2nd Grade Family Guide

What is the purpose of this family guide?

This guide was made to help families understand the Iowa Academic Standards and to show what students will learn by the end of second grade. It provides information about the key ideas and skills teachers will introduce in mathematics, English Language Arts/Reading and science. It also includes possible examples of what students will be asked to do in class, how to help your student at home, questions you can ask your student and questions families can ask the teacher.

This guide was also designed to help families understand how they can work with teachers to support the learning of their second grader. When teachers and families work together to help students master Iowa's Academic Standards, students can develop the skills they will need for success in school and life. If you have questions about this information or if your student needs extra help, please contact the teacher.

Why are Iowa's Academic Standards Important?

Academic standards are important because they help ensure that all students, no matter where they live or what school they attend, are prepared for success in college and the workforce. The standards help set clear and consistent expectations for what students should know and be able to do from kindergarten through 12th grade.

Standards are a set of goals, not a curriculum, so decisions about teaching remain with local schools. They guide families and teachers to know when students need extra assistance or when they need more of a challenge in the classroom. They also help your student develop critical-thinking skills in preparation for college and career.

English/Language Arts

In grade 2, students will gain more skills in reading, writing, speaking and listening. They will continue to learn and practice rules for letter/sound combinations to use during reading and writing. They will expand their knowledge of words to prefixes and suffixes. They will use this knowledge to understand the meanings of words. As students are immersed in text, they will gain increased vocabulary knowledge. The students' writing will include longer sentences and phrases. Students will start to understand the difference between speaking in an informal and formal manner.

What might students be learning in their classroom in connection to the standards?

- Students will continue to develop the reading foundational skills with more complex phonics patterns and common prefixes and suffixes.
- Students will be asked to work on reading fluently. This will include accuracy, rate and expression.
- Students will be asked to pay closer attention to the details when reading a text.
- Students will read from many text types, also known as genres.
- Students will expand their understanding of texts by participating in collaborative discussions and writing about their reading.
- Student’s vocabulary will continue to be enhanced through reading stories, but also informational text.
- Students will be introduced to the writing process and use it to support writing in various formats, including simple research.

What might my student be learning in their classroom?

- Your student will be using detail, including illustrations and graphics, from the text to answer questions related to who, what, where, when, why and how.
- Your student will use these details to determine if there is a lesson to learn from a story.
- Your student will learn how to use various features in text to locate information with ease.
- Your student will write in a variety of formats, including short research.
- Your student will take part in conversations in which his or her comments or questions add to the conversation or are used to gather additional information or deepen understanding of the topic.
- Your student will continue to expand their vocabulary, including adding prefixes and suffixes to words.

What can I do to support my student at home?

- Read at home every day and assist your student by reading every other paragraph if needed. Encourage your student to read to younger siblings, cousins, or other individuals you know.
- Support your student in sounding out unfamiliar words using their phonics skills.
- Encourage your student to explain what he or she has just read.
- Help your student figure out the meaning of new words by using prefixes, suffixes or text surrounding the word.
- Help your student explore their world and ask questions in which they use books to find the answers.
- Encourage your student to write for a variety of reasons. One example is writing a thank-you note or letter to family members or friends.
- Ask your librarian to suggest books about people or places that are important to your student or family that you can read together.

What questions can I ask my student about the learning happening at school?

- What did you learn from that book? Can you show me specific parts of the book that helped you learn that?
- Where might we find the answer to that question?
- I will help you use your phonics skills to figure out how to spell that word.
- Can you read that book again to your (sibling, stuffed animal, pet)?
- What is a new word that you learned today?

What questions can I ask my student's teacher?

- Ask to see a sample of your student's work.
- Ask the teacher questions such as: Is this piece of work satisfactory? How could it be better?
- Ask if your student is on track with their reading and writing skills?
- Ask how you can help your student improve or excel in this reading and writing?
- If you believe your student needs extra support, ask if there are resources that you can use at home.

Mathematics

Second grade is an exciting year when students expand their understanding of mathematics concepts, strengthen their problem-solving skills and apply what they've learned to more complex situations. This year builds on foundational skills while encouraging independence and critical thinking. Your involvement is key to helping your student succeed and fostering a love for learning that will last a lifetime.

What might students be learning in their classroom in connection to the standards?

- **Numbers and Operations:** Understand numbers up to 1,000; skip-count by twos, fives, 10s and 100s; and compare and order numbers.
- **Addition and Subtraction:** Fluently adding and subtracting within 100 and solving two-step word problems.
- **Place Value:** Understanding hundreds, tens and ones; using place value strategies to add and subtract.
- **Measurement and Data:** Measuring lengths with standard units, understanding concepts of time and money and interpreting data from graphs.
- **Geometry:** Recognizing, drawing and partitioning shapes into equal parts; understanding fractions as parts of a whole.

What might my student be learning in their classroom?

- Building number sense by working with larger numbers and solving more complex problems.
- Practicing addition and subtraction fluency to solve everyday math challenges.
- Exploring real-world applications of measurement, time and money.
- Developing an understanding of basic fractions through hands-on activities with shapes and objects.
- Strengthening their ability to explain their thinking and justify their answers.

What can I do to support my student at home?

- Practice skip counting and simple addition/subtraction facts during daily routines (e.g., counting coins or steps).
- Play math games that involve strategy, patterns, or problem-solving.
- Use cooking or baking to introduce fractions and measurements in a fun way.
- Encourage your student to solve word problems and explain how they reached their answers.
- Explore time-telling and money concepts using clocks and real currency.

What questions can I ask my student about the learning happening at school?

- What math problems did you solve today?
- Can you explain how you solved this problem?
- What's the biggest number you worked with today?
- Can you show me how to count by 5s (or 10s)?
- What shapes or fractions did you learn about this week?

What questions can I ask my students' teacher?

- What are the main math skills my student is working on this month?
- What are my students' strengths in math and where do they need more support?
- Are there specific activities or tools I can use at home to reinforce their learning?
- What should I focus on to help my student prepare for future math topics?

Science

The Iowa Academic Standards for Science empower teachers to provide all students in second grade with engaging science instruction that emphasizes data analysis and interpretation, critical thinking, problem solving and interdisciplinary connections—all while maintaining high expectations for academic achievement.

The science standards work in harmony with English/Language Arts and mathematics standards, allowing classroom instruction to better reflect real-world problem-solving, which often draws on multiple disciplines. Additionally, these standards aim to ensure all students have access to an equitable, high-quality science education.

What might students be learning in their classroom in connection to the standards?

The Iowa Academic Standards for Science incorporate the most current research and developments in modern science. To prepare students to think critically, analyze information and solve complex problems, the standards are structured to allow students—starting in elementary school and continuing through high school—to build on prior knowledge and skills. Key concepts are revisited and deepened over time, helping students strengthen their understanding of connections across scientific disciplines. Parents should be aware that while some content may seem familiar, the way it is taught may differ from their own school experience.

What might my student be learning in their classroom?

- Properties of materials
- Heating and cooling materials
- Growth of plants from seeds
- How water and wind change landforms

What can I do to support my student at home?

- Encourage your student to begin to make sense of the world around them by asking questions and making observations. Ask them what they notice and what they wonder about the world around them.
- Extend classroom experiences at home by encouraging your student to explore, using their own language to describe lived experiences.
- Use the information on these pages to ask your student's teacher meaningful, informed questions.

What questions can I ask my student about the learning happening at school?

- How does land change and what are some things that cause it to change? What are some design solutions that could slow or prevent changes to the land?
- How do the properties of the materials relate to their use?
- What do plants need to grow?
- How many types of living things live in a place?

What questions can I ask my student's teacher?

- What kinds of phenomena is my student going to be making sense of this year?
- How is my student going to be engaging with the practices of science?

Social Studies

Social studies helps students understand the world around them and how they can engage in it. In second grade, students will learn about Iowa. Students will learn about Native Americans in Iowa and about significant Iowa leaders and events. In doing this, they will build on what they learned in first grade to gain a deeper sense of chronological thinking, how the past is different from the present, and analysis of primary sources.

What might students be learning in their classroom in connection to the standards?

Second-grade standards help students develop a deeper understanding of Iowa and its place within the United States. Students develop a deeper sense of being a citizen of their local community, Iowa, and the United States of America. They will explore the role that Native Americans had in shaping the history and culture of Iowa in the past to today. They will analyze family, school and community life in the past to the present to draw conclusions and help develop a sense of chronological reasoning. They will explore significant Iowa leaders and events in Iowa's history to explain the distinctive history and heritage of Iowa. Second grade students in Iowa will also explore the unique features of Iowa's landscape and natural resources. Students will develop an understanding of economic decision-making by exploring and examining ways people spend and save money. Second grade students will develop a sense of critical thinking by generating compelling questions, collecting evidence from primary sources, analyzing results and drawing conclusions to distinguish facts from opinions and use evidence to support their conclusions. Another point of emphasis is cross-curricular integration, particularly with English Language Arts. Students could engage in shared writing projects and participate in collaborative conversations, developing literacy skills like sequencing and information recall.

What might my student be learning in their classroom?

- Culture and history of Native Americans in Iowa
- Iowa communities in the past and present
- What makes Iowa unique
- Saving and spending (financial literacy)

What can I do to support my student at home?

- Go to a local, county, or tribal museum. Discuss how the community has changed over time and significant events in the local community.
- Explain the role of the mayor, city council, local school board. If time allows, take students to a meeting so they can see these officials.
- Ask students to describe symbols and landmarks around Iowa. Ask students to think about how these might be different from those of other places or states.
- Discuss ways people can earn, save, spend, or borrow money.

What questions can I ask my student about the learning happening at school?

- What can you tell me about your city/town/community? How has our city/town/community changed over time?
- Can you tell me something about Iowans who have made an impact on our state? What did they do that made a difference?
- What symbols represent Iowa? What are famous Iowa landmarks?
- Why do you think it is important to save money?

What questions can I ask my student's teacher?

- How can I help my student better understand the social studies skills and/or content they will be learning about this year?
- How can I help my student ask better questions about what they are learning?