



Welcome to Fifth Grade!

JULY 2021

In his poem “On Turning Ten” American poet laureate, Billy Collins, describes turning that “first big number.” He describes the age as both young and old at the same time, and that is the wonder of teaching fifth graders. Fifth graders try on new roles, explore themselves and how they fit in with their peer group. They start identifying with peers more than adults and are becoming aware, and making sense, of a complicated world. Our fifth-grade program tries to recognize this as it helps fifth-grade students navigate their social, emotional and academic worlds. We are mindful that this is the last year of Lower School for students and work hard to protect their time as Lower School students while giving them the skills and confidence for their transition to Middle School.

Fifth-grade science takes place in the classroom and is a STEM program led by a member of the Lower School Technology Department. This program represents the culmination of all students have learned in their technology and science classes. . Students use and apply the tools and principles of science, technology, engineering and mathematics to think, collaborate, ask questions, solve problems and create while under the guidance of the Lower School STEM leader.

Fifth-grade language arts speaks to the sophisticated thinking students of this age bring to their work. Reading closely to determine multiple layers of meaning, citing text evidence, determining central ideas and analyzing how individuals, events and ideas develop over the course of the text are all central to their work.

Writing units of study are grounded in Teachers College Reading and Writing Units of Study and include units in narrative, information and persuasive writing and poetry. In these units, writers move through a writing process which includes brainstorming, outlining, drafting, revising and editing. Sentence work, spelling and grammar are important components of the writing instruction. Fifth graders are facile on the keyboard and many of their written assignments are typed. They frequently use google.docs to share, edit and revise their written work with both peers and teachers. The Lower School librarian oversees the publication of the Lower School literary magazine, DDescribe, to which fifth-graders are invited to contribute.

As in all grades, a problem-based math approach supported by the Singapore Math program helps develop strong conceptual understanding and skills, flexible thinking and a willingness to engage with open-ended problems. Students are given an *ALEKS* (Assessment and Learning in Knowledge Spaces) account. ALEKS is a web-based, artificially intelligent assessment and learning system that allows students to practice, develop and master skills at home. Math units of study in fifth grade include whole number fluency; fractions and decimals; ratio, rate and percent; and geometry. Solving all types of word problems by carefully analyzing the problem and creating bar models is a vital component of fifth-grade math and is a precursor to algebraic thinking.

Social studies covers the American Revolution. In this study of The American Revolution students learn about the key individuals and events that led to The American Revolution and the creation of the United States. They read and analyze primary sources such as the Constitution and Declaration of Independence. They consider multiple perspectives on an event and understand that history is a story not just of events that happened in the past but is also a story about human beings.

A highlight of The Lower School music program is the Creating Original Opera program. As part of the music program, fifth-grade students work with their classmates to create an opera from inception to completion with the support and guidance of a team of teachers. They make use of the skills and knowledge they have gained in other curriculum areas, including music, art, social studies, science, math, technology and physical education. Each homeroom presents their original opera to the Lower School and their families in spring.



Dwight-Englewood School

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In Spanish class students use memorized words and phrases to express messages, but they also start creating their own sentences with their learned vocabulary. They read and write in Spanish and continue practicing conversational Spanish with peers and adults. Units of study include all about me; family; places; modes of transportation and art. Art projects, songs, dances and drama all support this learning.

In Health and Wellness students practice balance through gymnastics activities, learn skills and rules for sports such as soccer, basketball, floor hockey, base games, as well as tag games. They learn about fair play, safety rules and procedures, and how to problem-solve. Classes are held twice a week, and when possible and frequently in the spring, on Leggett Field.

Whether your child is joining us in fifth grade or has been here since they were in preschool, fifth grade is an exciting year in the Lower School. Towards the end of the year there are many opportunities to learn about the Middle School program that will help students with the transition. We look forward to working with your child in the final year of Lower School!