

SCIENCE BUDDIES *in Action*



Teacher

Deborah Walker
Walnut Creek

Summary

When science fair season kicks off, Ms. Walker directs her students to Science Buddies' Topic Selection Wizard to answer the age-old question, "What kind of science project can I do?"

Overview

As a K-5 science teacher and school science fair coordinator, Deborah Walker has a lot on her plate. Each year, her school holds an informal science fair in which students have a chance to practice conducting an experiment and presenting it to an audience—an experience that prepares them for sixth grade, when half of their science grade will be based on a science project. Before the Internet became a household fixture, she used to compile substantial packets of information for parents to guide them through the science fair process. But after finding Science Buddies through a Google search of "science fair projects," Ms. Walker can save time *and* paper by directing students and parents to the website. In fact, despite the wealth of other science project websites on the Internet, Science Buddies is the only website Ms. Walker recommends.



"Science Buddies is the students' and parents' first stop," she says. "I tell them, 'Go look at this site.' It's very user-friendly."

In particular, Ms. Walker likes the Topic Selection Wizard because it gives students the freedom to choose from a selection of projects that match their interests. "I don't want to suggest projects because then students feel like they have to do it," she says. "It's great to be hands-off and have the kid find a fun project on their own. It's more student-driven."

After she started recommending Science Buddies to students and parents, Ms. Walker says she noticed that the science projects became more sophisticated, particularly in the higher grades. She adds that sixth-grade teachers continue to use Science Buddies to help guide students through the process of creating high-quality science projects. In fact, Ms. Walker discovered that some students continued to use Science Buddies even after the science fair was over.

"Some kids go there randomly, and not just during science fair season," she says. "The ones who were motivated and committed figured out they can use the website easily."