



October 2, 2018

Dear Parents and Students,

The purpose of this letter is to provide you with specific ways that you can continue to partner with our school district to increase our students' **academic achievement levels**. *Our vision is to be a district of high performance preparing ALL students to live and compete successfully in a global society.* Since ALL means ALL, this requires everyone working together to ensure students learn every day and are able to apply their learning in meaningful ways in and outside of school.

We are already nine weeks into the school year. At this time, we have given two important assessments to provide schools with data about students' learning needs. The first assessment is a **Beginning of the Year Diagnostic** in reading and mathematics to pinpoint students' specific learning needs. Leaders and teachers are using these data results to ensure students receive targeted instruction in order to close achievement gaps early in the school year. We also administered a **District-wide Benchmark Assessment** in the GMAS-tested grade levels and high school courses. These assessments measure how well students have mastered the learning that has occurred so far in the school year. We are currently using these results in the following ways: (1) to determine what concepts need reteaching, (2) to conduct student conferences on their performance, and (3) to engage students in setting goals and reflecting on the questions they missed. The assessments mirror what students will have to do on the Georgia Milestones Assessments (GMAS). Therefore, they reflect the more rigorous expectations for how students are required to show their knowledge and skills in the classroom. From these *beginning of the year* student results, we have observed that some students still have difficulties with the following **critical skills**; thus, so these are our focus areas for the school year:

- ✓ Skillfully reading and understanding different types of texts (e.g. stories, historical/science articles, diagrams, etc.)
- ✓ Writing for multiple purposes (e.g to inform, to argue, to describe, etc.) and using correct grammar and punctuation marks
- ✓ Applying learning to real-world situations and across the different subjects
- ✓ Thinking critically using acquired knowledge and skills to problem solve
- ✓ Justifying thinking when writing and speaking
- ✓ Asking questions in order to “figure out” potential solutions to problems

Parents, it is important that when you are speaking with your child about his/her day at school and examining his/her homework, that you hear and see learning that requires your child to apply these skills. Is your child reading more fluently and different types of texts; is his/her writing improving; is his/her thinking evolving? Pay close attention to what your child has to read, explain, solve, and write during his/her homework. The skills outlined above should be evident at all levels: elementary, middle, and high – since these are the skills required for college and today's work force.

The remaining portion of this communication provides resources from the GADOE that you can use at home with your child to prepare him/her for the Georgia Milestones Assessments. Consider having scheduled time for your child to practice and apply the knowledge and skills outlined in the Study Guides and on the various websites. The final attachments outline practices we want to see in every classroom. Page 3 outlines the behaviors that students should be required to engage in regularly: **Academic Discussions, Higher-Order Questioning, and Evidence-Based Writing**. Page 4 includes sample questions that students should be able to **ask and answer** during instruction. The goal is for all learning to lead to students making real-world connections. Notice the change in questioning from the A-box to the D-box. **Box D – Adaptation – requires students to** apply their learning to solve or propose real-world solutions. This is where the magic happens! When students can respond to and pose these types of questions, they are thinking and performing at higher levels. So, parents and students, pay attention to the type of learning that is occurring, and partner with us to *extend learning beyond the classroom*.

Together, we can move our students to higher performance!

Committed to High Performance,

Ebony J. Lee, Ph.D.

Director of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment



GADOE GMAS STUDY RESOURCES AND HELPFUL WEBSITES

Topic	Explanation or Resource
<p>1. Released GMAS items and writing samples (for ELA and mathematics), along with the scoring criteria (rubric) for proficiency.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These resources allow you to see and discuss the differences between a non-proficient and proficiently constructed written response using explanations of the rubric. • Grades 3-8 Released Writing: http://tinyurl.com/j3g2355 Grades 3-8 Guides: http://tinyurl.com/k456ktz • Grades 9 and 11 Released Writing: http://tinyurl.com/y7m3khuc Grades 9 and 11 Guides: http://tinyurl.com/m6dgs32 • GMAS Parent Resources (English and translated) located at this link: http://tinyurl.com/UnderstandingLexiles
<p>2. More Information about Lexile levels</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obtain information about Lexiles at the following GADOE link: http://tinyurl.com/ycq57ot8
<p>3. Helpful Websites</p>	<p>Explore other helpful websites that can be used at home or at the local library to help develop our students' knowledge and skills.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • www.studiesweekly.com (social studies) • http://www.discoveryeducation.com/ (all subjects) • www.readwritethink.org (all subjects) • www.studentnewsdaily.org (reading comprehension and writing) • www.readworks.org (reading) • www.newsela.com (reading comprehension and writing) • www.khanacademy.org/ (various subjects and test prep)
<p>4. The 5 Ps of Successfully Supporting Learning:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ P – Purpose: Emphasize frequently to your child why he/she is in school and what learning means for his/her future. ✓ P – Present: Ensure your child is present every day and has the necessary supplies. ✓ P – Place: Secure a place at home that is conducive to reading, studying, and completing homework assignments. ✓ P – Partnership: Establish a strong partnership with the school to support positive outcomes for your child. Stay informed! ✓ P – Plan: Have a plan for success! Encourage your child to set personal and academic goals and regularly revisit these goals to ensure he/she is on track for success.



WHAT LEARNING SHOULD LOOK LIKE IN EVERY CLASS

What is Thoughtful Work? (Evidence-Based Writing)

1. All students demonstrate their understanding of a text (e.g. selection, illustration, graph, etc.) through the use of a Close-Reading Protocol.
2. All students demonstrate their understanding by producing a written response that includes a precise **claim** and relevant **textual evidence** with justification/**reasoning**.
3. All students are required to use a writing rubric to assess and/or revise their response.

What is Higher-Order Questioning?

1. All students are required to respond to questions that deepen their levels of thinking.
2. All students fully explain and justify their thinking when responding to questions that demonstrate different levels of thinking, including questions that require analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of information.
3. All students actively engage in both developing and responding to peer-generated rigorous questions with little guidance from the teachers.

What are Academic Discussions?

1. Lesson mostly structures discussion as independent peer-to-peer. The teacher facilitates and redirects the discussion as needed, while evaluating the quality.
2. Students support their ideas with concrete explanations and evidence, paraphrasing as appropriate, and build on or challenge the ideas of others.
3. Students primarily drive the discussion, consistently adding value to the dialogue with their peers and teacher, and respecting the opinion and thoughts of both; the lesson shifts to dialogue rather than a Q&A session on the major concepts studied.



QUESTIONS STUDENTS SHOULD BE ABLE TO ASK AND ANSWER

C – Assimilation

1. What is the author’s purpose or intent?
2. What is another way that we can convey this?
3. Are there alternate solutions?
4. What is the claim, and how well does the text support the claim?
5. Which concepts belong together?
6. What are some of the reasons that..?
7. What do you think would happen if...?
8. What is the probability that...?
9. How do the data results support...?
10. How should we design the ____?

D – Adaptation

1. **How can I apply this knowledge to solve a real world problem?**
2. How do you propose the problem is resolved...?
3. What are the contributing factors to the issue?
4. What bias might be contributing to the author’s perspective?
5. Can you explain your reasoning? What is your supporting evidence?
6. Are you aware of any alternate perspectives?
7. **How many ways can you...?**
8. What are the potential implications if...?
9. In what ways does this problem connect to other real-world issues?
10. In what other contexts might this strategy work?

1. Who is/are ____?
2. What is/are ____?
3. How many ____?
4. What else should I know ____?
5. What is the definition of ____?
6. What do you remember about ____?
7. Where can I locate ____?
8. Where did you find ____?
9. What does it mean to ____?
10. When did this occur ____?

1. How does this connect to real life ____?
2. How does it work ____?
3. How would you rephrase the meaning of ____?
4. Can you explain in more details ____?
5. Can you explain the overall impact of ____?
6. How would you illustrate ____?
7. Can you distinguish between ____ and ____?
8. What similar attributes exist between ____ and ____?
9. What was the problem with ____?
10. How would you classify this type of ____?

A – Acquisition

B – Application

Sentence Starters for Citing Textual Evidence:

- The author states...
- From my reading, I know that...
- Throughout the text, the author states...
- According to the passage...
- One example from the text...
- The words/phrases _____ signal...
- Paragraph # _____ really highlights...
- The section entitled _____ addresses...
- The graphic illustrates...
- The data results from the chart indicate