

Unit Nine – Expert Projects in a Content Area: Writing to Learn and to Teach About Science

May

This unit builds on the energy and enthusiasm children carry about the world around them. Many teachers already know that the children in their classrooms are eager to learn about their world. Whether they are curious about insects or dolphins, or they collect rocks and sea shells, or they notice the way that leaves on the trees change across the year, second graders often come to school excited to talk, draw, and write about the things that surround them every day in the world. All year children have been engaged in science workshops. In these workshops, children have learned to observe closely, ask big questions, and follow procedures to find out about those questions.

In the first phase of the unit, children will study a whole class topic during a daily science workshop, and will write, sketch, and question to record and grow their thinking without a particular end product in mind. In reading workshop, your children will be immersed in a unit of study on reading to learn from science related books, and of course you'll be reading aloud as many books as you can on the topic your class is studying. In the second phase, they will spend two weeks alternating between looking closely at mentors and writing many, many books on topics that interest them within the unit of study in different genres. In the final phase, week 4, children choose one of their pieces to revise and edit, again relying on their mentors. The unit will culminate with some kind of celebration in which the children teach others about what they've learned.

We invite you to bring your own knowledge of content area and related passions into your plans for this unit, to draw on the work we describe in Unit 6 in this document, and to read the section on Expert Projects in *A Quick Guide to Teaching Second-Grade Writers* (pp. 67-70).