



Winter 2004

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Motivational Strategies That Work

Research has shown that group brainstorming used to explore questions during the beginning stage of research can be effective at reducing some of the apprehension that students may feel about the research process. Brainstorming is also an effective strategy for building from the familiar to something new. Cynthia Tidd uses brainstorming, for example, at the beginning of a lesson exploring plants of the desert. She asks students to brainstorm a list of facts they already know about the desert just before reading them a non-fiction book entitled *Cactus Hotel* written by Brenda Z. Guiberson.



Check out the rest of her lesson in the S.O.S. database using keywords or searching on Tidd as author.

Megan Riccardi proposes using diaries to help build students' sense of confidence and satisfaction in their research accomplishments. In her lesson, students research animal behaviors, diet, and habitat and create a diary as if they were the animal! She includes lots of other motivational strategies in her fun lesson plan that spans two 40 minute sessions.

Spotlight Feature

Michele Messenger

*School Library Media Specialist
Marion Elementary School*

**Written by
MariRae Dopke-Wilson
Spotlight Feature Producer**

After a little prompting from her Superintendent of Schools, teaching assistant and substitute, Michele Messenger, went on to earn her Masters Degree and become a School Library Media Specialist. Now with six years behind her as the SLMS for Marion Elementary, she knows she made the right decision. "There was an opening, and he thought I would be perfect. I love mysteries, solving problems, logic and reading. All of these add up perfectly to the aspects of being a great SLMS. I think part of what makes my job so important is teaching another layer or level of what the teacher is already doing. You can tie so many different things in through the library media center, whether it's through electronic resources, or books, and give them a new outlook on things that they are working on in the classroom. It makes children realize, that just because they look at Australia in Social Studies, doesn't mean that they can't look at



Michele reviews a project with students in Marion Elementary School's media center.

Australia through literature, and Australia through art, and to see through the different lenses in every part of what they are learning and how they overlap and intertwine to make a really exciting world."

Michele also enjoys the opportunity of interacting and influencing the entire student body. "There's a special bond you can make with kids in the classroom, but to see all of them and watch them grow through the years is exciting. I've got 550 kids that I see all the time. I grow with them and have the opportunity to influence them for seven years of their life."

Getting Teachers Involved

Convincing teachers that you, the LMS, are there to enhance their lessons and make teaching easier, is key to Michele's method for collaboration. She's al-

Spotlight Feature...



Michele's Tips for Success as SLMS

- **SLMS Role: Facilitate for Teacher Plan then Approach with Idea**
- **Do the Lion's Share of Work**
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- **Advise Teacher's to 'Start Small'**

ways mindful of teacher's feelings to ensure they know she's there to help, not tell them how to teach.

"If your approach is wrong, they may think you are questioning them on how they teach, and that you think they don't teach well enough. Instead, let them know that you are there to add another set of hands and another voice to what they are already doing so well. What I do to pull teachers in, is start with those who I know are up for new and exciting things. I find the people that love new challenges and are willing to get together and collaborate. I try and do about 70% of the work and let them do the remaining 30% just so they feel comfortable, unless they want to do more. I also find it helps a lot to have a plan when you approach someone, be open to his or her ideas, and don't expect them to do the lion's share of the work."

Recently, Michele had success collaborating with a second grade teacher on a guided reading lesson focusing on insects. She was able to enhance the lesson's depth and literacy skills by introducing a digital movie creator. "They video taped each other with this little recorder and used the content they had already researched in the library using books. They got a little added information off the website, added some costumes, and one of the boys was the reporter tying everything together. The software that came with the recorder made it very easy to put all these little pieces together. We ended up with a movie that the class came and watched. That was just an exciting way to tie in reading with the content area for second grade researching insects, and then we pulled in some literacy skills through their research for the report, and they tied it all together with presentation skills and evaluating themselves in the process

and product."

Excitement Motivates Learning

Michele knows from experience that exciting projects like the digital movie insect report pay-off with better student interest and enhanced learning. "Use some form of what motivates your students, whether it's humor or something that relates to the real world. Find something that gives them a real problem to solve, a real reason to do what they are doing." Michele sites a lesson she created on the Dewey Decimal System as an example of using something familiar to help children connect. She instructs second grade students to think of each hundred number as a town. Next, she asks them to think of each set of numbers within the hundred as a house. "My lesson on the Dewey Decimal System relates to their home address, and how the book also lives at an address. Making it real for them and finding the level that makes sense for them is one of the key aspects of making sure it works for the student." Michele speaks about her Dewey Decimal lesson in the "Reflections" video that can be viewed by clicking on the picture of her below.

Encourage Creative Thinking

As students get older they can become less likely to participate in class for fear of not having the right answer. Michele works to dispel these fears by teaching students that an important part of learning involves taking risks. "When we brainstorm, I tell them there is no wrong answer, I tell them when we guess, it doesn't matter who is right. I try to let them know that whenever we're thinking about anything that could be an answer, that it's important to think about every-

thing and broaden our horizons, and when we're done, just be excited if we got the guess right at all. Anything that we can do that fosters that through the LMC that is a continuation of the classroom is a big step in the right direction."

Making Time for Enhanced Lessons

Regular curriculum, testing and snow days can make incorporating new lessons difficult for the most conscientious of educators. Michele suggests setting small, reasonable goals such as trying one special project each fall and spring. "Promise yourself that you'll do one thing, and then when you do three you'll be so excited and feel so successful. Think of a topic that your kids are really excited about and go to your media specialist and ask for ideas on how to connect that to a really exciting project."

Michele's Tips for Success as SLMS

- **SLMS Role: Facilitate for Teacher Plan then Approach with Idea**
- **Do the Lion's Share of Work**
- **Choose Topics Relevant to Kids**
- **Advise Teacher's to 'Start Small'**

Michele Messenger is an S.O.S. Information Literacy Pioneer who enjoys perusing the S.O.S. database for meaningful lessons. She especially appreciates the site's easy searches by grade level and topic. In the months to come, we look forward to seeing some of Michele's lessons on the site. Thanks, Michele, for allowing us to share some of your excellent advice!

About Handouts . . .

By Marilyn Arnone

Consider using handouts with the lesson plans you enter into the S.O.S. database. Handouts can be any print support material that you give to your students in conjunction with your lesson or unit. You can upload handouts in Step 2 of Submitting a lesson plan. S.O.S can accept handouts in formats that include Word, RTF, Excel, PDF, etc. You may also create a handout especially for other educators to provide them with additional information on your lesson topic, for example.

Try and keep file size down by considering the photo/image elements that are contained within your handout(s). Handouts that you upload to S.O.S. should not be more than 200K. If you need instructions on uploading media, it is available by clicking on training from the main menu or you can type this address on your browser :

http://www.informationliteracy.org/training/Step_2.htm

Have You Seen Our Videos?

In the Fall edition of Spotlight on Educators, we introduced our preliminary index of video features. We will be adding new ones each quarter. These videos clips feature pioneers who demonstrate "in action" lessons, or offer "reflections" on successful teaching episodes, philosophies about teaching information literacy. Occasionally, we are fortunate to even capture some "child perspectives" on doing research. To access the index type this address on your browser :

<http://www.informationliteracy.org/spotlight/videos/VideolIndex.htm>

S.O.S. Presentations Here and Abroad

More and more educators are hearing about S.O.S. for Information Literacy. Here are some recent presentations:

- Dr. Ruth V. Small presented S.O.S. to a group of BOCES Library System Directors in New York State. She will also be introducing S.O.S. at the East Asian Regional Council of Overseas Schools (EARCOS) in Bangkok, Thailand in March.
- Colleen Tierney, a graduate student at the School of Information Studies at Syracuse University demonstrated how to search S.O.S. and how to submit lesson plans to the Rochester (NY) City School District librarians on February 4th.

S.O.S. Award Winners Announced!

The winners of two digital cameras for the S.O.S. Awards for Lesson Plans have just been announced. They are Sharon O'Connell for "Vivacious Vertebrates in the News" and Cynthia Tidd for "Yoko's Paper Cranes." A panel of four independent SLM judges reviewed the submissions based on criteria which included appropriateness, clarity, organization, completeness, motivation, and overall quality of related media. Second place winners were Mary Dixon for "Call Number Relays," Mary Charters for "Holiday Primary Document Scavenger Hunt" (based on an original lesson by Doris Waud), and Sharon O'Connell for "Consumerism." They will receive a storybook and educator's guide designed to introduce evaluation skills to children in primary grades entitled The Strangest Dinosaur That Never Was published by Libraries Unlimited. Congratulations to all the winners and to all those that submitted their lesson plans during the contest (October-January)! We hope to do something similar next fall to encourage more submissions to the S.O.S. database.

New Videos Are Underway!

Dr. Marilyn Arnone and MariRae Dopke-Wilson are currently producing several new videos for the S.O.S. database. These videos include "reflections" of successful teaching episodes and several videos depicting teaching strategies "in-action!"

S.O.S. for Information Literacy

Questions or comments?
Contact:
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S.O.S. for Information Literacy is a dynamic web-based multimedia resource for educators, that promises to make a significant contribution to enhancing the teaching of information literacy skills to children. At no time in history has the ability to locate, organize, evaluate, manage and use information been more critical for today's learners. These skills, collectively referred to as information literacy, lay the groundwork for success in every phase of a student's life both in and out of school.

<http://www.informationliteracy.org>



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