



## ACADEMIC KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

# An Update on the “Core” of Teaching and Learning in Gwinnett County Public Schools

Annually, Gwinnett County Public Schools (GCPS) reviews its Academic Knowledge and Skills (AKS) curriculum, inviting educators, parents, and the community to make suggestions for how we can improve what we teach Gwinnett students. This year’s review focused primarily on aligning the AKS to the state-adopted Common Core Georgia Performance Standards (CCGPS) in the areas of mathematics (K–9), language arts (K–12), and literacy standards in science, social studies, and technical education for middle and high school students. That work now is done and the updated AKS have been adopted by the Gwinnett County Board of Education. But what does this really mean? What will students learn? How will it prepare them for the future?

**What is the “Common Core” and who developed it?** “Common Core” refers to content standards that serve as the curriculum in math, language arts, and in literacy in science, social studies, and technical education. In Georgia, these are called the Common Core Georgia Performance Standards (CCGPS). These standards have been developed by content experts and educators. They also have been reviewed by teachers and leaders in Gwinnett County Public Schools and were used to develop the updated AKS standards that will guide instruction beginning in the 2012–13 school year.

**Is the CCGPS replacing the AKS?** No, in Gwinnett, we have long had strong curriculum standards in the form of our AKS curriculum and that will continue. Just as the AKS have been aligned to state curriculum standards in the past, the CCGPS have now been integrated into the AKS. The state’s Common Core is a natural fit with Gwinnett’s rigorous, world-class AKS curriculum and its long-standing focus on problem-solving, technical reading and writing, and integrating content areas. The CCGPS emphasizes problem-solving and a conceptual understanding of mathematics operations, as well as reading and writing in the content areas.

**How will the integration of the CCGPS into the AKS affect students and how they learn?** The AKS in mathematics will rely more heavily on conceptual understanding of mathematical processes and the learning experience will include more application opportunities. This is consistent with the methods Gwinnett County teachers already have been using. The AKS in language arts will reflect an increasing role for technical literacy skills so students now will spend more time developing their reading and communication skills in technical subjects. The addition of literacy standards in the science, social studies, and technical education courses further supports the preparation students need to be successful communicators in technical subjects. Bottomline, Gwinnett students have consistently outperformed others in Georgia and have been competitive nationally and even globally. Implementation of the Common Core in our AKS will allow them to remain equally, if not more, competitive.

**How will the changes in the math curriculum affect current high school students?** Students in grades 10–12 during 2012–13 will complete their mathematics sequence based on the current Georgia Performance Standards. The revised math standards will take effect for rising 9th graders in the coming school year.

Learn more about the AKS curriculum in the fall.

### What are the benefits of aligning Gwinnett’s proven AKS curriculum with Georgia’s common core standards?

#### Benefits for Students:

- Reflects rigorous knowledge and skills needed to succeed in college and careers;
- Provides consistent expectations across states for all students; *and*
- Ensures relevant content and application of knowledge through use of critical-thinking, problem-solving, modeling, and higher-order thinking skills.

#### Benefits for Educators:

- Provides clear, focused expectations that are consistent across the state;
- Assists educators in working together with students and parents toward shared goals; *and*
- Expands the collaborative network of educators in which Gwinnett teachers can develop and share resources to enhance the instructional delivery of our AKS, now aligned to the CCGPS.

#### Benefits for Taxpayers:

- Provides for long-term potential savings on textbooks and instructional resources as a result of a consistency in the development of materials across states;
- Prepares Georgia students for college or careers beyond high school; *and*
- Prepares a workforce for a globally competitive future.

