Strategic Content Literacy Initiative Focusing on Reading in Secondary Schools

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Administrators and teachers in secondary schools throughout the United States have finally begun to realize the impact that insufficient reading, writing, and math skills have on the ability of students to acquire the information included in the core curriculum. This attention is largely the result of state and local initiatives to set standards and measure the attainment of these standards through standards-based tests. It is important to realize that standards and tests have been around for a long time, and there have always been students at the secondary school level who performed poorly on these tests. However, in the past, the focus was on holding only students accountable. Gradually, policy makers have turned their attention to those determining how students spend their time in school—teachers. Now, whole schools are the focus of accountability, and principals are being held directly accountable for the leadership they provide in helping change curriculum and instruction to increase test scores. Test scores are more public than ever, and administrators are evaluated and rewarded (or punished) based on how well their school performs compared to other schools and how much progress they are making on tests given to measure achievement towards meeting standards.

This is a new journey for high schools, junior high schools, and many middle schools that historically have focused on content acquisition rather than the competencies required to enable content acquisition. Almost no efforts have been made to help faculty develop schoolwide approaches to attacking the literacy problem at the secondary level. However, for the past ten years, several pilot studies and some collaborative efforts between the staff of the Center for Research on Learning, Strategic Instruction Model Trainers, and SIM teachers have begun to shape a model for developing a powerful system for promoting adolescent literacy across the curriculum. Although the model is just beginning to solidify, the initial data and the response from teachers and administrators are encouraging.

The purpose of this article is to introduce what we are calling the Strategic Content Literacy Initiative. Content literacy is defined as the listening, speaking, reading, and

> *For more information about some of the collaborative efforts mentioned in this article, see the Language-Sensitive SIM forum on StrateNet.*

Trainer news

- Helen Barrier, an independent consultant from Roanoke, Virginia, has been hired as a research associate at T/TAC, Virginia Tech University. She also has been elected vice president of the Virginia Council for Learning Disabilities.

- Barbara Glaeser, assistant professor at California State University at Fullerton, published an article about positive behavioral support in Intervention in School and Clinic. She also has been nominated for the Excellence in Teaching with Technology Award given by the Faculty Development Center at CSUF.

- Joni Poff, program supervisor at Roanoke County Schools, Virginia, became president of the Virginia Council for Learning Disabilities on July 1.

writing skills and strategies necessary to learn in each of the academic disciplines. This introduction to the Content Literacy Initiative is to help trainers think about how strategic instruction might fit into schoolwide reform efforts that focus on literacy acquisition. This initiative is just beginning, and research and development conversations and activities should be a part of what we are doing in the SIM Network. The initiative is based on the following five ideas.

1. The purpose of literacy is to increase the learning of critical content. Literacy cannot be developed separately from the core secondary curriculum. Students learn skills because they need them to meet the demands that they face; the skills become relevant because they enable students to do authentic tasks. Simultaneously, direct and regular application of skills in critical content provides the practice and exploration that plant literacy skills permanently in learner knowledge banks.

2. Content literacy requires fluent decoding. Students can be expected to use basic skills to learn critical content only after they have begun to read words fluently. Although some strategies provide a bridge between decoding and comprehension (for example, the *Word Identification Strategy*), provisions must be put in place to ensure that all secondary students are fluent word readers. For many students, this must begin with work on decoding words. Students reading below a fourth-grade reading level need to be placed in intensive research-based reading programs, such as The Corrective Reading Program (Decoding), published by SRA, to profit from the secondary core curriculum.

3. Common strategies are taught and reinforced across all teachers. The steps of strategies such as *Paraphasing,*

Self-Questioning, Word Identification, and *Visual Imagery* should be learned by all secondary teachers. The steps of the strategies are then taught in different ways, at different times, by different teachers. The key, however, is that all teachers create a culture within a building where a common set of strategies are valued, discussed, and nurtured, albeit differently, across all teachers. Therefore, when a teacher asks a student to paraphrase, the expectations and criteria for satisfactory performance is consistently applied across courses.

4. Responsive and systematic instruction is provided on a continuum of intensity. The tasks associated with successfully teaching strategies and then ensuring successful content applications require planning and negotiation. The responsibilities of the general education teacher, support teachers, paraeducators, parents, peers, etc., must be carefully defined to ensure that instruction is provided along a continuum of intensity. When students are provided with instruction in a strategy during large group instruction in the core curriculum, that instruction must be consistent with the goals of the subject area. Provisions must be made for when group instruction is insufficient. Instruction that is more sensitive to student needs or more systematic in the process of applying the strategy may be required. Other, more intense learning experiences may be needed to provide more support and to lead the student to mastery.

5. Students master critical content regardless of literacy competence. Finally, and most importantly, secondary teachers must make a major shift in their thinking about curriculum design and delivery. This shift requires that teachers move away from simply covering the available content. Curriculum design should focus on organizing curriculum experiences around the socially compelling critical content and then developing plans and ►

teaching routines that ensure that all students (for whom the core general education curriculum has been judged to be appropriate) master that content regardless of skill levels. This is an important requirement for improving content literacy because it ensures that students acquire the background knowledge required if the curriculum is truly a core curriculum that has high social costs if it is not acquired. Students should not be further handicapped by not ensuring access to the critical content by requiring that they use the very skills we know they do not have to acquire that content. In essence, this outcome should be the standard by which core-curriculum teachers and their methods should be evaluated.

"Implementing the Strategic Content Literacy Initiative: Creating a continuum of responsibility" on pages 4 and 5 illustrates what the implementation of this initiative might look like in a high-school setting. It describes an instruction-intervention continuum with five levels of intensity designed to meet the needs of adolescents with literacy difficulties. The continuum involves the collaborative efforts of content teachers and support personnel to provide a variety of instructional options for students with differing levels of need. Each delivery option described has a corresponding professional development piece necessary for schoolwide implementation.

Where should a school begin? This is part of the work that the SIM Network needs to do. Committing to the implementation of a Strategic Content Literacy Initiative will require nothing less than systemic reform in how secondary schools, especially high schools, approach curriculum and student learning. Such a reform effort at the school level must be based on a shared vision, shared knowledge base, shared responsibility, and shared accountability to be successful.

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SIM research update

SIM Trainer Anthony K. Van Reusen, San Antonio, Texas, recently published two chapters and one journal article related to the Strategic Instruction Model. In these publications, he described how a team of teachers and consultants worked together to help fifth-grade students improve their mathematics skills, described the *Self-Advocacy Strategy,* and took an in-depth look at social skills. The complete citations for these publications are listed below.

• Mittag, K.C., & Van Reusen, A.K. (July/August 1999). One fish, two fish, pretzel fish: Learning estimation and other advanced mathematics concepts in an inclusive class. *Teaching Exceptional Children,* 31(6), 66-72.

• Van Reusen, A.K. (1998). Self-advocacy strategy instruction: Enhancing student motivation, self-determination, and responsibility in the learning process. In M.L. Wehmeyer & D.J. Sands (Eds.), *Making It Happen:* *Student Involvement in Education Planning, Decision-Making, and Instruction,* (pp. 313-152). Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brooks Publishing Co.

• Van Reusen, A.K. (1999). Developing social competence in diverse secondary schools and classrooms. In S. Graham, K.R. Harris, & M. Pressley (Series Eds.) & D.D. Deshler, J. Schumaker, K.R. Harris, & S. Graham, (Vol. Eds.), *Advances in Teaching and Learning: Vol. 2. Teaching Every Adolescent Every Day: Learning in Diverse Middle & High School Classrooms,* (pp. 106-144). Cambridge, MA: Brookline Books.

In addition to Tony's writings, we have received copies of several articles written by members of the SIM family recently. We will continue to list these articles in *Stratenotes* as space permits. Check back next month for a list of publications by Stephanie Carpenter, Peggy King-Sears, Charlie Hughes, and more.

Book sale

The following books are available at a discount from Edge Enterprises. The books show some damage, such as scuffed or marked covers. Nothing is wrong with the content inside. The books are available for $2 each on a first-come, first-served basis.

• *Addition Facts 0-9*
• *Assignment Completion*
• *Collaborative Problem Solving*
• *Concept Anchoring Routine*
• *Concept Mastery Routine*
• *FIRST-Letter Mnemonic*
• *Lesson Organizer Routine*
• *LINCS*
• *Paragraph Writing Strategy: Student Lessons*
• *Quality Assignment Routine*
• *SCORE*
• *Multiplication Facts 0-81*
• *Self-Advocacy*
• *Subtraction Facts 0-9*
• *Subtraction Facts 10-18*
• *Teamwork Strategy*
• *Test-Taking Strategy*
• *Unit Organizer Routine*

In addition, Edge has several boxes of the old *Sentence Writing Strategy: Student Lessons* manuals left over. They are in mint condition, but they have been replaced by the new *Proficiency in Sentence Writing: Student Lessons* manuals. The old books may be purchased for $4 each while supplies last.

To purchase any of these books, contact Edge Enterprises, 708 W. Ninth Street, Suite 107, Lawrence, KS 66044. Phone: (785) 749-1473. Fax: (785) 749-0207.

Implementing the Strategic Content Literacy Initiative
Creating a continuum of Responsibility

Level 1

What students do: Students learn critical content required in the core curriculum regardless of literacy levels.

What professionals do: Teachers compensate for limited levels of literacy by using Content Enhancement Routines to promote content mastery and by making the necessary modifications for students with disabilities.

What it looks like: For example, the history teacher introduces a unit on "Causes of the Civil War" by co-constructing with students a Unit Organizer that depicts the critical content demands of the unit. The organizer is used throughout the unit to link student prior knowledge to the new unit and to prompt paraphrasing and self-questioning. Other routines are used to ensure that the critical vocabulary is developed.

Professional development: Content teachers learn Content Enhancement Routines.

> **Student Outcome**
> Students demonstrate appropriate achievement levels on state assessment tests and demonstrate real-world content literacy.
>
> **Teacher Outcomes**
> Teachers employ research-based curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

Level 2

What students do: Students learn broad learning strategies for increasing literacy.

What professionals do: Teachers directly embed selected Learning Strategies in core curriculum courses through direct explanation, modeling, and required application in content assignments. They describe strategies for acquiring, storing, and expressing course information; design learning tasks that prompt practice of the strategies; and provide feedback on students' use of the strategy in learning the content.

What it looks like: For example, at the beginning of the year, the history teacher explains that being able to paraphrase the history text is important because paraphrasing is required to write reports, answer questions, and discuss. The teacher shares the steps of the *Paraphrasing Strategy* (RAP) with students and models how to paraphrase history text to complete different types of learning tasks. Class activities and assignments require students to paraphrase text and use information. Both oral and written information is paraphrased. Paraphrase responses may take oral or written forms. The Unit Organizer is used to model and prompt paraphrasing of critical chunks of content. The teacher continually evaluates and provides feedback to encourage high-quality paraphrasing throughout the year.

Professional development: Content teachers learn selected Learning Strategies (*Paraphrasing, Self-Questioning, Visual Imagery, Word Identification*, textbook usage, *Sentence Writing, Paragraph Writing*, etc.)

Level 3

What students do: Students who have difficulty mastering the strategies presented in the course by the content teachers learn them through specialized, intensive instruction delivered by support personnel.

What professionals do: Support personnel provide more intensive instruction via supplemental instructional sessions delivered in the general education classroom, in a pullout program, or through the offering of a separate course.

What it looks like: For example, the history teacher notices that some students in the class are struggling with paraphrasing. Support personnel develop a plan to reintroduce the steps of the *Paraphrasing Strategy* (RAP) to this group of students. Support personnel provide additional models and practice in paraphrasing text. The support personnel may guide the student through paraphrasing paragraph-by-paragraph, gradually encouraging students to paraphrase more independently. Explicit feedback and additional practice are provided. Support personnel may work daily for 15 to 20 minutes a day for three or four weeks until the student gains confidence and masters the strategy. As the strategy is learned, the student sees the strategy being required in his history class and other classes and gets the message that this is a valued skill that is worth learning.

Professional development: Support personnel and teachers learn specific Learning Strategies.

Level 4

What students do: Students learn content literacy skills and strategies through specialized, direct, and intensive instruction in listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

What professionals do: Reading specialists, special education teachers, and speech-language pathologists team to develop intensive and coordinated instructional experiences designed to address severe literacy deficits. These services will most likely be delivered by reading specialists and special education teachers. They also assist content teachers in making appropriate modifications in content instruction to accommodate severe literacy deficits.

What it looks like: For example, some students appear to have significant difficulty learning to paraphrase because they do not have sufficient decoding skills or they have language problems. Sometimes, these problems are identified before strategy instruction begins and sometimes the problems emerge during strategy instruction. The staff as a team develop options for courses and support services that directly address deficits that cannot be addressed through less intensive efforts. However, the students can still participate in the history class because the teacher is presenting content in ways that take into consideration poor reading strategies.

Professional development: Reading specialists and special education teachers learn approaches to teaching literacy skills and strategies to students with disabilities.

Level 5

What students do: Students with underlying language disorders learn the linguistic, metalinguistic, and metacognitive underpinnings they need to acquire content literacy skills and strategies.

What professionals do: Speech-language pathologists deliver curriculum-relevant language therapy in collaboration with other support personnel teaching literacy. They assist content teachers in making appropriate modifications in content instruction to accommodate language disorders.

What it looks like: For example, students identified as language impaired may have difficulty learning the *Paraphrasing Strategy* even when it is taught by learning strategists in a language-sensitive fashion. They may need therapeutic intervention delivered by a speech-language pathologist to address the linguistic and metalinguistic underpinnings of the *Paraphrasing Strategy* and the academic content.

Professional development: Speech-language pathologists learn curriculum-relevant approaches to language therapy that interface with other intensive intervention provided to students.

Information on CD

The Center for Research on Learning, in response to numerous requests from SIM Trainers, this year began converting overheads from all of our training packets to PowerPoint presentations. Thus far, we have completed the packets for the Content Enhancement Routines. We compiled all of these materials onto a single CD-ROM, which is now available for purchase. The cost is $25. (To purchase all of the equivalent paper overhead masters would cost about $75.)

The benefits of having the training packets on CD include

- the ability to customize presentations and individual slides to meet your specific training needs
- a reduced load in your briefcase because you can now leave stacks of overheads at home.

We are now working to convert the Learning Strategies training packets. Stay tuned to *Stratenotes* and StrateNet for more information.

Preservice workshops

Deadlines are fast approaching to register for two workshops developed especially for preservice educators. If you or someone you know is interested in attending one of these workshops, contact Irma Brasseur at the Center for Research on Learning. Irma's phone number at the Center is (785) 864-0539.

SIM Learning Strategies Workshop for Preservice Educators
January 4-8, 2000

This workshop is designed for college/university faculty involved in teacher education programs. The purpose of this workshop is to enable preservice educators to provide empirically validated interventions from the Strategic Instruction Model (SIM) to prospective teachers. This instruction is characterized by explicit and intensive instruction for students with mild disabilities and other students considered to be at risk for school failure. This workshop will focus on exploring strategies from the SIM Learning Strategies Curriculum. (Faculty interested in the routines in the Content Enhancement Series should attend the Pedagogies for Academic Diversity in Secondary Schools Workshop for Preservice Educators.) Participants will explore several learning strategies and will be provided sample syllabi, books, and teaching resources so that learning strategies instruction can be infused into existing courses or new courses can be constructed. Information related to meeting additional SIM Learning Strategies Trainer certification requirements for inservice training will be provided. *Registration is due by November 8, 1999.*

Pedagogies for Academic Diversity in Secondary Schools Workshop for Preservice Educators
May 30-June 2, 2000

This workshop is designed for college/university faculty involved in teacher education programs preparing teachers primarily responsible for large group content-area instruction in the general education middle- and high-school settings. This workshop, which will be conducted by a team of faculty from five diverse universities, will enable faculty to prepare teachers to implement a variety of empirically validated teaching routines from the SIM Content Enhancement Series. Content will emphasize inclusive course planning and the implementation of a variety of explicit teaching routines designed to ensure content area mastery of critical ideas and concepts. Participants will explore several routines in depth and will be provided sample syllabi, books, and teaching resources so that Content Enhancement Routines can be infused into existing courses or new courses can be constructed. Information related to meeting additional SIM Content Enhancement Trainer certification requirements for inservice training will be provided. Teams of individuals from the same institution are encouraged to apply. *Applications are due by April 3, 2000.*

Fees
The cost of each workshop is $510. This fee covers the cost of materials provided with the training. Participants will be responsible for their own transportation, housing, and meals.

SIM epidemic spreading through Michigan

During the summer of 1998, a group of 65 teachers had the terrific opportunity of working with both Don Deshler and Jean Schumaker, as well as some seasoned Michigan SIM Trainers by the names of Joe Fisher, Maureen Johnson, Irma Brasseur, Sue Woodruff, and Cyndi Gibson. During a four-day period in June, with the support of the Michigan Association of Learning Disabilities Educators, many of the learning strategies and content enhancement routines were taught, and a broad overview of the purpose of the model was presented. This group met twice during the school year for follow-up and continued discussions and learning. Don was the keynote speaker at the annual MALDE conference at Boyne Mountain in October 1998, and he used this opportunity to meet with this group in Lansing the day before. We, as a group, met again in Grand Rapids in March to continue discussion and plans. Even though many schools were given the day off because of inclement weather, a large number of dedicated SIM folks met with us in Grand Rapids that day. We spent the time exploring modeling and feedback in depth, as well as beginning to discuss requirements for becoming trainers.

At the end of June this year, MALDE sponsored the first Potential SIM Trainers' Workshop in Michigan. Jim Knight and Irma Brasseur joined us from KU-CRL. Larry Bemish of Eastern Michigan University shared information and training ideas for using humor in training. Sue Woodruff from Muskegon, Michigan, led the workshop. Seventeen teachers completed the intense four-day training. Thirteen of the potential trainers were from the initial group of 65 who began the summer before. Three joined us during the school year and demonstrated the requirements necessary to be eligible for the Potential Trainers' Workshop. One person from Virginia joined us, also. We believe that this effort was a huge success, and as a group, we plan to meet regularly to exchange ideas, develop training plans, and support one another. We believe that we share a vision for teaching and learning in Michigan, and we believe that we have established a learning community here. What a great pleasure it has been to work with such a terrific group of educators. We look forward to coming to Lawrence next summer as a group to receive certificates of completion. Wouldn't it be wonderful if all 17 are able to make it!

—*Submitted by Sue Woodruff*

LOOk
what you're missing on StrateNet!

The SIM Library on StrateNet now contains articles that appeared in *Strategram* Volumes 4 through 10. The articles are grouped by strategy or routine as well as by volume number. To obtain a StrateNet user ID and password, contact Julie Tollefson at jtollefson@ukans.edu.

www.ku-crl.org

Don't forget to visit the Center for Research on Learning Web site.

Last Stratellite

In September, we distributed Stratellite Connection Videotape #13, the last of our Stratellite Connection series at this time. The technology grant for which these videos were produced has ended. We hope that SIM Trainers who have used Stratellite Connection tapes have appreciated the opportunity to learn more about what is happening at the Center for Research on Learning through this communication.

CEC seeks success stories

Every year, the Council for Exceptional Children collects Success Stories for its Budget Book. Jaclynn Bootel, policy specialist with CEC's Public Policy Unit, would like your help collecting these stories.

"I know there are a lot of kids out there who have benefitted from a special education, whether it be under IDEA or from a gifted and talented program. I need you to help me find them and to print their stories and pictures," she wrote in an e-mail request this summer.

The last CEC Budget Book went to press in June, so stories collected now will be for next year's book. If you would like more information, contact CEC, 1920 Association Drive, Reston, VA 20191-1589. Call toll-free at 1-888-CEC-SPED, or visit the CEC web site at www.cec.sped.org.

Strateworks renewal

Take a look at the mailing label below. A green dot indicates you already have renewed your *Strateworks* membership. A red dot means that, according to our records, you have not renewed. If you don't act fast, this could be your last issue of *Stratenotes*, and you could be in danger of losing the other benefits you receive as an active member of the International SIM Training Network. To ensure you continue to receive *Stratenotes*, *Strategram*, and other member benefits, complete the form at right and mail it and your check for $35 (U.S.) to Strateworks, KU-Center for Research on Learning, 3061 Dole, Lawrence, KS 66045.

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