

The School District of Gulf County

Parent Guide

How to Use This Guide

Your child's education is a responsibility shared by the district and family during the child's entire educational experience. A first step toward ensuring that those of us who have children in school will know the basics of what it takes for our students to progress from grade to grade and earn a high school diploma, is to be informed and to monitor the child's progress.

This guide is based on the Florida Standards and State Requirements and the Student Progression Plan which govern grades, tests, attendance, courses, remediating, and challenging students.

This guide defines the terms educators use, gives examples of skills and subjects your child will be taught in each grade, explains what will happen if your child falls behind and what help is offered, and suggestions as to what, we as parents, can do at home.

Nothing we write can substitute for the best way to find out what's happening with your child's education

- Talk to your child about school every day.
- Empty the book bag and look at what your child is learning.
- Go over school work every day.
- Meet with the teacher face-to-face.
- Attend school functions that allow you to learn about the school.
- Ask questions
- Meet with the principal.
- Stay involved.

This guide also give advice about who to call if you have more questions so please feel free to contact the district office, or a school about this guide or any questions concerning our schools.

Superintendent:	850-229-8256 ext. 106	Transportation:	850-227-1744
Business Services:	850-229-8256	ESE & Pre-K:	850-229-6940 ext. 126
Instruction:	850-229-6940 ext. 120	Assessment:	850-229-6940 ext. 134
Port St. Joe Elem:	850-227-1221	Wewahitchka Elem:	850-639-2476
Port St. Joe High:	850-229-8251	Wewahitchka High:	850-639-2228

Terms you Will Need to Know

Florida Standards: Florida Standards are academic standards that represent a set of expectations for student knowledge and skills that high school graduates need to master to succeed in college and careers.

Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test: Also known as FCAT, is an assessment given to test science in grades 5 & 8 and reading in grade 10. Passing the 10th grade reading FCAT is a graduation requirement.

Iowa Test of Basic Skills: The Iowa is a nationally normed test that is given in grades K-2 to measure student achievement in reading and math.

End-Of-Course Exams: End-Of-Course Exams (EOCs) are tests given upon completion of courses in Algebra I, Algebra II, Geometry, Biology, U. S. History and Civics.

Florida Standards Assessment: The FSA is given to students beginning in third grade and measure progress in English Language Arts, Mathematics and Writing.

Exceptional Student Education Program: Through this program, which is also known as ESE, students with disabilities receive an education designed through an Individual Education Plan (IEP) to meet their specific needs.

Student Progression Plan: The SPP is a document detailing federal, state, and local rules concerning attendance, course of study, report cards, promotion and retention, testing, grading, academic standards, transfers, credits, honors, diplomas, scholarships and related topics.

Retention: This refers to students who do not progress to the next grade level at the end of the year due to poor academic performance.

Extracurricular Activities: These are school sanctioned activities like clubs or athletic teams that happen either before or after school.

Proficiency: The student has the skills, knowledge, and motivation to successfully master academic requirements.

Deficiency: The student is unable to master academic requirements.

Who Goes to School & How to Enroll

For a quick answer, call:

Pre-K Programs

Port St. Joe: 850-227-1221
Wewahitchka: 850-639-2476
District Coordinator: 850-229-6940

Health Exams & Information

Gulf County Health Department
Port St. Joe: 850-227-1276
Wewahitchka: 850-639-2644

School Attendance Policies:

Although most students start school when they enter kindergarten, Gulf County does have several pre-kindergarten programs for students as young as age three. In order to enter kindergarten, a child must have turned 5 on or before September 1. Enrolling in school for the first time is easy. All you need is proof of your child's age, a medical examination, contact information in case of emergency, and your address. In certain grades, including kindergarten, you will have to provide documents showing that your child's immunizations are up to date. By law, children up to 16 must come to school and parents may be prosecuted if children don't attend. Your child can't succeed in school if attendance isn't regular. Too many absences could affect your child's academic performance and prevent your child from moving on to the next grade.

Immunizations

Students must have all required immunizations unless granted a waiver for religious or medical reasons as allowed by law.

Meningococcal Vaccine – Be aware that this is recommended for students age 2-10 years (MPSV4) and for children ages 11-18 years of age (MCV4) that will help prevent bacterial meningitis, an infection of fluid surrounding the brain and spinal cord. For further information go to www.cdc.gov/vaccines.

Parents Right to Know

At the beginning of each school year, schools receiving Title I funds will notify parents that they may request and the school will provide, in a timely manner, information regarding the professional qualifications of the student's classroom teacher, including, at a minimum, the following:

- Whether the teacher has met State qualification and licensing criteria for the grade levels and subject areas in which the teacher provides instruction.
- Whether the teacher is teaching under emergency or other provisional status through which State qualification of licensing criteria have been waived.
- The baccalaureate degree major of the teacher and any other graduate certificate or degree held by the teacher, and the field of discipline of the certification or degree.
- Whether the child is provided services by paraprofessionals and, of their qualifications.
- Information of the level of achievement of your child's academic performance on the State assessments.
- Timely notice that the parent's child has been assigned, or has been taught four or more consecutive weeks by a teacher who is not highly qualified.

To request information, please contact the Principal.

Standards & Testing

Standards are what teaching, grades, and tests are based on. They are developed by the State, cover every academic subject, and are followed by every public school in Florida. They state what your child is expected to know at different grade levels. Classroom instruction in every subject is based on these standards and teachers' grades show how well students are performing according to the standards.

Standardized tests are given to measure how well students have learned the standards. Throughout your child's school years, standardized tests will be taken including Iowa (grades K-2), FCAT Science, and the Florida Standards Assessment (beginning in grade 3). Students will also be given the FAIR (Florida Assessments for Instruction in Reading) which helps teachers select the best reading instruction strategies for students. End-of-Course Exams are given to test student proficiency in Algebra I, Algebra II, Geometry, U. S. History, Civics, and Biology. Standardized tests show how your child is doing compared to others in our state and track progress over time. Your child's teacher has all the testing records for your child and uses them to see if there's a problem that requires additional help or a different way of teaching. Tests also help teacher identify students' strengths in order to provide more challenging academic opportunities. Schools use testing results to develop school-wide and individual plans for improving academic performance. All testing results are available to parents.

Elementary School Curriculum

Every child in the State of Florida should be learning the same things in the same grades. Here are some of the important skills outlined in the Florida Standards that your child should be learning at school between kindergarten and grade six:

- Writes stories, poems, letters, and simple reports
- Edits own writing, correcting spelling, grammar and punctuation
- Reads books, magazines and stories and is able to explain what has been read
- Listens to and understands stories, songs and poems
- Reads a map, graph, and table
- Does hands-on projects such as creating simple models, charts, books, and science experiments
- Applies math to the real world
- Studies about other countries
- Studies the history of Florida and the United States
- Understands the basic structure of the U. S. Government
- Uses a computer for simple writing assignments, and to supplement reading, math, and science skills

To find out how well your child is learning these things:

Pay attention to what your child is learning in school. Look regularly at your child's homework assignments and samples of work they bring home. Ask your child's teacher for a copy of the "syllabus" or outline of the course of study for the year or grading period. Look at the school books that your child brings home. When you visit your child's schools, look at the students' work on the classroom walls.

You can also look at the list of Florida Standards which describe exactly what your child should be learning at each grade level. The standards can be viewed at the Florida Department of Education web site at www.fldoe.org.

If you have questions or concerns about what your child is learning in class, make an appointment to meet the teacher. Don't be afraid to ask questions if you think your child is not being taught what is listed in the Florida Standards for his/her grade level.

Physical Education

Physical education may be waived if the student needs intensive remediation or if the parents requests a waiver because of a schedule conflict with a desired elective; otherwise, all students will have physical education at least three days each week.

Middle School Curriculum

During the middle school years of 6th, 7th and 8th grades, students have to complete specific courses in order to be promoted to high school. These courses include three levels each of math, language arts, reading, science, physical education and social studies. Students must earn 12 credits in the core courses of English, math, science, social studies to meet state requirements for promotion. All seventh grade students must take and pass a Civics course. The district includes reading as a requirement for students scoring a Level 1 on FCAT. Students also take electives. Students who are retained may take credit recovery courses in order to be promoted. Students who are in danger of retention may take basic skills intensive courses instead of electives. Parents may request a P. E. waiver if there is a schedule conflict with a desired elective such as band. Certain immunizations are required for students depending on the grade they are entering. Please make sure your child's immunizations are up to date and that the school has a copy of the record.

If your child is struggling to perform at grade level in a particular subject or fails a course, you will be asked to come in for a conference. At that time, progress monitoring will be discussed with the parent and will outline what type of extra help your child needs and how he will get it. We will also discuss what your child will need to be able to do academically in order to be on par with his grade level. Parents of students who are still struggling at the end of the second nine weeks will be notified of the possibility that their children may be retained at the end of the school year. Parents who have been closely following their student's academic progress will already be communicating regularly with teachers and are unlikely to be surprised. Middle school students who participate in extracurricular activities must maintain a minimum 2.0 grade point average and pass five subjects for the last grading period.

You can help your child do better by:

- Requiring your child to read something of personal interest for 30 minutes each day
- Involving your child in activities involving measurement where directions must be read and followed: building, assembling items, and converting measurements
- Providing a place and time for your child to study everyday
- Linking privileges to performance

- Assuring regular school attendance
- Attending parent night for your child's grade level
- Emptying your child's backpack and see what the school is sending home
- Asking to see your child's planner
- Attending school advisory meetings where parents and teachers plan ways to improve student performance

High School Credits

High school credit requirements can vary depending on the year your child entered ninth grade. Requirement details can be found in the Gulf County Student Progression Plan on our website and on the FLDOE website. High school guidance counselors are available to answer any questions you may have about these requirements.

Bright Futures Eligibility

Bright Futures eligibility requirements can be found in the Gulf County Student Progression Plan on our website and at <http://www.floridastudentfinancialaid.org>.

Retention

Based on grades and performance on standardized tests, a child may be retained. If your child is in danger of retention the school will request a conference with you. At this time, school officials and parents will work together to develop strategies that address where your child is having trouble and what can be done at home and at school to promote academic success. The school's goal is to avoid retention by involving the parent in a plan that will help the child catch up during the school year.

Students may be retained for any of the following reasons:

Kindergarten:

- An average of less than 60 in reading or math

Grade 1-6:

- Less than 60 average in on-grade level classroom work in each academic subject (reading, math, science, language arts)
- Scores beneath the 30th percentile on standardized tests

Grades 7-8:

- Scores beneath the 30th percentile on standardized tests
- Less than 60 average in on-grade level classroom
- Failure to receive a passing final grade in core courses

Grades 9-12

- Failure to earn the appropriate number of credits and/or GPA for the grade level

Parents concerned about their children’s academic progress should be in close touch with teachers. Parental support and involvement is essential for student success. The School Board does not allow “social promotion.” This means that students can only advance to the next grade on the basis of academic performance, not age, size, or other reasons. Research shows that it is far worse for a child’s self-esteem and his/her academic future to be socially promoted than to give him/her a second chance at the same grade level. Giving a student an extra year of preparation in elementary school can often prevent dropping out in frustration later.

Educational Choices

Home Education – Gulf County allows students to attend a home education program. Details of the program for students between the ages of 5-16 are available upon request from the Instructional Services office. A student seeking to enter or re-enter Gulf County School District from a home education program must meet all entrance requirements that any other students must meet. The student shall be placed academically as any other student that seeks to enter public school below the ninth grade. Special considerations are outlined in the School Board adopted program to award credits for grade 9 and above. State law requires all students to verify completion of kindergarten before entering first grade.

Private Schools – Gulf County School District collaborates with the private schools to serve all students.

Opportunities for Advanced Students:

Gifted student – the State of Florida decides who is gifted based on IQ test scores. The state sets the cut-off score. Programs are provided at all schools.

Advanced Placement – Gulf County offers courses that are comparable to introductory college classes. If students achieve high scores in exit exams following these Advance Placement (AP) courses, they can earn college credits that are transferrable to almost any public or private college in the United States. Course standards, teacher qualifications, and examinations are

controlled by The College Board, a national academic organization. Courses are provided via Florida Virtual School.

Dual Enrollment – Juniors, seniors, and, in some cases, sophomores, can receive state college credit for courses taught either on the high school campus or at the state college. State College dual enrollment credits are accepted at most Florida public universities, but may not be accepted at private schools or outside Florida. Consult with guidance counselors or at the college to get additional information.

Honors Courses – In secondary schools, this means the classes are more challenging than standard courses. No college credits are earned, but weight is given to the numeric GPA.

Accelerated Promotion – In some rare instances, elementary and middle school students who have already mastered all the subjects being taught are ready to “skip a grade.” The principal makes these decisions after reviewing academic records and consulting with parents and teachers. Guidelines are found in the Student Progression Plan.

Honors Graduates – Candidates for Honor Graduate shall meet the following requirements: High Honor graduates must have a grade point average of 3.850-4.00 on a 4.0 scaled. Honor graduates must have a grade point average of 3.50-3.849 on a 4.0 scale. A weighted numeric average may be used to determine local class ranking and the salutatorian and valedictorian.

Students with disabilities may be placed in the Exceptional Student Education Program. At the time your child is placed in this program, educators will evaluate him/her and complete a document called an Individual Education Plan or IEP. Students in the ESE program are entitled to stay in school until they reach the age of 22. For questions, accommodations, concerns or appeals regarding services in your child’s school, contact your child’s principal. For district policies and practices, contact the District ESE Office at 229-6940 ext. 126.

Reporting to Parents

Report cards are issued each nine weeks to parents to provide an evaluation of their child’s academic achievement and social and physical development. All parents will be notified each nine weeks of their child’s achievement. In addition, all students will be issued a progress report at the mid-point of each grading period.

Parents are informed that students must successfully master standards on the 10th grade FSA in order to receive a standard diploma upon completion of all district and state requirements for graduation.

Grading System

Kindergarten – 12th Grade:

A 90-100

B 80-89

C 70-79

D 60-69

F 59 & Below

Bridges:

E, S, N, U

Services Available to Parents

For Counseling Service, Academic Advisement or College Planning you may contact your child's Guidance counselor at the following numbers:

Port St. Joe Elementary School	DeEtta Smallwood	850-227-1221
Port St. Joe High School	Jessica Brock	850-229-8813
Wewahitchka Elementary School	Renee Lynn	850-639-2476
Wewahitchka High School	Karen Turner	850-639-2228

Advisory Council & Programs

ESE Advisory Council – A resource in the district office to provide direction and offer solutions to educational issues of students with disabilities.

School Advisory Council – A resource in each school and to the principal to provide direction and offer solutions to educational issues. Members are elected by their peers and include a strong representation of parents and community members.

Volunteer Programs – Parents and community members are invited and encouraged to become volunteers in the school system. Call the school of your choice for information.

Parent Inservice – Provided by individual schools on topics of pertinent to academic achievement and social growth.

Title I Advisory Council – A resource in the district to provide directions and offer solutions to educational issues of students receiving Title I services.

Other Informational Resources at School

- School Public Accountability Report (SPAR)
- School Improvement Plan
- Student Progression Plan
- Student Code of Conduct
- District Strategic Plan
- School Advisory Council Handbook
- English Speakers of Other Languages Plan
- Title I Parent Involvement Plan
- School Technology Plan
- Guidance Plan
- District Safety Plan
- Instructional Materials Procedures Manual
- K-12 Comprehensive Reading Plan

Resources for Families

Florida Department of Education	http://www.fldoe.org/family/
Bureau of School Improvement	http://www.flbsi.org
Partnership for Family Involvement	http://www.thefamilyworks.org
Parents Place	http://www.parentplace.com
Parent Smart	http://parents smart.com
Student Health	http://www.healthkids.org
National Parent Information Network	http://npin.org
Choice Offer	http://www.floridaschoolchoice.org
Family Education Network	http://www.familyeducation.com
Florida Department of Health Immunization Schedule	http://doh.state.fl.us/Disease_ctr/immune/community/index.html

Gulf County Parent Self-Assessment Checklist

The Gulf County Parent Self-Assessment Checklist is designed to help parents determine how involved they are in promoting a positive education for their child. Please place a check by each response that you consider to be an area of need. This self-assessment is for your use and is not to be returned to your child's school.

Focus on Attitude

- I stress the importance of education and doing one's best in school to my child.
- I express my belief in my child's ability to be successful.
- I help my child set short and long term educational goals.
- I celebrate my child's academic accomplishments.

Focus on Academics

- I support reading with age appropriate home activities.
- I assure that our home has a consistent time and place to do homework.
- I ensure that my child has access to materials needed to complete assignments.
- I regularly discuss and ask to see work that my child is doing in school.
- I attend workshops on helping my children at home.

Focus on Behavior

- I monitor the Internet, email, chat sites and computer games used by my child.
- I monitor the television programs and videos viewed by my child.
- I teach and reinforce positive behaviors such as respect for self and others, hard work, and responsibility.

Focus on Building Responsibility

- I ensure that my child has a regular routine.
- I encourage my child to accept responsibility for his/her actions.
- I ensure that my child is in attendance and on time to school each day.
- I monitor and promote my child's participation in extracurricular and after-school activities.

Focus on Home/School Connections

- I communicate regularly with my child's teacher in person, on the phone, by email or through writing.

- I prepare for and attend teacher conferences, Individualized Educational Plans, Academic Improvement Plans, or other individualized student meetings.
- I attend open house, science fairs, plays, musical events, class trips, sporting events, career/college fairs, curriculum nights, or other school activities at every opportunity.
- I volunteer in the school setting when possible.