



## **Knowledge Quest on the Web: January/February 2001**

Special content referenced in the feature article  
"Building a Motivation Toolkit for Teaching Information Literacy" (p. 28-32)  
exclusively on KQWeb

### **KQ on the Web Review of Turning Kids on to Research**

Review by [Ann M. Gray](#)

Small, Ruth, and Marilyn Arnone. *Turning Kids On to Research*. Englewood, CO: Libraries Unlimited, 2000.

Two summers ago, while still pursuing my MLS at Syracuse University, I had the good fortune to take a weekend course presented by the dynamic team of Ruth Small and Marilyn Arnone. We spent the whole weekend designing curriculum to help motivate students so that they would become excited about research and learning, in the classroom and in the library media center. We became skilled at a variety of techniques to take the somewhat boring lessons we had previously used and transform them into lessons that were relevant to the students. We were taught to use "confidence-builders" like providing extra help at the beginning of the research process. Posters, graphics, music, and storytelling were suggested as possible methods of stimulating curiosity. Now Ruth Small and Marilyn Arnone have put together a book meant to bring these ideas to educators who do not have the opportunity to participate in one of their seminars.

Library media specialists are in the unique position of being aware of projects that teachers throughout our building(s) are pursuing with their students. If you, like me, use one of the many information skills methods available, you make a concerted effort not to teach library skills in isolation. Chances are that you try to work with your teachers to design collaborative research projects that incorporate skills that students need to solve information problems.

How can you design lessons that are not dry or boring? Small and Arnone have the answers. Based on research on motivational theories plus years of personal experience and ideas gleaned from teacher-librarians throughout the world, the two teach us how to build a "motivational toolkit" piece by piece.

No matter which of the many information skills models you use, Small and Arnone have developed a systematic method that uses motivational principles to create enthusiasm and engagement in your students. Among other things, the authors' goals include ways to instill excitement into the research process, to encourage student satisfaction in their research accomplishments, and to promote the value of both information and its use. There are practical techniques for planning, re-writing, and enhancing information skills lessons. "Motivation Makeovers" provide extensive examples of how practitioners have redesigned lackluster lessons to promote curiosity, excitement, and motivation.

I found myself taking notes about particular ideas I wanted to try out in my own library media center. One intriguing idea for stimulating students' curiosity about research involves creating a mystery box filled with questions. Students draw questions that are guaranteed to generate interest and give the class a chance to practice their information skills. Another idea in the book involves creating a personalized scavenger hunt involving a teacher lost in the library. Each student in the class is a character in the story. Together students work through clues to help find the "lost teacher". One LMS created a mnemonic, TILUSE, to help her students remember the six steps to the Big6™. These are just a few of the many treasures found in the book.

At the end of each chapter there are exercises to test your understanding of what you're learning, as well as references to other resources. If you are looking for ways to put excitement back into your information skills lessons, I recommend that you put this book into your own toolkit today!

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