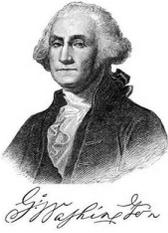


GEORGE WASHINGTON ACADEMY



Parent Handbook

2015-2016



George Washington Academy

"I attribute all my success in life to the moral, intellectual, and physical education I received."

EdKey, Inc.

Fall, 2015

Dear Parents,

Welcome to *George Washington Academy*! We are grateful for the privilege of working with your child and your family this the 2015-2016 school year and look forward to all the learning adventures that lie ahead.

We are a school with a strong focus on families, personal responsibility, an inclusive welcoming atmosphere and strong American values. We teach reading, spelling, and writing with the Spalding methods and materials. Our math program is centered around the Saxon math curricula. Both of these programs have been proven in scientific university studies to increase student achievement in these key curricular areas.

We teach using integrated, thematic instruction, fun, logical, and effective way for children to learn. Science, Social Studies, Art, Music, PE, Math and Reading are all incorporated in teacher-developed integrated units. Units are taught through reading, video presentation, Power Point presentation, demonstrations, and hands-on participation. Every 9 weeks, your child will be asked to choose a personal interest project based on that term's theme and research, write, create, and make an oral presentation of their findings for the class. Parents are invited to attend their child's PIP presentation.

We are so blessed to have such talented and willing parents. Thanks to them, we are able to present a full music program with performance and theory every week at every grade level. Our school choir is a full-school choir. They will perform for us all in three programs—fall, holidays, and spring. These musical programs have been outstanding and we're excitedly looking forward to this year's endeavors.

Children attend school on Monday through Thursday from 8:00 A.M. to 3:00 P.M. (Junior High Classes will meet until 3:20.) Friday mornings are available for remediation and tutoring as needed. Afternoons will be set aside for clubs such as Spanish, Art, and Lego Clubs. We hope to add to our club offerings this year. If you are interested in sponsoring or helping with a club, contact the school at 928-536-6536. You will be receiving further information about volunteering at the school for our Parent Advisory Committee President, Carin Stradling, in the near future.

I look forward to meeting you all soon. Here is to a great year!

Dr. Danielson

Attendance Policy



The Elementary Grades establish the educational foundations for the students throughout their lives. At GWA, the learning is sequential, particularly in phonics, reading, and math. Any breaks in the sequence have been shown to delay or damage a student's educational progress. Additionally, a lot of the teaching in the classroom is completely lost as it is teacher-presented (rather than text or workbook driven) and, therefore, difficult to make up. It is the policy of GWA that elementary level students (grade K-6) who are absent 6 or more times in the semester, may be subject to being retained in that grade, especially if grade level work cannot be maintained. We understand that illness absences are excused, but if a child is absent 3 or more days with the same illness, s/he may need to bring a doctor's/nurse's note. It is the responsibility of the student, with encouragement from the parent, to make up for lost work. Illnesses that require the student to stay home include rashes, nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea, or a temperature over 100°. Headaches or a slight temperature of less than 100°, in the absence of other symptoms, do not usually require that a student stay home

GWA must offer 1000 clock hours each year for 7th and 8th grade students. Students are required by state law to attend school on a regular basis. As with our elementary students, 7th and 8th grade students who are absent 6 or more times in a semester may be in danger of losing credit for that class. It is the responsibility of the students to determine which assignments are missing and to make them up.

We understand that there may be rare or unusual extenuating circumstances. These are subject to review by the principal.

Dress Code Policy



George Washington Academy Students will wear uniforms whenever they are on the GWA campus. Exceptions may include uniform buy-out days, school programs or sports activities (as determined by the principal) or other special activities.

The Uniform shirts are red (flag red), white, or dark (navy) blue collared polo shirts or collared blouses for the girls. Uniform pants, shorts, and skirts are to be navy blue or khaki. Shorts and skirts must be just above the knee and short shorts or skorts are not allowed. Dockers or Dickies style pants are appropriate. Denims may be worn if they are unfaded, dark blue or khaki, with no holes, tears, or *bling*. Leggings that are red, white or navy blue may only be worn under girls' skirts or jumpers. Baggy, tight fitting, or revealing clothes are unacceptable.

Shoes may be any closed-toed shoes. Sandals are not acceptable footwear because of the safety issues involved.

During cold weather, students may wear whatever sweat shirts, jackets, or hoodies they possess. However, they must take the outer wear off while in the classroom.

Uniforms may be purchased locally at Walmart and JC Penney's stores, or online at Target, Old Navy, and French Toast. Thrift stores in the Valley are also a good place to look for gently used uniforms at a reasonable price. We will have a uniform exchange/purchase day every fall just before the new school year begins.

Students may be sent home if they are out of uniform or if uniforms are not to GWA standards. These cases will be determined by the administration.

PERSONAL INTEREST PROJECTS



Every nine weeks, your child will have the chance to explore something that interests him or her. These are called Personal Interest Projects or PIPs. These projects help to fulfill research standards in Science and Social Studies. You should help your child choose a topic that has something to do with the theme of study during that term. You can choose from the list of suggested topics or come up with one on your own. You should help your child choose a topic by the beginning of the second week of term and share his/her ideas with the teacher. At the end of each term, there will be a sharing time for each student to present his or her PIP to the parents and other students.

During the course of the school year, each class will explore four different topics. Your child will have the opportunity to present four different PIPs. Because he or she will have a month to work on the project, it should reflect a good month's work. However, it also should be something that's fun for your child and not something that causes a lot of stress to for your family! Plan ahead and do a little each week and the job will be done. Children have a tendency to procrastinate, then rush to do the work during the last few days. Please help them structure the time so they are working on their PIP throughout the month.

One of the projects during the year may be a book report on a chapter book that is at your child's independent reading level according to teacher direction. The other PIPs must be projects that involve the higher-level thinking skills of analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.



PIPs can take a variety of forms. They can be collections made, research done, experiments conducted, models built, or demonstrations presented (i.e., teaching the class how to do something new.) PIPs are only limited by your child's imagination! Each PIP should include a written report with the following information:

- The title of the project
- The purpose of the project (i.e., why was this project chosen?)
- A list of materials used
- A list of sources for the research, (i.e., other words, what books, magazines, internet sources, etc., studied)
- The procedures followed or the steps taken to complete the project.

- The results of the project. What did your child learn? Has this changed his or her thinking in any way? What recommendation would the child make to others?
- What is he or she going to do in the future as a result of what he or she has learned?

PIPs also include a product, poster, display, etc.

All PIPs require an oral presentation in the classroom.



The Parent's Role

1. Offer suggestions when appropriate, but let your child choose the topic and make the key decisions.
2. Set aside a regular time each week for your child to work on his or her project. Be available for consultation, but don't do the work for him or her. Encourage a variety of research materials, not just the internet.
3. Make sure your child has access to the books, tools, and materials that he or she needs. Taking your child to the library should be a regular event. In terms of materials, talk about what you can or cannot buy/supply for the project in the very beginning so that your child can plan around that and won't be hitting you up the night before the project is due with a request for expensive tools and materials!
4. Supervise your child whenever he or she is working with materials or tools that are sharp, hot, or in any way potentially dangerous.
5. If your child uses the internet, make sure that you have a firewall program that blocks adult content. It is also important that the computer be in a location in your home - like the living or family room - where you can easily see what your child is seeing. You shouldn't put the computer in a bedroom and leave the child unsupervised to surf the net. Also warn your child never to post any personal or family information on any internet site or respond to anyone else's personal information. Occasionally check out the information your child has gleaned on line. There are some excellent and expert sources to be found, but there are

also a lot of people's personal opinions. Follow up to see who posted the information and if it is a reliable source.

6. Help your child set up a timetable for the project so the work does not get left until the last minute.
7. Remember, the project is supposed to be educational and fun. Don't nag or try to make your child feel guilty. The PIP should not become a stressful experience for either of you. If *you* need help, just ask!



Choosing and Working on Your PIP The Student's Role

1. Pick something that interests you. It should be fun as well as educational.
2. Don't pick something too big. It should be something you can do by working a few hours each week (average: $\frac{1}{2}$ hour each day) for 4 weeks.
3. Talk about your topic to your parents and your teacher to make sure the project is safe, ethical, and not too costly in terms of the materials and supplies you will need. You need to have the approval of your parents and teacher before you actually begin work on your project, so start early.
4. You can get project ideas from your teacher, your parents, books you've read, something you've seen on TV - almost anywhere. Your teacher will give you some suggestions each term.
5. Begin early to research your topic. You can do research from trade books, reference books (like encyclopedias, atlases, dictionaries, etc.), newspapers and magazines, personal interviews, or on the internet.
6. Keep good records as you go. You may want to keep a science journal to keep track of what you are doing.
7. Work safely! When in doubt, ask an adult for help.

8. Present your material in a neat and organized way so that other people can understand what you've been studying and what you've learned.
9. You will be explaining your projects to other students and parents, so have some ideas ahead of time of what you will say. Practice explaining your project at home to your family.
10. The most important part of your PIP is sharing what you have learned about your subject and how that is going to affect your life in the future.¹

These Personal Interest Projects, when done correctly, meet the Arizona State Research Standards in Social Studies and Science. If you would like to know about the Academic Standards in the State of Arizona, go to the Arizona Department of Education/Standards at the following link:

<http://www.azed.gov/standards-practices/>

¹ Some of the suggestions in this handout were suggested by and adapted from the book *Quick-but-great Science Fair Projects* by Shar Levine & Leslie Johnstone, Sterling Publishing Co, Inc., New York, NY, 2000.

INTEGRATED THEMATIC INSTRUCTION

Brain-Compatible Learning versus Brain-Antagonistic Learning:

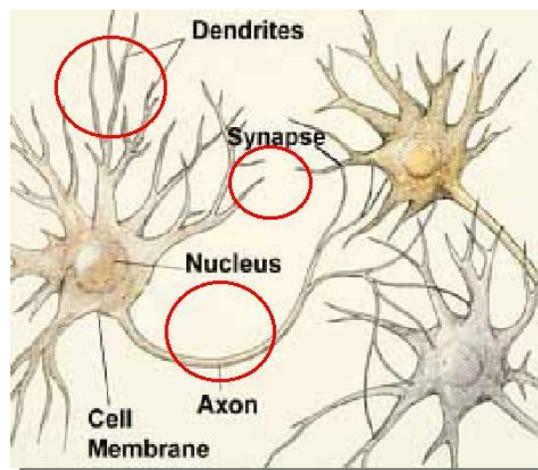


How does learning occur?

Actually, in several ways, two of which we'll discuss here:

- The first is linear, one-step-at-a-time. Break down the process into small, step-by-step procedures. Here are some examples from reading and math:
 - 1) Learn the sounds of the letters of the alphabet, and then begin to put them together to form words.
 - 2) Learn the basic addition facts, and then use the facts to solve simple addition problems.
- Some learning tasks lend themselves to a holistic brain model. We call this integrated, thematic learning. Each new piece of information can connect with a previously learned piece of information until the knowledge acquired is organized by the brain into schemas (think schematic) that provides high levels of understanding and retention. The human brain needs both step-by-step and holistic learning.

Let's talk about integrated learning by looking at the human brain:



The cells of the brain are called *neurons*. The neurons communicate with one another across little gaps called *synapses*. As the brain learns, it literally develops little extensions to each brain cell called *dendrites*. In integrated learning, new information easily connects with the dendrites of old information. It becomes part of the schema surrounding that theme.

Just look at the illustration above and try to find the linear process here. You won't. Learning is messy! We only learn what the brain perceives as necessary.¹ It learns best when new information is connected to already existing information. Dr. Fred Jones in his landmark series, *Tools for Teaching*, is quoted as saying, "You either teach to the brain the way it is made or you don't teach." Learning does not take place out of confusion.

I like to picture the new learning as a little ring of information. If a similar peg is present, the new learning has a place to go, new dendrites are formed and the new information has a high likelihood of being retained in the memory.



If the peg is not there, the information might roll around in the head awhile (maybe even long enough to "pass the test") but it will then be forgotten. It simply had no place to go! That is one reason I oppose the *teaching-to-the-test* model of education that has developed around high stakes, standardized testing. It rarely produces true understanding and long-term learning.



Whether one is teaching step-by-step or holistically, new learning must have a connection to information already in the brain. Less than that, it produces frustration and is brain-antagonistic rather than brain compatible. Step-by-step learning can be compared to building a house. It best occurs when the teacher provides the foundation and checks for understanding before going on the next *brick!* Spalding Reading and Saxon Math are good examples of this type of learning.

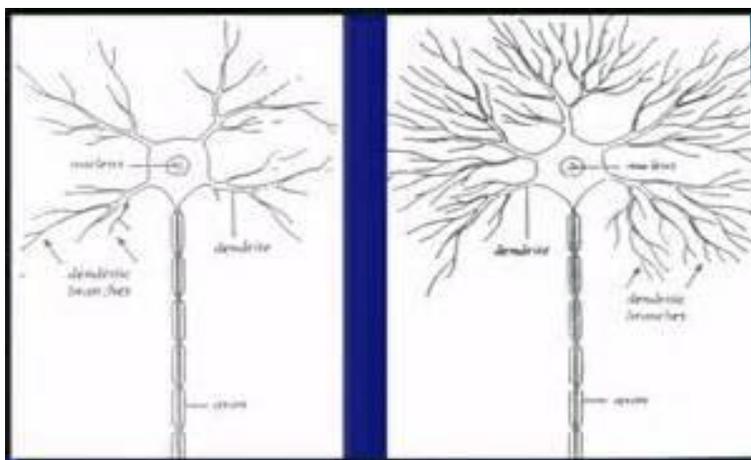
Add New Information	Add New Information	Add New Information
	Add New Information	Add New Information
Add New Information	Add New Information	Add New Information
Build a Solid Foundation		

¹ Retrieved from http://www.witchhazel.it/brain_learning.htm

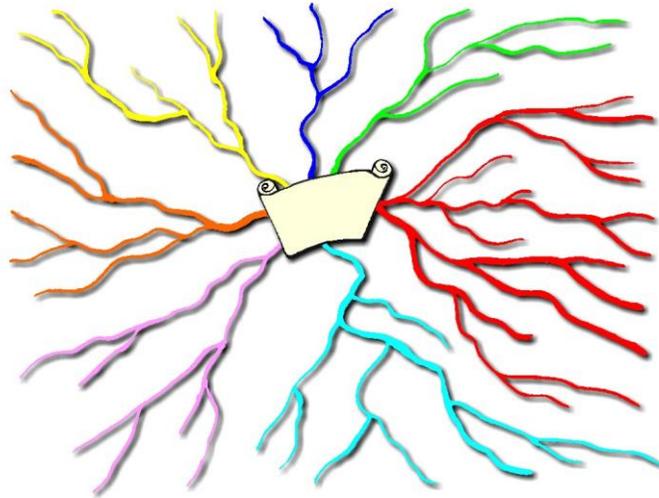
Let's talk a minute about memory itself. Memory is made up of three steps or processes, each impacting a different place in the brain:

- **Short-term memory** is like remembering someone's name or phone number for a few minutes. Verbatim recall is about 2 short declarative sentences. Much beyond that and the concept is lost. Think of the last time someone told you a phone number and you'd forgotten it within about 30 seconds!
- **Medium-term memory** is what kids use to remember the items on a weekly quiz or you the items on a grocery list. It is a little longer lasting, but still not the ultimate goal of learning. For that, you need long-term memory.
- **Long-term memory** includes those things that you remember months and even years later because new schemas have been developed. These then become the "pegs" upon which later learning can hang. Long term learning happens best when things are presented in a meaningful way and connected to existing schema developed earlier.

Integrated, Thematic Instruction is a model that teaches to the way the brain learns. It begins with a central theme. Related topics are then added to this theme in a connected and meaningful way. Learning experiences are designed around the theme. The core academic skills are integrated into the whole as they teach to the theme - reading, math, social studies, science, music, and art - even P.E. and recess on occasion! Students work with the different topics, using many academic skills, in an integrated fashion. New information is "hung" on existing pegs, creating dendrites which then become the "pegs" for additional information. The learning process is structures, but not broken up into strict periods (which often cuts short learning that is just taking root), but continues until the task is complete and a logical stopping place has been reached.



This illustration shows the difference between the dendrites of a cell coming from a cognitively poor environment to those coming from an enriched environment



Above is an illustration of a mind map. It not only reminds me of the neuron with its dendrites, but it is a great planning tool for organizing Integrated Thematic Instruction. The Central Theme is like the neuron and the learning activities that teach to that theme are like the dendrites.

For example, 4th grade Social Studies focuses on the topic of state - in this case, Arizona. Here is a possible beginning of a mind map of a 4th grade integrated curriculum with a central theme and three sub-themes (the fourth sub-theme, Modern Arizona, is not pictured):



The core theme is "Arizona". A sub-theme is "Prehistoric Arizona". Topics of study include the Petrified Forest - where the student explores rocks, fossils, the National Park System, careers in geology and paleontology, etc. Studies integrate the academic areas of science, math, social studies, reading, written language, computer skills, art, and career awareness.

For further information on how the brain learns, you may want to visit these sites:
http://www.witchhazel.it/brain_learning.htm; <http://braincompatible.ascd.org/>; <http://eduscapes.com/tap/topic>;
http://www.loloville.com/brain_based_learning.htm

BLOOM'S TAXONOMY: Categories in the Cognitive Domain¹



Learning is a complex process. It can be as simple as learning by rote, such as memorizing the multiplication tables, or as complex as analyzing information from a variety of sources and forming a personal opinion about what one has learned. Educators often tout the higher level thinking skills as the only goals for teaching/learning, but in truth all levels of learning are important and all have their place. After all, one can understand the complexity of algebra, but still be slowed down by not having memorized the math facts necessary to perform the equations. Dr. Benjamin Bloom organized learning into six categories, referred to as Bloom's Taxonomy. In our program, students will experience learning at all six levels as they explore integrated themes of study.



Level 1: KNOWLEDGE - Knowledge of terminology; specific facts; ways and means of dealing with specifics. Knowledge is defined as the remembering or recalling of appropriate, previously learned information. Verbs which describe this level of learning include:

defines;	describes;	enumerates;	identifies;	labels;	lists;
matches;	names;	reads;	records;	reproduces;	
selects;	states;	views.			

Level 2: COMPREHENSION - Comprehension: Grasping (understanding) the meaning of informational materials. Verbs which describe this level of learning include:

classifies;	cites;	converts;	describes;	discusses;	estimates;
explains;	generalizes;	gives examples;	makes sense out of;	paraphrases;	
summarizes	restates (in own words);		traces;	understands	

¹ The *cognitive domain* refers to experiences related to thinking. There are two additional domains, the *affective domain* which refers to experiences related to feelings or emotion and the *psychomotor domain* which refers to experiences relating to motor skills and the physical aspects of the body. In the process of learning, the student will often have experiences in all three of these domains.

Level 3: APPLICATION - Using previously learned information in new and concrete situations to solve problems that have single or best answers. Verbs which describe this level of learning include:

acts;	administers;	articulates;	assesses;	charts;
collects;	computes;	constructs;	contributes;	controls;
determines;	develops;	discovers;	establishes;	extends;
implements;	includes;	informs;	instructs;	operationalizes;
participates;	predicts;	prepares;	preserves;	produces;
projects;	provides;	relates;	reports;	shows;
solves;	teaches;	transfers;	uses;	utilizes.

Level 4: ANALYSIS - The breaking down of informational materials into their component parts, examining and trying to understand the organizational structure of such information to develop divergent conclusions by identifying motives or causes, making inferences, and/or finding evidence to support generalizations. Verbs which describe this level of learning include:

breaks down;	correlates;	diagrams;	differentiates;	discriminates;
distinguishes;	focuses;	illustrates;	infers;	limits;
outlines;	points out;	prioritizes;	recognizes;	separates;
subdivides.				

Level 5: SYNTHESIS - Creatively or divergently applying prior knowledge and skills to produce a new or original whole idea. Verbs which describe this level of learning include:

adapts;	anticipates;	categorizes;	collaborates;	combines;
communicates;	compares;	compiles;	composes;	contrasts;
creates;	designs;	devises;	expresses;	facilitates;
formulates;	generates;	incorporates;	individualizes;	initiates;
integrates;	intervenes;	models;	modifies;	negotiates;
plans;	progresses;	rearranges;	reconstructs;	reinforces;
reorganizes;	revises;	structures;	substitutes;	validates.

Level 6: EVALUATION - Judging the value of material based on personal values/opinions, resulting in an end product, with a given purpose, without real right or wrong answers. Verbs which of learning describe this level include:

appraises;	compares & contrasts;	concludes;	criticizes;	critiques;
decides;	defends;	interprets;	judges;	justifies;
reframes;	supports			



While the first three skills - **knowledge**, **comprehension**, and **application** are hierarchal in nature (i.e., comprehension requires higher level thinking than does knowledge and application requires higher level thinking than both), the last three skills are more parallel. It does not require a higher level of thinking to place a value on something than it does to analyze information from one source and draw a conclusion, for example. The three upper level skills are different from one another, but all three require the student to move beyond memorization and understanding to doing something with the information he or she has learned. **Analysis**, **synthesis**, and **evaluation** all require that the student make what he or she is learning a part of who he or she is. For example, a student can learn all about the process of petrification and about the National Parks System, but if he or she then tries to sneak out of the Petrified Forest National Park with a bit of petrified wood, he or she hasn't really learned anything of value.

As a wise man once said the following: *The things that I learn should change me in such a way as to make me a better person. If they do not, perhaps I haven't really learned them at all.*

I agree.

DETERMINING YOUR CHILD'S READING LEVEL



What Do Reading Levels Mean?

Vivian Franz, Ph.D.

Frequently, parents wonder exactly what reading test scores mean in terms of everyday achievement. If a child is reading "at grade level," what does that really mean? Is he or she reading **well** at grade level? Does the child know most of the words in the school reader at sight, or are there a good many words that require thoughtful analysis? The information that follows gives some insight into the reading process.

Most children are actually taught by the teacher at their **instructional** levels. This is the level at which the teacher "stretches" the student in his thinking and reading. The **independent** level, on the other hand, is the level at which the child can read easily and with pleasure. **Reading scores on tests generally refer to instructional levels.**

- **Independent Reader:** The child's independent reading level is usually determined from books in which he/she can read with no more than one error in word recognition in each 100 words and has a comprehension score of at least 90 percent. At this level the child reads orally in a natural tone, free from tension. His/her silent reading will be faster than his/her oral reading.
- **Instructional Reader:** The instructional reading level is usually determined from books (or other material) which the child can read with no more than one word-recognition error in approximately 20 words [no more than 5 mistakes per 100 words]. The comprehension score should be 75 percent or more. At this level, the child reads orally, after silent study, without tension. Silent reading is faster than oral reading. The student is able to use word-recognition clues and techniques. He reads with teacher help and guidance. This is the "stretch" level. With the right materials and purposeful reading, s/he makes maximum progress.
- **The Frustrated Reader:** The frustration level is marked by the book in which the child obviously struggles to read. Errors are numerous. The child reads without a natural rhythm and in an unnatural voice. No child should be asked to read at his/her frustration level, but the teacher/parent needs to know that this level does exist for the student.
- **The Listening Reader:** The probable capacity reading level is shown by the highest book in a given series in which the child can understand 75 percent or more of what he **hears** when the book is read aloud to him. He should be able to answer questions and to use properly many of the special words used in the selection. He should be able to use in his own conversation or discussion some language structures comparable to those used in the selection.

School Supply List 2015-16

Kindergarten

- Kleenex or other tissue, 1 standard-sized box
- Primary grade Safety Scissors
- Pencil box (5"x8"x2")
- 2 large glue sticks
- 1 box crayons, 8-colors, large primary-size

1st and 2nd grade

- Kleenex or other tissue, 1 standard-sized box
- Primary grade Safety Scissors
- Pencil box (5"x8"x2")
- 2 large glue sticks
- 1 box crayons, 8-colors, large primary-size

3rd and 4th grade

- Kleenex or other tissue, 1 standard-sized box
- Scissors
- Pencil box (5"x8"x2")
- 2 large glue sticks
- 1.5" to 2" loose-leaf binder
- 5-subject separator pages
- **wide ruled** paper, 3 hole punched
- 1 box crayons, 24-colors
- Colored pencils (optional)
- 12" ruler

5th and 6th grade

- Kleenex or other tissue, 1 standard-sized box
- Scissors
- Pencil box (5"x8"x2")
- 2 large glue stick
- 1.5" to 2" loose-leaf binder
- 5-subject separator pages
- **wide ruled** paper, 3 hole punched
- 2 wide-ruled composition books (50 cents at Wal-Mart)
- 1 box crayons, 24-colors,

- Colored pencils (optional)
- 12" ruler

Junior High

- Kleenex or other tissue, 1 standard-sized box
- Scissors
- Pencil box
- 2 large glue stick
- 1.5" to 2" loose-leaf binder
- 5-subject separator pages
- **wide ruled** paper, 3 hole punched
- 2 wide-ruled composition books (50 cents at Wal-Mart)
- 1 box crayons, 24-colors,