Welcome to Second Grade!

Second graders with their gap-toothed smiles are a marvel! They look a little different from day to day, with some teeth falling out while others are coming in, and because they cannot always keep track of their growing bodies, they may stumble as they run across the playground. Second graders can plan more than in years past, and as a result they may worry more about what “might” happen, such as what if nobody is home when they get home or what will happen if the playdate goes badly? But this ability to plan also means they can begin thinking more strategically. They can make plans with friends and recess games are more easily organized and can go on for days. Negotiating the rules and fair play is an important topic during second-grade recess, one that teachers help students with throughout the year.

Reading and writing workshop are part of the schedule for all grades. Second graders are more likely to read books that cannot be completed in a single sitting. The world is fascinating to a second grader and reading and writing units on informational text allow them time to study, explore and share their interests. Also included in the second grade are units on folk tales, series books and realistic fiction. Students are given a Kids A to Z account, an application for reading practice at home. Poetry is everywhere, and a beautiful end-of-the-year unit on poetry is a chance to think a bit more carefully about word choice and how words can be organized on a page to communicate ideas.

Second graders plan their writing lives and live with a piece of writing a bit longer, thus revision and editing are an important part of second grade. They write in complete sentences and spell more words conventionally. Following the Words Their Way sequence, we provide targeted instruction about spelling rules and patterns. Students practice handwriting (manuscript), following the sequence of Handwriting Without Tears. Second-grade writers have an opportunity to publish their work in the Lower School literary journal, DEScribe. Writing units of study are grounded in Teachers College Reading and Writing Units of Study and include units in narrative, information and opinion writing.

Solving problems is at the heart of the Lower School's mathematics curriculum. Students begin solving simple multi-step word problems in second grade, using a technique called the "bar model" method. The method consists simply in representing (mentally or graphically) arithmetical quantities by line segments. As in all grades, this problem-based math approach is supported by the Singapore Math program. Second-grade math units of study include operating in a base ten number system, measurement (length and weight), multiplication and division; mental math and algebraic thinking, measurement II (money, fractions, time, capacity), and data and geometry. Students are given a Dreambox account where they can practice, develop and master math skills and concepts at home.

In social studies second graders study the idea of community with a focus on the community of Dwight-Englewood school and the city of Englewood as well. They explore the campus of Dwight-Englewood and learn about the people who make up the community. A study of the city of Englewood introduces the roles and responsibilities of local government. Students read and create simple maps and learn about the geography of Englewood and New Jersey.

Twice a week second-graders visit the music room where they play rhythm instruments, listen to music, and sing songs with more than one verse. They work with pitched and unpitched percussion instruments, learn about the lives and music of Beethoven, Schumann, Brahms and Tchaikovsky and in the spring attend a concert at NJPAC presented by the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra. They also perform during the annual Lower School Spring Concert and Art Show, as well as during "Grandparents and Special Friends Day” held in the spring.

Health and Wellness occurs twice a week in the Lower School gym. Second graders are exposed to a wide variety of activities to help develop an overall understanding of fitness and basic skills. They learn to use a fitnessgram and participate in Jump Rope for...
Heart. Sports introduced and practiced include soccer, flag football, handball, basketball, floor hockey, base games and lacrosse. They also engage in basic movement and motor skills to improve overall fitness, hand/eye and foot/eye coordination, and body/spatial awareness. When possible, and frequently in the spring, students have physical education on the school’s Leggett Field.

Second-grade amigos have Spanish twice a week. They practice the days of the week and months of the year, learn numbers, greetings, foods and weather terms. They begin to maintain a simple conversation and gain more confidence speaking! They practice their skills in the Mis Amigos y Yo textbook series.

Twice a week students travel to the Swartley Arts Studio. They learn about color, line, shape and pattern while exploring drawing, painting, collaging, sculpture and printmaking. Students work independently and collaboratively, and all students produce a collection of work to represent their progress within each medium. They develop the language for talking about art by studying their own work, the work of their peers and professional artists.

As part of technology, students learn flowcharts and simple coding through the use of programs such as Light-Bot, Kodable, Scratch Jr., and Hopscotch. Most technology in second grade is done using the school’s iPads.

Budding scientists visit the science room twice a week. Beginning the year with a study of the plants they planted in first grade, they learn about the life cycle of a plant and how to record their observations. Topics covered in science include states of matter and the water cycle, mammals, amphibians and reptiles. They learn to use a microscope and various tools for measurement.

Second graders can do a lot! Their competencies are growing, and we work hard to help them feel grown-up and capable, while at the same time protecting their childhood and giving them time for fun and silliness – for it is that combination which is the special joy of second grade!