

Ruth Bammes - Second Grade

It seems unlikely that there could be any greater electricity in the air at the Kennedy Space Center than there is in the TCS courtyard when second graders gather to launch the homemade rockets they've built with their families. The rocket launch is a second grade landmark event. As the students step forward to send their two-liter soda bottles-turned-rockets into the air, Ruth Bammes presides over each countdown and launch. As the rockets blast off, the crowd cheers and the children explode with excitement and happiness.



"I love that second graders have so much enthusiasm," says 28-year teaching veteran Ruth Bammes. "Second graders retain the enthusiasm of younger students, but they're a little more independent and can do more kinds of activities." Activities like those in the Project Polaris space unit leading up to the rocket launch. In small groups, the students work on a math simulation, pretending they're traveling through the constellations en route to Polaris, one of the brightest stars. Along the way, they overcome the tricks of Dastardly Derek, who is likely to steal their rulers, forcing them to measure with other tools, like paper clips or centimeter cubes, or their hands. When they arrive, the children assemble the space station they've designed in their groups.

This project often kindles a long-term interest in planets or rocketry. When students find something they're really interested in, whether it's space exploration or something else, Mrs. Bammes advises parents to "find as many ways at home, as a family, to investigate that, to support the children in learning more about those things that really spark their attention. Often those students will come back and share information on a deeper level than we've been able to cover in class."

Ruth Bammes knew from a very early age that she wanted to be a teacher. Her parents raised chickens that roosted in rows in the coop. "As a young girl, I would take my books in there and I would read to them and teach them math facts," she remembers. "They were a perfect class, always attentive!"

Later, Mrs. Bammes was further inspired to teach by role models in school, her third grade teacher among them. "Miss Rehwaldt just had a way of making everyone feel comfortable and special. Because we all felt that way, we were all more engaged in her lessons and what was going on in her room." Hmm, sounds just like Mrs. Bammes!