

LEARNING 2025

Student-Centered Equity-Focused Future-Driven Education



We are in the same sea, but not in the same boat.

The past two years of living and learning during the pandemic have confirmed what we've always known. Each and every student in our care has unique needs, abilities, and interests. One-size-fits-all simply doesn't fit everyone as we work to ensure that students will learn, grow, and thrive... in their school years and beyond. In joining the [Learning 2025](#) network of school districts, GCPS is collaborating with and learning from other districts so that we can provide a **student-centered, equity-focused, and future-driven education.**

To make sure the school experience provides such an education, we are focusing on three primary areas—**Culture, Growth, and Resources.** As a district, we are committed to reaching and teaching the “whole learner,” going beyond academics to support a child’s well-being and sense of belonging in the school community, tailor-

ing the learning experience to our students’ needs and embracing, and celebrating the rich diversity of our community.

We know that we can’t do this work alone. Our families, staff members, and the community are important partners as we come together to support our children and provide what they need to co-author their learning. In other words, it will take all of us working together to equip kids for the road ahead as they map out their future.

And that journey to success starts early.

In fact, those years—from birth to age 5—are some of the most critical in preparing children for their future.

Connecting kids and families to community resources throughout their educational journey makes sure that they can reach their potential.

With an eye to the future, we know that

“When we think about being future-driven, it starts with relationships.

Knowing our students and their families and their stories helps us provide individualized support to each student.”

Dr. Erin Hahn, Harris ES principal

the #1 skill that our graduates will need is the ability to reinvent themselves. To nurture that skill, we must reinvent schools and how we do school to prepare them for *their* future, not *our* past. Research tells us that today’s students are likely to change careers and employers a number of times during their working years. In fact, we’re preparing kids for jobs that don’t exist yet. *How?* By helping young people develop skills and abilities that can be used across jobs and career fields such as solving problems, working with others, communicating effectively, and thinking creatively and critically, and more. With a full toolbox, our kids will be ready to build a career, lead a fulfilling life, and help make the world a better place.

In this issue, we focus on components of [Learning 2025](#) that already are making a difference for GCPS students—community resources, early learning, future-ready and career-focused programs, and student-centered initiatives.

COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Community partnerships support whole learner

All children can reach their potential when they make personal connections, feel welcomed, have a [voice](#), and know caring adults support them. Learning is at the heart of what we do in schools, but meeting our students’ needs goes beyond the school day and the classroom. Strong partnerships in the community and aligned resources help remove obstacles to learning, and support children’s academic and personal development. Just a few examples of key partnerships include:

- **Tutor.com:** Our students have the [academic help they need](#), no matter the hour, with [Tutor.com](#). Live, online tutoring support is available daily from noon to 10 p.m. through a partnership with [Gwinnett County Public Library](#). Help is available in core subjects of language arts, math, science, and social studies as well as Advanced Placement courses, SAT/ACT prep, and

[study skills coaching](#), with support

in Spanish and by phone once a user has logged in. For access, students can use their GCPL library card number or their GCPS student ID and birthdate through the Branch Out program.

- **Vision to Learn:** In partnership with the [GCPS Foundation Fund](#) and with a \$25,000 grant from Jackson EMC, the non-profit is providing free eye exams and glasses to kids in underserved communities in Gwinnett.
- **Mental Health Support:** A partnership with local mental health professionals is providing therapeutic support in a school setting for high school students with significant mental health needs.
- **Gwinnett Cares:** Designated staff at local schools have access to the Gwinnett Cares Helpline to request help to meet the specific needs of students and their families.

tutor.com
A Service of [The Princeton Review](#)

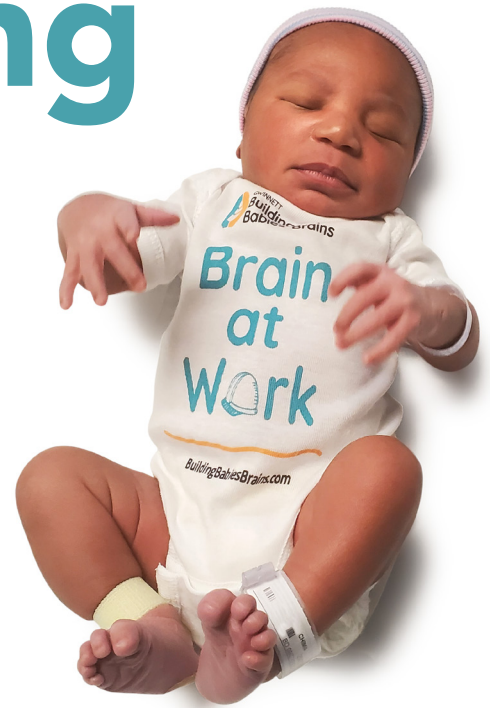
Early Learning

Did you know?

- A baby's brain develops fast, creating 1 million neural connections every second!
- A child's brain is 80% developed at age 3 and 90% at age 5.
- Babies are born with the ability to learn any language, and understand the language they hear most by their first birthday.

Learn more about a child's first five years at buildingbabiesbrains.com.

Gwinnett Building Babies' Brains is a community partnership involving the school district, Gwinnett County government, the public library, faith-based organizations, business leaders, elected officials, non-profits, and individuals committed to ensuring that all children thrive in kindergarten and beyond.



Learning begins at birth... Parents are a child's first and best teacher, and learning begins at birth! The district and Gwinnett Building Babies' Brains have partnered with Northside Hospital-Gwinnett to help families get off to a great start with a "Brain at Work" goody bag that includes a newborn onesie, a read-aloud book, information about [early learning and resources for those first few months](#), and more. "The parents are loving it... and the staff is having a blast talking about the program," says **Dr. Veritta Henderson**, director Women's Services at Northside.



Play 2 Learn

is a program for young children—ages birth to 5—offered at 42 elementary schools in GCPS. Children, parents, and other adults in the family learn *together* in a high-quality preschool environment for 90 minutes

each week during the school year. Families are empowered to keep the learning going at home so that all children will be ready for kindergarten! **Coming soon...** A *Play 2 Learn on the Go bus* will bring fun learning activities to families in the community!

GCPS, partners promote early learning

More than half of Gwinnett children are not ready for kindergarten when they start school. And we know that children who start behind, and stay behind, are far more likely to leave school without a high school diploma. We are working with our partners to promote early learning and provide learning opportunities. Early Learning Ambassadors share the importance of early learning wherever families gather. Targeted programming for families of young children is available in county parks and libraries. GCPS is providing professional development to support high-quality learning at school and at early learning centers in the community. The district will pilot Pre-K classes in eight schools in 2022–23. New kindergartners are invited to Rising K Academy during the summer.

Ambassadors building community while building babies' brains

Early Learning Ambassadors are community members who work with GCPS to share encouragement with families, provide information about available programs, and build connections that grow their communities.

Paola Aramendiz got involved in the program after attending Babies Can't Wait classes with her child. She saw first-hand the impact of early learning efforts, and knew that being able to approach new parents as a bilingual mom would help create trust. She says "moms talking to moms" at apartment complexes, churches, pediatricians' offices, and even the grocery store help families feel like they could be involved in the learning process. In addition to giving out information, ambassadors are helping to build relationships that make their communities stronger. As parents get to know one another at events like Norcross' bilingual story time, their children thrive in a strong, supportive learning community. **Mrs. Aramendiz** adds, "We are a family. We are a team. We are a tribe."



Career and Technical Education Future-ready

GCPS' Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs for grades 6–12 provide real-world, hands-on, career-ready experiences that prepare all students for future jobs and different learning options after high school, meeting students where they are and building on their interests. CTE programs prepare young people for a wide range of high-wage, high-skill, in-demand careers with real-life opportunities to explore the world of work and build a foundation for

their future success. As a result, CTE students are more engaged in their studies, perform better in the classroom, and graduate at higher rates.

GCPS offers 60+ CTE pathways, ranging from Cybersecurity and Automotive Services to Healthcare and Manufacturing. Students who complete a pathway—three consecutive courses concentrated in one career area—are eligible to earn industry-recognized credentials. Solving real-world

problems, learning from industry professionals, taking college courses for dual credit, and earning while learning in the workplace allow CTE students to explore options and develop a foundation for success after high school.

Whatever their work future holds, our CTE students have a strong foundation to build on after high school. Students have many paths to future success... whether they enter a certification program, participate in an apprenticeship, attend a trade school, graduate from a two-year technical college, or earn a four-year university degree or beyond. ***CTE is their foundation for success!***

CTE Fast Facts

- 97% graduation rate for pathway completers
- \$2.5 million work-based learning earnings (20–21)
- 4,458 industry certifications earned (20–21)
- 45,382 students enrolled in CTE (21–22)

“Parents, when your child takes a CTE class, they are getting some of the most valuable skills that they will ever use.”

Rod Hames,
Business Education Teacher, Crews MS



Building a Better Tomorrow... ▼

In Berkmar HS' industry-certified [Construction Program](#), students are OSHA certified for safety as they learn carpentry, electrical, plumbing, masonry, and drywall. Strong partnerships between the school, industry professionals, and Gwinnett Technical College serve as a bridge from a robust high school learning experience to high-wage jobs and advanced training in high-demand Construction trades.



Learning while earning... ▲

[Work-based learning](#) (WBL) gives students the opportunity to get valuable experience and a paycheck. “WBL has prepared me for the future by enabling me to get my feet wet in the professional world and challenging me with new skills I can only experience in the workplace,” says Priya, a Marketing student at Mountain View HS who interned with Gwinnett Water Resources this year.



Representation matters... ▲

In technology fields, men make up 63% of the workforce and African Americans just 8%. Access and exposure to careers help young people see their future. “[With] my coursework and [Girls Who Code](#) [club]... I have now been able to build a bridge between technological creation and my passion for social awareness,” says Asia, a South Gwinnett senior who will attend Georgia Tech in the fall.

‘On fire’ for the future... ▼

[Fire Services](#) students at Maxwell HS of Technology use real tools, equipment, and gear as well as an on-campus fire tower in hands-on training with industry professionals. For Justin—Georgia’s 2022 SkillsUSA Firefighting champion and a Lanier HS senior—his Maxwell experience has blazed the path to a future career. “Getting to learn every aspect of the Fire Department has made me decide that I want to go straight into the Fire Academy when I graduate,” he says.



STUDENT-CENTERED



Families can designate 'preferred name' for students

Names are important and help to tell the larger story about who we are as individuals. We see it every day in our schools as students ask to be called by a nickname, go by their middle name, or use a preferred English/Western name or one that better reflects their identity. GCPS is taking steps to ensure that students are called by their [preferred name](#) at school, giving families the option to designate a "Preferred Name" (other than student's legal name) for use in the Student Information System.

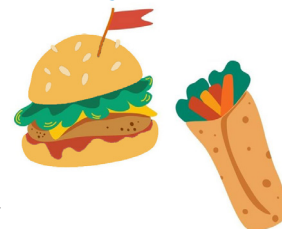
Practical learning prepares for real life

Starting next school year, the state's required Economics course will include more instruction in personal finance to prepare young people for real-world situations. In the [revised course](#), students will learn about personal budgeting; building credit; protecting against identity theft; understanding tax forms, student loan applications, and pay stubs; and more. At the middle school level, [GCPS' Junior Achievement \(JA\) Discovery Center](#) allows students to practice "adulting" skills so they can successfully navigate today's complex economic environment and discover how decisions made today can have an impact on tomorrow. In [JA BizTown](#), 6th graders

experience a simulated economy, while 8th graders visiting in [JA Finance Park](#) discover how education and career choices make an impact on personal finance and a family's monthly budget. Exposure to real-world experiences like these help to build students' financial knowledge and confidence as they prepare for their future.

Cafes gives options to meet dietary needs

Gwinnett County Public Schools' cafeterias provide a wide range of options to meet students' dietary needs. In addition to offering several vegetarian entrees, the school district has introduced a Halal-certified hamburger. This tasty option is available in all GCPS cafes on days when hamburgers appear on the menu—once every three weeks. Families can find [daily, weekly, and monthly menus](#) online. At least one Halal offering (a vegetarian item or the Halal Burger) is available every day in GCPS cafes. Vegetarian options that may be on the menu include yogurt baskets, salads, garden burgers, spicy black bean burgers, bean and cheese burritos, pizza, and more!



"The media center is both a physical and mental safe space for kids where they author their learning every time they are allowed to choose a book to read."

Mary Barbee, Director of Media Services and Technology Training

GCPS, GGC partner to support students of all ages

A longtime collaboration between the school district and postsecondary partner [Georgia Gwinnett College](#) (GGC) has been formalized with an agreement that strengthens collaborative efforts to prepare today's students to be tomorrow's leaders. The [new agreement](#) builds on the work of past leaders to strengthen relationships between the two largest education organizations in Gwinnett County and to provide a more strategic use of resources. Initiatives are being designed to improve student graduation rates at both the high school and college levels, create stronger pathways to college for GCPS students, and build a sustainable system that encourages positive outcomes for Gwinnett students of all ages over time. The relationship between GGC and GCPS benefits both organizations and the greater Gwinnett community. A large number of GCPS graduates continue their education at GGC. In fact, more than 70% of

GGC students are former GCPS students. In addition, many GGC students who graduate with bachelor's degrees in [education](#) return to GCPS to teach future generations. "Today's students are tomorrow's leaders," says **Dr. Calvin J. Watts**, GCPS superintendent. "This collaboration will create a stronger high school and college student, and, ultimately, a stronger Gwinnett County."



(Left to right) Superintendent Watts; Jose Perez, University System of Georgia regent; and Dr. Jann. L. Joseph, president of Georgia Gwinnett College, celebrate the new agreement at a signing ceremony.

