



What's Hot in 2nd-Grade with #2ndchat moderator Carol McLaughlin

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Vicki: Today we're talking with Carol McLaughlin [@missmac100](https://twitter.com/missmac100) from Alabama, but she is the moderator for Second Chat [#2ndchat](https://twitter.com/#2ndchat), currently. And today, Carol, we thought we would talk about some of the trends we're seeing in second grade across the world. So what's hot with second grade teachers right now?

Carol: Well, what I'm really excited to see is that second grade and other primary classes – but second grade are starting to do **Project Based Learning**. That's always been really elevated in the upper grades, but I'm starting to see second grade and lower do some Project Based Learning in their classrooms.

Vicki: So, do you think it's just – you know, because there's a difference between projects and Project Based Learning...

Carol: Yes.

Vicki: Do you think teachers are really grasping that difference?

Carol: The ones that are on Second Chat do. They realize that it's not just a project. And projects are great, all on their own. They have their place, and we still do projects. But Project Based Learning is a whole other animal, and so I see teachers really trying to get their kids involved and engaged in problems they can solve. [They're] using all the skill they need to solve it with a real audience and finding experts in that field – because kids can do that, and they get excited about what they're learning because they're solving a real problem.

Vicki: Can you think of an example that you've seen lately?

Carol: Yes! My class collaborated with our local zoo. I happen to know the educational director, one of the education directors at the zoo, and I wanted to do something with animals that was a big standard that we had. I wanted research to be part of it, but I also wanted to help the zoo because the zoo has been

really rebuilding. They redesigned their zoo, and I wanted kids to be really excited about it. So, I contacted him, and we made a project together, where he asked us to try to think of some animals that would be a good addition to the zoo, [some] that they didn't currently have. And so they had to research what the zoo already had, and then they had to research what animals would be good for the zoo, and animals that kids would like. They did all this research, and they polled kids [about] what they wanted, and they sent all their results to the zoo. Not knowing that they didn't mean to get that zoo animal, but it just meant that they had input that the zoo would listen to. And that was fun for them to do that.

Vicki: Did the zoo listen?

Carol: They did listen. They didn't have to get that animal, but they gave them feedback and told them what they liked about it and why they could or could not get that animal. But they were so excited! We skyped with many of the zookeepers, and they talked to them about why the animal would be good for the zoo or not. They learned so much more than they would just doing a little animal research project.

Vicki: Oh, so much. OK, what other trends. Project Based Learning, what else?

Carol: I noticed that a lot of **Global Projects** are huge right now. We want our kids connected to other classrooms around the world. It can be as simple as just solving a math problem with each other, or doing a science project, or doing a whole chapter book that we are sharing books and ideas with.

Vicki: You connect and collaborate with guests we've had on the show. Why don't you tell us [about] one of your collect global projects?

Carol: Oh my goodness. One of the coolest ones I did was actually with Tim Cahey, who teaches in Chicago, and another teacher taught in Canada, which was not [Vickie Margado](#) but another friend and another teacher taught in California, and then I was in Alabama. We collaborated with an author, [Tricia Springstubb](#), who wrote *Cody and the Fountain of Happiness*. We all read the same book at the same time, but we each shared ideas throughout it, and we had different things we talked about in the book. At the end, the author skyped with all four of our classes, which was fun!

Vicki: Oh, wow. When you get creative and you become a "[teacherpreneur](#)" like you are, you just put together – it's almost like, you know, business deals, but it's really deals between classrooms, you know, because you're a "teacher-preneur." OK, what else? So we have Project Based Learning, we have Global Projects. What else?

Carol: Of course, **STEAM** is a big thing that teachers are wanting to do in Maker Space. Having kids get very involved in using all the parts of STEAM. What I love about Twitter and other things from #2ndChat is that we get to share ideas and talk among ourselves about ideas we have, but we can also contact people. Chris Woods -- he is [@dailystem](#) on Twitter – and he's done our chat a few times. He is an expert in STEAM and STEM and science. He gave us great practical ideas about how to make every day STEAM activities and how to easily integrate it into your lessons.

Vicki: OK. So, let me ask you this. We talked about three ideas. What's the biggest heartbreak of second grade teachers right now?

Carol: I see a lot of people struggle between wanting to do innovative things and the pull for some to stay traditional because testing, sadly, has gotten all the way down to second grade. The push for getting all

the content in – and people keep it all isolated, instead of thinking about it being integrated – which is why Project Based Learning works, and STEAM works, and these global projects work so well. They teach all of these things in a way that makes sense to kids, but we don't always have people join with us. So a lot of the time, I feel like we're "lone wolves" in our schools. That's heartbreaking because the whole part of teaching that's fun is to do it with someone else, get excited, share ideas. We're better together.

Vicki: Absolutely. What do you think is a mistake that some second-grade teachers are making right now, besides maybe just the traditional piece? Are there common mistakes you're seeing?

Carol: I think sometimes second grade teachers are scared to let [go of] control of their classrooms, and also the technology, thinking that their [students] are too young to do it. And they're not. Second graders are amazing in technology. They're leaders, already. They can do a lot of these things. I think [the teachers] are kind of scared to let go – it'll be chaos – but if you have them in the right project and the right activity, doing the right things that are very engaging, kids will take off with all those things. They will surprise you beyond what you could possibly ever do. I think teachers just don't want to let go all the time, scared of what might happen. But that "what happened" is the most fun part!

Vicki: Yeah. So, Carol, could you give a 30-second pep talk to all the second grade teachers listening right now to give them the energy to just be awesome for their kids?

Carol: You do not know what you're missing if you don't try some of these things. Maybe you're scared, and maybe you don't feel like you've have someone else to do it with, but reach out online –through #2ndChat or through some other second grade teachers online. Ask other people in your district. There's someone else who's willing to try it. Just try it. One time. Start small. Do something like maybe an integrated unit or a small Project Based Learning or a STEAM activity or a global project. Start small. You will become addicted to it. You're going to want to do it more and more, because your kids are going to benefit, and your kids are going to learn more than you can possibly imagine.

Vicki: So, join #2ndChat, and remember if you're in another grade, there's #3rdChat, there's #4thChat, there's #5thChat, there's #KinderChat, there's #1stChat. There's all these chats out there, where you can find awesome, engaged, excited teachers like Carol. Like you, we don't have to be an island of innovation. We don't have to be alone. We're better together. We get energy from one another. So, you need to join in, be part of the chat and the community, and learn. Carol, I know that you started as a "lurker," right?

Carol: I did! I just read everything for a long time. But the magic happens when you engage with others.

Vicki: Yeah. Yeah, it does. So, get out there. Be a remarkable educator. We've had so many wonderful ideas today.

Transcribed by [Kymerli Mulford](#)