reads.

Science

Exploration in life science is nurtured through a hands-on approach in 7th grade. Students explore concepts in the many branches of life science. They develop lab experiences using the steps of the scientific method. Students further develop scientific skills — observing, collecting and analyzing data, making measurements, and making conclusions.

Characteristics of Science

7th graders use scientific-process skills. They collect evidence, develop a hypothesis, and manipulate variables. They formulate explanations and revise investigations based on their findings. The lab experience in 7th grade emphasizes safe practice. Students learn the value of scientific research in developing scientific theory.

Types of Life Science

Classification and Ecology

7th grade students classify organisms from simple to complex. They evaluate life processes of living organisms. Students compare and contrast different organisms. They investigate the interdependence of all organisms on one another and their environment. Students explore how environmental changes can affect the survival of individual organisms and entire species.

Evolution

7th graders examine the evolution of living organisms and explain how physical characteristics of species have changed over time. Using fossil records found in rock, students trace the history of changing life forms.

Cells and Genetics

Students study the basic components of plant and animal cells. They evaluate the structure and function of each component of a cell and describe how cells move and reproduce. Students explore how biological traits are passed from parents to offspring. They evaluate the role of genes and chromosomes.

Science Tips for Parents

• With your student, collect plastic, aluminum, paper, and other recyclable materials for home pick-up, or drop off recyclables at a recycling center.
• Build a family tree dating back as far as you can. On the tree, trace the presence of common traits your student can observe in family photos.

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.

Social Studies AKS online.

Interpretive Skills/Where We Live/Personal Finance

7th 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 examine personal money management in terms of income, spending, credit, saving, and investing.

Our Nation

Middle school students examine Challenges in a Global Society. 7th graders study contemporary and traditional issues affecting Africa, South and East Asia, and the Middle East. 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.

Civics Tips for Parents

• Talk family finances. Help your student see the process for deciding what you can and can’t afford, and trade-offs involved.
• Show interest in your student’s research. Have your middle schooler explain the project to you. What topic is he researching? What does he want to know? What does he already know?
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.

7th graders identify life-threatening emergencies and appropriate responses. They analyze environmental, genetic, and behavioral factors that influence health. Students discriminate between risk-taking and healthy behaviors and the consequences. 7th graders analyze the effects of illegal drug use, including steroids. Students analyze media influence on illegal drug use. They study the prevention, detection, and control of infectious diseases and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). 7th graders examine the consequences of sexual behavior. They examine how the birth of a child and parental responsibilities change lives. Students examine body image in relation to weight control. They discuss the effects of safe and unsafe weight-loss programs. Students demonstrate respect for self and others. 7th graders identify ways to deal with stress.

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, 7th grade students learn fitness concepts and participate in fitness assessments. They 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.

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

I understand that my student who is enrolled in 7th grade must earn a passing score on each of the following Criterion-Referenced Competency Tests (CRCT) subtests: Reading, English/Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies.* Should my student not earn promotion to 8th grade, he or she may have the opportunity to attend summer school for targeted instruction. A student who does not meet all promotion requirements after summer school will not be promoted to 8th grade. Instead, the student will receive extra help the next year through a transition program.

* Note: A special education student's promotion is determined by his or her Individualized Education Program (IEP). Promotion for a student with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) is determined by his or her AKS Intervention and Modification Plan, or by recommendation of the English Language Learner (ELL)/Test Participation Committee.
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 a nine-week class. Some schools offer a year-long class (7th and/or 8th grades) that allows students to begin high school language at a more advanced level.

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 7th grade Language Arts skills. The class covers standards for publication, knowledge of ethics in journalism, and career opportunities.

Family and Consumer Science (FCS)
This course introduces students to FCS Career Pathways in the areas of Nutrition and Food Science, Culinary Arts, Consumer Services, Interior and Fashion Design, Early Childhood Education, and Teaching as a Profession. Exposure to career possibilities prepares students to consider further study in high school and beyond.

Engineering/Technology
Engineering/Technology students learn about Career Pathways in the areas of Electronics, Energy Systems, Engineering, Engineering Graphics and Design, and Manufacturing. Students apply Mathematics and Science skills in this class. They enhance problem-solving skills and learn about computer-aided drafting and robotics.

Business and Computer Science
In Business and Computer Science, students learn fundamental skills and knowledge to support business-related fields. Through a range of activities, students learn about finance, legal operations of business, digital design, and basic programming. Project-based learning enhances keyboarding skills that are used across the curriculum.

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

- Peer Leadership
- Academic Support and Enrichment in core subjects
- Career Connections
- Research
- Study Skills
- Study Skills
- 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 these two pages, learn more about some of these programs and services.

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.

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 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.

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.

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

- 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
- 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

Learn more about the AKS for Connections online.
About Promotion to 8th Grade
To earn promotion to the 8th grade, Gwinnett 7th graders must earn a passing score on each of the following Criterion-Referenced Competency Tests (CRCT) subtests: Reading, English/Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies.* Should a student not earn promotion to 8th grade, he or she may have the opportunity to attend summer school for targeted instruction. A student who does not meet all promotion requirements after summer school will not be promoted to 8th grade. Instead, the student will receive extra help the next year through a transition program.

* Note: A special education student’s promotion is determined by his or her Individualized Education Program (IEP). Promotion for a student with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) is determined by his or her AKS Intervention and Modification Plan, or by recommendation of the English Language Learner (ELL)/Test Participation Committee.

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
School counselors support students in their overall academic success. Counselors build strong relationships with their students by delivering comprehensive, data-driven programming through classroom guidance, small-group counseling, and individual counseling sessions. They help students explore their postsecondary options, develop 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 that result in improved academic achievement.

Technology/Information & Media Literacy
The school media program contributes to your student’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 student 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 student learn to locate, analyze, evaluate, interpret, and communicate information and ideas.

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 7th Grade
All 7th grade students participate in the state’s Criterion-Referenced Competency Tests (CRCT) in the spring.

CRCT
The multiple-choice CRCT measures what students should know and be able to do at the end of 7th 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.) Georgia students in 7th grade 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.

Gwinnett County Public Schools
437 Old Peachtree Road, NW
Suwanee, GA 30045
www.gwinnett.k12.ga.us

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

Current July 2012