Message from the Superintendent

Dear HCPS Students and Families,

Embarking on the journey from elementary to middle school brings about a multitude of changes – moving between classrooms, encountering subject-specific teachers, engaging in athletic teams, and navigating larger campuses with more students and amenities. It's a significant transition, and we want to support you every step of the way.

At HCPS, we understand the importance of creating a nurturing and positive learning environment for every child during their middle school years. Our teachers, counselors, and staff are committed to fostering social-emotional health, promoting equity, and maintaining high expectations for academic success. We firmly believe that each student is a scholar, and we are dedicated to unlocking their boundless potential.

In this course guide, we provide an overview of the diverse coursework and programs available in our middle school. Additionally, you will find valuable tips for parents and guardians on how to best support your children during this exciting transition. Our academic teams work collaboratively to establish a strong instructional foundation, preparing students not only for the challenges of middle school but also for success in high school and beyond.

We encourage you to take the time to explore this guide thoroughly and to reach out to our counselors and teachers whenever needed. Your partnership is vital, and we are here to support you and your child on this journey.

Sincerely,

Hertford County Public Schools

Dr. Jesse Pratt, Superintendent

Hertford County Public Schools does not discriminate on the basis of race, ethnic origin, gender or disability in its educational programs, activities or employment policies as required by Title IX of the 1972 Education Amendments, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and Title II of the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Hertford County Public Schools expects all employees, students and other members of the school community to conduct themselves in an appropriate manner with concern and respect for all members of the school community. Discrimination and harassment on the basis of race, sex, religion, creed, disability, national origin or language minority status will not be tolerated.

Hertford County Public Schools

PO Box 158 - 701 North Martin Street
Winton, North Carolina 27986

(252) 358 - 1761

Dr. Jesse J. Pratt, Superintendent

Dr. Takeda LeGrand
Assistant Superintendent, Curriculum & Instruction

Bearfield Primary School (PK-3)
Opie Stinson, Principal
145 Hertford County High School Rd
Ahoskie, NC 27910
(252) 209-6140

Ahoskie Elementary School (4-5)
Terrell Deloatch, Principal
1206 1st St W
Ahoskie, NC 27910
(252) 301-5060

Riverview Elementary School (PK-5)
Beshelya Smith, Principal
236 US-158 BUS
Murfreesboro, NC 27855
(252) 398-4862

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Pre- K to Elementary School Overview

The Elementary School experience nurtures young learners in a safe, supportive environment, preparing them for their journey through education and life in the modern world. From Pre-K to 5th Grade, students are encouraged to explore and grow with the help of dedicated teachers. The curriculum focuses on essential subjects such as Reading, Math, Science, and Social Studies, taught in a way that fosters independence, responsibility, and critical thinking. Schools emphasize collaborative learning, personal goal-setting, and the development of organizational skills, setting the foundation for lifelong learning and success.

Finding The Right Place & Time for at Home Learning

Setting up a great study area at home for kids from Pre-K to 5th Grade involves a few key steps. Choose a specific, quiet spot for studying to help separate learning from playtime. Make sure this area has comfy seating and a desk that fits your child's size. Good lighting is important to keep their focus sharp and protect their eyes. Use organizers to keep supplies tidy and minimize distractions like toys or noisy devices. Letting your child add a personal touch to their space can also make studying more enjoyable. Remember, a study spot that works well for one child may need adjustments as they grow or as their needs change, so be flexible and check in with them to keep their study area effective and welcoming.

Monitor Your Child's Academic Progress

Parents can monitor academic policies by taking a proactive approach to stay informed and involved in their child's education. Here are several strategies they can employ:

Regular Communication with Teachers:

- Attend parent-teacher conferences to discuss your child's progress and get updates on academic policies.
- Establish open lines of communication with teachers through email or other communication channels.

Accessing School Websites and Portals:

- Use the PowerSchool Parent Portal to keep track of your child's grades and attendance.
- Access school and district websites for up to date information.
- Utilize social media as a way to communicate and obtain information.

Read School Handbooks:

- Familiarize yourself with the school's handbook or guidebook. It often contains detailed information about academic policies, grading systems, and other important guidelines.

Attend School Meetings:

- Attend school board meetings, PTA (Parent-Teacher Association) meetings, or other parent meetings where academic policies may be discussed or explained.

Join Parent Groups:

- Participate in parent groups or committees where academic policies and school-related matters are discussed. This involvement can provide insights and opportunities to raise concerns or seek clarification.

Subscribe to School Newsletters:

- Subscribe to newsletters or other communication channels used by the school to stay updated on important announcements and changes in academic policies.

Connect with Other Parents:

- Connect with other parents to share information and experiences. This can help in gaining a broader perspective on academic policies and understanding how they impact students.

Review Homework and Assignments:

- Regularly review your child's homework, assignments, and assessments to understand the expectations and grading criteria. If there are discrepancies or concerns, communicate with the teacher.

Ask Questions:

- Don't hesitate to ask questions to teachers, administrators, or school staff when you need clarification on academic policies. Being informed helps you advocate for your child effectively.

Attend School Events:

- Attend school events, workshops, or seminars that focus on academic policies and educational strategies. These events often provide opportunities to interact with school staff and administrators.

Be Aware of Changes:

- Stay vigilant about any changes in academic policies. Schools may update policies from time to time, and being aware of these changes helps you adapt and support your child accordingly.

By staying actively engaged and informed, you can effectively monitor academic policies and contribute to your child's success in school.

Grade Level Overviews

Pre-K

Discover a world of learning through play! Pre-K is all about exploring colors, shapes, letters, and numbers in fun and engaging ways. Your little one will make new friends, learn to share, and start building the foundation for all their future learning adventures.

Kindergarten

Welcome to the exciting world of Kindergarten! It's a year filled with reading magical stories, solving puzzles with numbers, and creating art. Kindergarteners become little scientists exploring the world around them and start their journey as confident readers and thinkers.

1st Grade

First Grade is where the adventure deepens. Reading becomes richer, math introduces fascinating problems to solve, and students begin to write their own stories. It's a year of discovery, exploring the community, and understanding how each of us fits into the wider world.

2nd Grade

Second graders become more fluent readers and mathematicians, diving into books that take them on grand adventures and tackling math that explains the world. They learn about nature, animals, and the environment, becoming young stewards of the planet.

3rd Grade

Third Grade is a milestone year! Students read complex stories, learn about historical heroes, and master multiplication and division. They become more independent learners, thinking critically and expressing their ideas through writing and presentations.

4th Grade

In Fourth Grade, students explore diverse cultures and the rich history of their state and country. Math becomes more intricate with fractions and decimals. Science is all about experiments that explain how things work, sparking curiosity and a love for discovery.

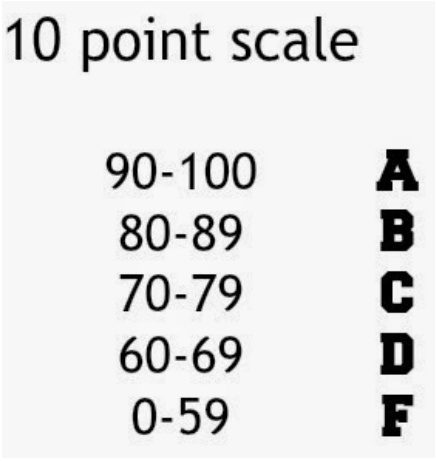
5th Grade

Fifth Grade is the gateway to new adventures in learning. Students tackle challenging texts, become proficient in math, and dive deep into American history and the basics of physical science. It's a year of growing independence, preparing for the exciting transition to middle school.

District Policies

Grading Scale and Weights

Beginning with the 2015-2016 school year, the North Carolina State Board of Education required all school districts to implement a new grading scale. This new scale applies to middle schools and high schools and changes the way letter grades are assigned. Students can expect to participate in a variety of different learning activities. Final grades will be based on the average of all classwork, homework, tests/quizzes/assessments, and projects done throughout the course. Each one of these learning activities may be weighted differently but will come together to create the final grade.



Testing Requirements

End-of-Grade (EOG)

In North Carolina, while End-of-Grade (EOG) tests primarily apply to grades 3 through 8, it's important for families of students in K-5 to understand that these assessments begin in the later grades, focusing on reading, math, and for 5th grade, science. These tests measure mastery of subject content. Scores range from I to V, with III to V indicating at or above grade level performance. This understanding helps prepare families for what lies ahead in their child's academic journey.

Promotion Standards

In elementary school, students should earn passing grades and demonstrate proficiency in reading and math to be promoted. North Carolina law mandates that the final decision for promotion lies with the principal.

District Services

Academically and/or Intellectually Gifted (AIG) Services

The 2025-2028 HCPS AIG Plan uses multiple criteria to identify students with advanced learning needs and to construct learning environments and strategies that appropriately address those needs.The AIG program includes professional development for teachers to enhance their ability to support gifted students effectively.

While AIG Specialists use ongoing assessment data to monitor student performance, students can be referred for AIG services by an educator, teacher, parent/guardian, community member, peer, or self.

A district and school AIG committee reviews each student's data to determine if the student qualifies for AIG services, then develops a Differentiated Education Plan (DEP) for each identified student. The plan details the most appropriate learning environment for the identified student as well as necessary content modifications and enrichment opportunities.

Program Offerings:

- Classroom teachers provide differentiated instruction tailored to each student's identification needs. Teachers who are not AIG Certified, receive specialized training in order to reach all students.
- Middle and high school students receive differentiated instruction tailored to each student's identification needs. Seniors must complete at least five projects to receive an honor cord at graduation.

Extracurricular Opportunities:

- AIG students participate in district, regional, and state competitions, as well as educational field trips.
- Opportunities such as, The Governor's School Recommendations, are available for high-performing students who apply and interview for recommendation.
- Other opportunities include Spelling Bees, Battle of the Books, Quiz Bowl, and Class and School competitions.

Community and Cultural Exposure:

- Activities and field trips, such as attending plays and visiting cultural centers are sometimes incorporated, enriching the students' educational experience.

Family Nights:

- This event is part of the AIG mission for students to discover, nurture, and develop the potential of AIG students, offering professional development for teachers and fostering a sense of community among stakeholders. The AIG Family Night is an initiative that likely aims to engage families in the educational process, providing insights into the program and opportunities for parents and the community to be involved in supporting gifted students' growth and development

Exceptional Children's Services

Students with disabilities who qualify for special education services will have an Individual Education Plan (IEP) developed by the school's IEP team. The IEP outlines the specially designed instruction that enables students to maximize academic achievement in the least restrictive environment alongside their non-disabled peers. To receive special education services, schools use federal and state guidelines to identify specific needs that adversely impact academic performance and require specially designed instruction. Each school provides unique opportunities to meet the needs of students with IEPs.

English Learners Services

Hertford County Public Schools may place students whose primary/home language is a language other than English in a support program designed for identified English Learners. The placement is determined by needs as determined by the state-mandated language proficiency test in the areas of Reading, Writing, Listening and Speaking. English Learners are tutored by licensed teachers who teach using standards aligned to English Language Arts Standards. Students are assessed for services per state and federal requirements.

At Home Learning Opportunities (Home Resources)

Hertford County Public Schools provides our students with a multitude of opportunities to access curricular materials and learning resources both in-school and at home. These resources include research support provided through NCEdCloud (EBSCO & Britannica), E-book Checkout through Destiny Discover, and many more. To facilitate student access to these resources HCPS makes use of Classlink, a platform where students may access all resources we provide using a single log-in and often only requiring a single click to access. Below please find the icons from Classlink with some brief descriptions of those resources available to students. List last updated 1/26/2026.

MagmaMath is an online math platform that helps students grow by allowing them to show their handwritten work digitally and get immediate feedback.	iReady is an online program that helps students with personalized lessons in math and reading, adjusting to their individual learning needs.	Savvas provides digital learning materials and textbooks across various subjects, offering interactive resources to support classroom learning and homework.	Learning.com provides various online resources and lessons to help students improve their digital literacy and computer skills.

NCEdCloud is a platform that helps students and teachers access different educational tools and resources in one place. Lets you access EBSCO & Britannica for research purposes as well as Canvas, Powerschool, and other NC Student Resources!	Amplify has both mCLASS and CKLA. mCLASS is our reading diagnostic tool and CKLA is our literature curriculum. Both focus on foundational skills for student success.	MasteryConnect helps teachers assess student learning through quizzes and assignments, allowing for personalized learning plans and tracking progress.	Provides links to many of North Carolina's Museums, including Art, Nature, History, Science. Also provides links to Libraries, the Parks Service, NC Symphony, NC Archives, and more!

Elementary School Core Academic Programs

English Language Arts

The Science of Reading

The Science of Reading is an evidence-based approach to teaching reading that draws on research from various fields. It emphasizes explicit and systematic instruction in phonics, phonemic awareness, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. The principles of the Science of Reading are relevant across all grade levels, including sixth through eighth grade. Here's how it can impact reading instruction in these grades:

- **Fluency:** Fluency remains a crucial aspect of reading comprehension in the upper elementary and middle school grades. The Science of Reading advocates for explicit and systematic instruction in fluency, including strategies such as repeated reading, modeled reading, and providing opportunities for independent reading.
- **Vocabulary:** The Science of Reading recognizes the significance of vocabulary knowledge for reading comprehension. In middle school, students are exposed to more advanced and specialized vocabulary. Instruction should focus on explicit vocabulary instruction, including understanding word meanings in context and teaching word roots, prefixes, and suffixes.
- **Comprehension:** Reading comprehension is a multifaceted skill that involves the integration of various cognitive processes. The Science of Reading encourages explicit instruction in comprehension strategies, such as summarization, questioning, and making connections. In sixth through eighth grade, students can benefit from learning more sophisticated strategies for analyzing and interpreting texts.
- **Content Area Literacy:** As students progress through middle school, they encounter more complex texts in various subjects. The Science of Reading principles can be applied to improve literacy skills in content areas such as science and history. Teachers can integrate explicit reading instruction into these subjects to support students in understanding and analyzing discipline-specific texts.

In summary, the Science of Reading provides a solid foundation for reading instruction in middle school by emphasizing explicit and systematic teaching of foundational skills, vocabulary, and comprehension strategies. It supports a comprehensive and evidence-based approach to literacy education at all grade levels.

English/Language Arts Curriculum

The North Carolina Standard Course of Study (NCSCOS) defines the appropriate content standards for each grade level and each high school course to provide a uniform set of learning standards for every public school in North Carolina. These standards are designed to prepare students for success in college, careers, and future endeavors. The curriculum for K-5 covers a wide range of subjects including English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, and Healthful Living.

English Language Arts (ELA)

The ELA standards in K-5 focus on foundational reading skills, including phonics and word recognition, fluency, and comprehension. Students are encouraged to read a variety of texts and genres to build understanding, gain knowledge, and develop preferences. Writing standards emphasize the creation of coherent and focused texts that convey well-developed ideas and arguments. Listening and speaking skills are also developed through participation in collaborative discussions.

Mathematics

Math standards for K-5 aim at building a solid foundation in basic mathematical principles, including understanding of numbers, operations, fractions, and decimals. Students are introduced to concepts of geometry, measurement, and data analysis. Problem-solving and reasoning skills are emphasized to help students apply mathematical concepts in real-world scenarios.

Science

The science curriculum is designed to instill a sense of curiosity and wonder about the natural world. Students learn about life science, earth science, and physical science. Key topics include plant and animal life cycles, weather and climate, matter properties, and energy types and transfer. Hands-on experiments and observations are crucial for developing scientific thinking and inquiry skills.

Social Studies

Social studies in K-5 cover history, geography, civics, and economics. The curriculum focuses on understanding the local community, North Carolina, the United States, and the world. Students learn about historical events, cultural differences, geographic locations, and government structures. Critical thinking and analysis skills are developed through discussions and explorations of these topics.

Healthful Living

Healthful living combines physical education and health education. Students learn about the importance of physical activity, nutrition, personal health, and safety. The curriculum promotes the development of skills necessary for making healthy decisions and living a healthy lifestyle.

The NCSCOS aims to create a well-rounded educational experience for K-5 students, providing them with the knowledge and skills necessary for their future academic and personal success. Teachers are provided with resources and guidelines to ensure that instruction meets these standards, helping to ensure a consistent and high-quality education for all students across North Carolina.

Incorporating Literacy Throughout All Subjects

Incorporating literacy at home across various subjects is a great way to enhance your child's overall learning experience. Here are some general tips and subject-specific ideas to promote literacy in different areas:

General Tips:

- **Read Aloud:** Read books aloud to your child regularly, exposing them to different genres and styles.
- **Create a Reading Routine:** Establish a consistent reading time each day to make it a habit.
- **Word Games:** Play word games like Scrabble, Boggle, or crossword puzzles to improve vocabulary.
- **Library Visits:** Take regular trips to the library to explore new books and resources.
- **Discussion:** Encourage discussions about what you're reading. Ask questions and share your thoughts.
- **Writing Practice:** Encourage your child to write stories, journals, or even letters.

Subject-Specific Ideas:

- Math: Practice math through word problems, enhancing both math and reading skills.
- Science: Explore science-related books to broaden knowledge and vocabulary.
- Social Studies: Read historical fiction novels related to the time period being studied.
- Art: Encourage writing about the emotions or stories behind art creations.

- Physical Education: Read biographies of athletes or sports figures for inspiration.
- Foreign Language: Read books in both English and the target language.
- Technology: Explore coding activities that involve reading and writing code.
- Music: Analyze song lyrics for meaning and encourage writing lyrics or poems.

Additional Tips:

- **Create a Reading Space:** Designate a comfortable and quiet space for reading and learning.
- **Model Reading:** Let your child see you reading regularly to set an example.
- **Use Technology Wisely:** Incorporate educational apps, websites, and audiobooks for a modern approach.
- **Book Clubs:** Start a family book club where everyone reads the same book and discusses it.
- **Field Trips:** Visit museums, historical sites, or nature reserves to tie in with subjects studied.

By weaving literacy into various subjects and activities, you not only enhance your child's reading and writing skills but also foster a love for learning.

Mathematics

Students develop skills in several key areas including ratios and proportional relationships, extending the number system, geometry, statistics, probability, expressions and equations, and functions. In addition to learning new concepts and skills, students will solve challenging problems by applying the concepts they have learned and by using technology, including calculators, to facilitate meaningful problem-solving. With the implementation of the new North Carolina Standard Course of Study in the 2018-2019 school year, middle school learners can anticipate a rigorous curriculum that will adequately prepare them for further study in high school and beyond as they pursue college and various career options. Students can also expect a deliberate focus on the 8 mathematical practices to facilitate their learning of this rigorous content.

Advanced Courses in Mathematics Legislation; NCGS § 115C-81.36

North Carolina G.S. 115C-81.36 directs that all local education agencies provide:

- advanced math services for any student in grades 3 – 5 who scored at the highest level (Score of 5) on the end-of-grade test in mathematics
- any student scoring at the highest level (Score of 5) on the end-of-grade or end-of-course test for the mathematics course in which the student was most recently enrolled shall be enrolled in the advanced course for the next mathematics course in which the student is enrolled.

The legislation also stipulates that "No student who qualifies under this subsection shall be removed from the advanced or high school mathematics course in which the student is enrolled unless a parent or guardian of the student provides written consent for the student to be excluded or removed from that course after being adequately informed that the student's placement was determined by the student's achievement on the previous end-of-grade or end-of-course test. " (G.S. 115C-81.36 (b))."

8 Mathematical Practices

These mathematical practices are applied throughout each course, and with the content standards, prescribe that students experience mathematics as a coherent, useful, and logical subject that makes use of their ability to make sense of problem situations.

Based on their achievement, grades, and teacher input, students will follow one of the mathematics sequences listed below.

Elementary School Elective Programs

Arts Education

In today's globally competitive world, innovative thinking and creativity are essential for all school children. In HCPS, we teach within the Comprehensive Arts Education framework. The Three components of CAE - Arts Education, Integration, and Exposure - are interdependent and were found by the Comprehensive Arts Education Task Force to all be necessary.

Arts Education is the instruction of an arts discipline according to the Standard Course of Study to develop the student as an artist. Arts Integration is instruction designed to show students how non arts content connects to arts content in both areas. Arts Exposure gives students the opportunity to experience the arts as presented by professionals on a stage, in a gallery, or as a teaching artist in residence.

Just as a three-legged stool cannot stay upright without one of its legs, an arts education without one of these components is incomplete for any student. Our three-pronged **Comprehensive Arts Education (CAE)** approach to Arts Education helps students develop these skills as well as effectively engage, retain, and prepare them for graduation and success in tomorrow's global economy.

The middle school offers a selection of visual and performing arts electives in Music (Band and/or Chorus), Dance, Visual Arts, and Theatre Arts.

Healthful Living

Students learn how exercise and diet can lead to a healthy lifestyle. Students learn about the dangers of drugs and alcohol, the biology of reproduction, nutrition, conflict resolution, fair play and sportsmanship. Students are required to take Healthful Living on an annual basis.

Other Discovery Courses

Each middle school will develop its own discovery offerings based on the interests and needs of the students and the teachers' special skills. Schools include discovery classes that connect to and support academic subjects.