

## Michigan team creates winning program

### *Intervention reaches low-achieving readers*

**S**ue Woodruff and a team of strategic teachers in Muskegon, Michigan, are glowing.

**Julie Tollefson**  
Editor  
The University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning

**Sue Woodruff**  
Special Education Teacher Consultant  
Muskegon, Michigan

Their glow is a reflection of well-deserved praise heaped on them in a recent report from the North Central Association Outcomes Accreditation Team. The report, which lauds

the Strategic Instruction Model and the efforts of the teachers to improve the reading skills of students at Muskegon High School, is the culmination of an exhaustive three-year improvement process undertaken at the school.

The School Improvement Team, with Sue as co-chair, chose to pursue an outcomes accreditation goal

that involved extensive data collection and analysis. The process also required that the team define specific target areas for improvement and measures of success in those areas. Reading improvement was selected as one of the target areas.

The challenges facing those charged with improving reading were significant. Assessment tests indicated that half of the 400 ninth-graders at Muskegon High School read below grade level. One-third of the 400 students read significantly below grade level. The school has



**Muskegon High School SIM Intervention Team**  
Back, from left, Jan Graham, MaryAnn LaGuire, Arlyn Zack, Sue Woodruff. Front, from left: Kathy Lutkus, Marilyn Whitlow.

**A review committee found the intervention directly affected the students needing help in reading the most.**

defined “significantly below grade level” as two or more years behind.

In considering these challenges, the Communications Committee became interested in the Strategic Instruction Model because of tremendous gains noted in a group

of students with learning disabilities who had been instructed in some of the reading strategies. The committee devised a “SIM intervention” as a way of reaching low-achieving poor readers within their English classes.

Students were pretested, needs were determined, and general education classroom teachers received feedback on students’ reading levels. As a result of all this preparation, small groups of students were identified to participate in the SIM intervention.

English teachers released the students to a “strategies” classroom for four to six weeks. Upon completion of the strategies instruction, the strategies teacher provides a full accounting of attendance and a progress report for the general education English teacher. The English teacher accepts the grade given by the strategies teacher. The student is not responsible for work missed in the English classroom while he or she is working in the strategies classroom.

Strategies instruction begins with the Word Identification Strategy, known as “DISSECT.” The teachers then teach students the reading comprehension strategies: Visual Imagery, Self-Questioning, and Paraphrasing.

The number of students working in the strategies classroom varies depending on the activity.

“We have found that, with DISSECT, a ratio of 1 to 4 is optimal so that time is used wisely and students get daily feedback,” Sue said.

Reading comprehension groups can be a little larger.

“Our strategies teacher is incorporating the literature or



### **Bring in the frogs**

John, Sulema, and Courtney with their favorite DISSECT frog, the MHS strategies mascot.

story being used in class into practice and modeling. That way, students see how to use the strategies with their own materials. We are really excited about this approach,” Sue said.

### **Evolution of the program**

During the 1995-1996 school year, the first year of the SIM intervention program, the equivalent of a half-time teacher was available most of the year for strategies instruction, and 55 students were served.

Mary Ann LaGuire, the lead teacher for the first two years of the program, helped get the program off the ground. Mary Ann won an Excellence in Education award because of the special way in which she has touched student’s lives.

During the second year, the program was expanded. Strategies teachers served 75 students. Also during the second year, the strategies team placed posters featuring the DISSECT

steps in each classroom, and each student who successfully mastered the strategy received a DISSECT notepad to help cue him or her to use the newly learned strategy in general education classes.

This year, the third year of the intervention, 2.7 teachers have worked with 40 to 50 students, so far.

“We’ve been blessed with consistency this year,” Sue said. “Instead of different teachers from hour to hour, we have three consistent strategies instructors. All three have education backgrounds—Jan Graham has a master’s degree in reading, and both Kathy Lutkus and Marilyn Whitlow are high school English teachers.”

### **The results**

The Communications Committee found that with excellent administrative support, as well as the cooperation of all of the English Department staff, the

strategies intervention directly affected the students needing help in reading the most. The committee has been able to document incredible success with the students who complete the intervention. In 1995-1996, the pretest showed an average reading grade level of 5.7. After the intervention, the posttest indicated an average grade level of 9.6, an increase of 3.9 grade levels. In 1996-1997, pretest scores 6.7 compared to a posttest of 9.8, an increase of 3.1 grade levels (see Figure 1).

“The visiting North Central team raved about the intervention and how we operated it,” Sue said.

It certainly did. Consider these excerpts from the accreditation team’s official report:

“The curriculum at MHS has been positively impacted by the SIM, a pullout program that is being embraced by the MHS staff and administration. Students involved in the SIM have expressed favorable attitudes toward the program’s effectiveness.”

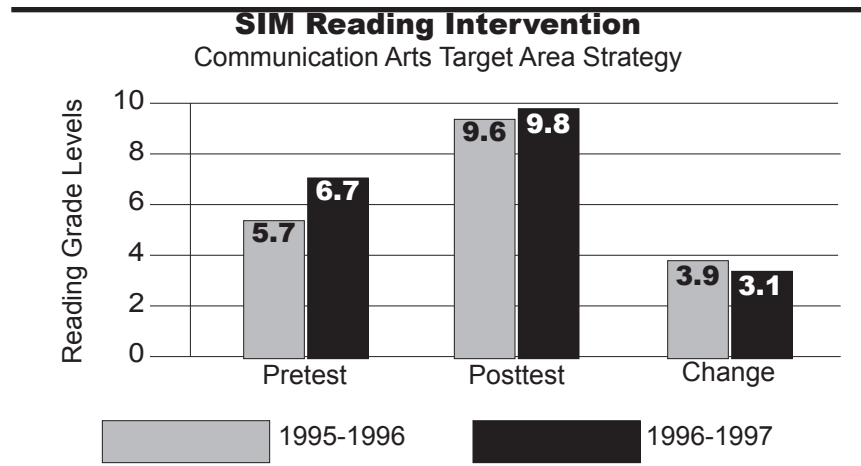


Figure 1

“The committee should be proud of their accomplishments over the last five years,” the report continues. “It is their belief and the belief of the visiting team that significant gains have been made in communications. SIM has served as a staff rallying point, and with continued hard work and administrative support, will be a reading intervention program paying big dividends for MHS students.”

The committee’s enthusiasm for the SIM intervention didn’t

end with its report, however. The two co-chairs of the visiting team and the reading chair visited the strategies room and talked with the students and with Sue. As a result of this visit, reading chair Dennis Hunt, who teaches developmental reading to low achieving students in Battle Creek, Michigan, wants to be trained and both of the co-chairs of the visiting team want people in their buildings to be trained as strategy teachers.

The visiting team members also conducted a large public meeting, attended by school board members and central administrators, in which team members sang SIM’s praises.

“They talked directly about the power they were seeing with the SIM program. I was so thrilled! The efforts are really beginning to pay off for us at Muskegon High School,” Sue said.

Sue gives her principal, Arlyn Zack, high marks for his support of the SIM intervention. When funds were cut, preventing him from hiring two strategies teachers, Arlyn rerouted money from other parts of his budget just to get the program started.



**Working together**

Kathy Lutkus works with Rene on the Word Identification Strategy.

Funding has since been restored, resulting in a greater ability for the school to serve its students. Arlyn and Sue are planning a SIM presentation to the school board in April or May.

### **What's next**

Each year sees changes in the strategies intervention program and in plans for its future.

This year, Kathy and Jan have personalized the “strategies” room. A collection of frogs decorate the room and remind students to DISSECT!

“We would like to expand even further to work on writing strategies,” Sue said. One of the English teachers, who taught DISSECT last year in this program, is teaching PENS and SCRIBE to her students. She

reports that it “just makes so much sense to the kids.”

Students often come back to the strategies classroom to visit once they have returned to their general education English class.

“Many times, students indicate that they would like to stay, relishing the good feelings associated with pride in their accomplishments,” Sue said.

*(continued on page 6)*

# **Steps of the Word Identification Strategy**

**D**iscover the context

**I**solate the prefix

**S**eparate the suffix

**S**ay the stem

**E**xamine the stem

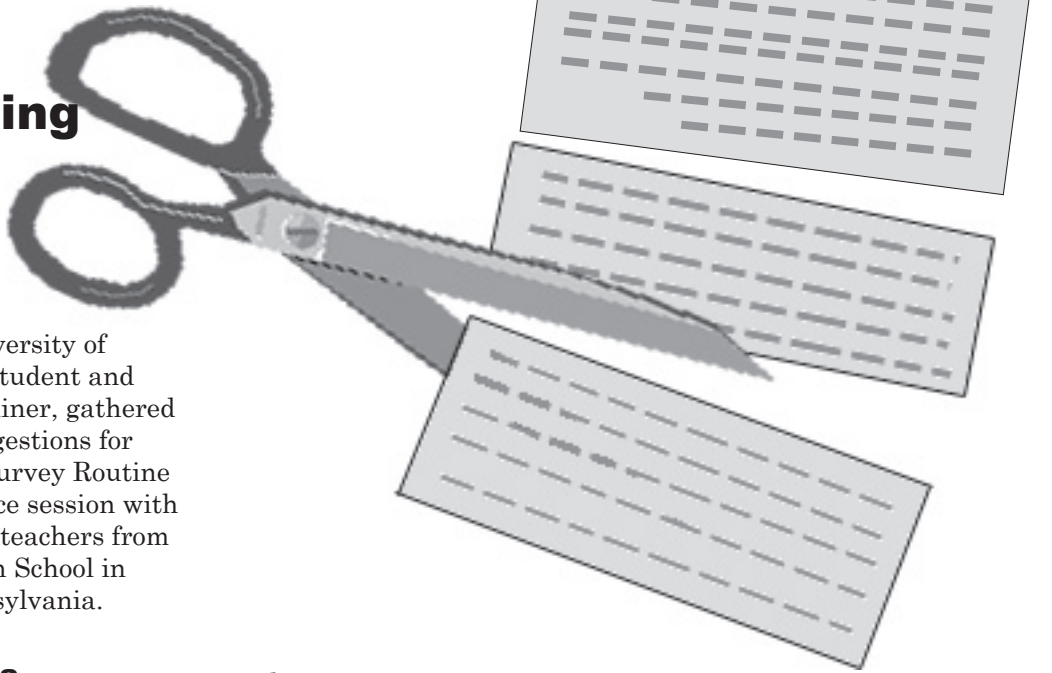
**C**heck with someone

**T**ry the dictionary



# Introducing the Survey Routine

Gwen Berry, University of Kansas doctoral student and Certified SIM Trainer, gathered the following suggestions for introducing the Survey Routine during an inservice session with special education teachers from Mt. Lebanon High School in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.



## Use the news

1. Laminate a newspaper article.
2. Each day “trim” a section of the article.
3. Build suspense and curiosity by not fully disclosing what “TRIMS” means until the newspaper article is completely “trimmed.”

## Tackle a text

1. If the school has extra textbooks, use one; if not, copy the next chapter you plan to discuss.
2. Physically tear the chapter out of the extra text!
3. Trim the key parts from the

chapter.

**Note:** You may want to highlight the key parts before trimming for added emphasis.

4. Throw other information in the wastebasket!

**Note:** You may choose to have students participate in the trimming process!

## Make it a game

Use a game-show approach such as the \$25,000 pyramid to have students name the “TRIMS” steps.

Using this format, students give each other clues about the letters of the mnemonic device “TRIMS.” Remember that this game is used to *introduce* students to the acronym for the first

time, so don’t give away what the letters stand for before the game!

The game might proceed in the following manner:

1. Place two chairs which face each other in the front of the room (one for the clue-giver and one for the guesser).
2. Two students volunteer for each of the roles. The clue-giver is given the word “title” and must give clues to the guesser. You could make up your own rules regarding the types of clues that would be allowed.
3. Once the word “title” is guessed, two new students follow the same procedure with the letter “R” (relationships). This procedure is repeated for I (Introduction), M (main parts) and S (summary).
4. At the conclusion of the game, engage students in a discussion about the meaning of “TRIMS” and the purposes of the steps.

Gather your thoughts, prepare your clues and get ready to play the

**\$25,000 Survey Routine!**



(continued on page 6)

# Survey Routine

(continued from page 5)

with a rap! (**Note:** John Petrasun, known by his students as “Mr. P.,” developed this rap in a brainstorming session. He thought it was appropriate that his students refer to him as “Ice P” while singing this rap!

Thanks to the following teachers from the Mt. Lebanon junior and senior high school Special Education Department for contributing these ideas:

- Susan Haudenshield
- Sue West
- Cindy Hughes
- Kerry Sakanich
- Tom Steffora
- John Petrasun
- Linda Elm
- Mark DeBernardis
- Tom Stillely
- Phil Packer
- Joey Geisinger
- Chris Hessler
- Jackie Carl
- Debbie McConahy

## The Survey Routine Rap

My name is P  
and I’m here to say-  
We’re going to learn  
about TRIMS today.

Trims, Trims.  
Don’t sit there and  
look so idle-  
Look at the book  
for the title.

Don’t sit there  
and be a lout-  
Tell me what  
the chapter is about.

Relationships are next  
on the list-  
You’re starting to learn  
don’t try to resist!  
Don’t stop now,  
or you’ll ruin it-  
Tell me the name  
of your unit.

I’m your book  
you must turn it  
to the stuff  
that is current.

I’m that unit  
look and see  
what once was  
and what will be.

You will need your brain to  
function-  
Let us go and find the intro-  
duction.  
Read it through until  
you find-  
the key ideas to keep  
in mind.

Your friends will all think  
that you’ve got smarts-  
If you learn about the \_\_\_  
main parts.

All this work will really pay  
when on your test you  
get an A!  
Give a cheer because we’re  
near the end  
write a summary for a friend.

All this work has been too  
much fun  
I almost sorry that we  
be done!

# Strategic intervention

(continued from page 4)

“That is when we explain that the most important part is yet to come. These students have new skills to use. We explain how important generalization is, and timidly, but more self-confidently, they return to English class.”

Several students have chosen to become “strategies aides.” Sue describes them as students who have really internalized DISSECT and are willing and

anxious to work with others. The aides provide encouragement and reinforcement and can listen and record errors.

“Teachers still provide feedback, but the teachers who have used aides have found them invaluable!” Sue said.

Sue, who is the special education teacher consultant in the building, finds the students aren’t the only ones to benefit from the strategies intervention.

“I love what I’m doing,” she

said. “I’m able to work with both teachers and kids. I’ve found the best way to help new strategies instructors is to work side-by-side with a group from start to finish. I learn more every time.

“These teachers give me

great ideas and we share materials and thoughts. It’s exciting to go to work every day because we feel like we are really making a difference!”

# Strategic Instruction Model Workshop Opportunities

## Strategic Instruction Model Workshop Level I

July 21-25, 1998  
(Tuesday-Saturday)  
Fee: \$395

Teachers who have had no training in SIM or perhaps have been trained in only one or two strategies will benefit from this week. During the five days of training, teachers will become familiar with the Overview of Content Enhancement and will become prepared to implement one Content Enhancement Routine and the following strategies: SLANT, Paraphrasing, Sentence Writing, Word Identification, Self Advocacy, and FIRST-Letter Mnemonics. Registration is due by May 8, 1998.

## Strategic Instruction Model Workshop Level II

July 21-25, 1998  
(Tuesday-Saturday)  
Fee: \$395

This workshop will provide training for classroom teachers who already have been trained in SIM procedures and have taught some of the strategies. At this advanced session, participants may choose to enroll in the Writing Strategies (Sentence Writing, Error Monitoring, Paragraph Writing, Theme Writing), Reading Strategies (Paraphrasing, DISSECT, Visual Imagery,

All of the workshops described here will be offered at the University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning in Lawrence, Kansas.

The training fees listed for each workshop cover the cost of materials provided with the training. Participants will

be responsible for their own transportation, housing, and meals.

Registration forms are available from Janet Roth, training coordinator, KU-CRL, 3061 Dole, Lawrence, KS 66045. Janet may be reached by phone at (785) 864-4780.

Self-Questioning), other strategies (Vocabulary, Memory, Assignment Completion), the Content Enhancement Routines, or a combination of several routines and strategies. Teachers will make their selections and submit these with their completed registration form and payment for the workshop. Registration is due by May 8, 1998.

## Content Enhancement Workshop

(Tuesday-Saturday)  
July 21-25, 1998  
Fee: \$395

This workshop is designed to provide an opportunity for teachers to learn new methods to teach large amounts of content to academically diverse classes in "learner friendly" ways. In this hands-on workshop, participants will plan how to use the Content Enhancement Routines developed at the Center for Research on Learning to enhance the ways they present content and improve students' ability to orga-

nize, understand, and remember critical information. Participants will learn all the routines from the Content Enhancement series (Concept Mastery, Anchoring, and Comparison; Lesson, Unit, and Course Organizer; Survey, Clarifying, and Quality Assignment) and then invent ways to implement the routines in their courses. Registration is due by May 8, 1998.

# www.ku-crl.org

Visit us on the World Wide Web

### Strategram

Vol. 10: Issue number 2. Published six times per year by The University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning, Dole Human Development Center-Room 3061, Lawrence, Kansas, 66045-2342. Subscription rate: \$13 per year. No part of this publication may be reproduced without written permission from the publisher, unless otherwise stated.

©1998 by The University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas, 66045. All rights reserved.

### Editor

Julie Tollefson

### Consulting Editors

Keith Lenz

Don Deshler

Jean Schumaker

### Strategram Subscription Form

To subscribe to Strategram, complete this form and send it with your check for \$13 to KU-CRL, 3061 Dole, Lawrence, KS 66045

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

City, State, ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Your subscription entitles you to all six issues of the current volume.  
The current volume is No. 10, and the publication period is  
September 1997 to August 1998.

### Strategram Back Issue Form

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

City, State, ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

Volume/issue # request: \_\_\_\_\_

\$13 per volume/\$3 per issue  
Mail to KU-CRL  
3061 Dole  
Lawrence, KS 66045

Non Profit Org.  
U.S. Postage  
**PAID**  
Lawrence, Kansas  
Permit No. 65

The University of Kansas  
Center for Research on Learning  
Rm. 3061 Robert Dole Bldg.  
Lawrence, Kansas 66045-2342  
1-785-864-4780  
Address change requested