

StrategramTM

Strategic Instruction Model

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In a nutshell

Content Enhancement & elementary students

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In one elementary school in Orlando, students from kindergarten through fifth grade are proving that the Strategic Instruction Model isn't just for big kids.

Teachers throughout the school have implemented Content Enhancement Routines in all of their classrooms and through this experience have learned valuable lessons about SIM and younger students.

Jerri Neduchal, a SIM Professional Developer who works with teachers at the school, shared some of those lessons during the 2003 International SIM Conference.

"We're thinking in too small a box when we say the research was done in fourth through something grade," Jerri said.

Teachers can successfully use Content Enhancement for younger students, she said. The process requires time, creativity in adapting Content Enhancement instruction to meet the needs of the youngest students, and sustained support from a number of quarters.

"In a nutshell, this is how you teach Content Enhancement in elementary school," Jerri said, as she launched into a description of how it worked at the Florida school, using many real classroom examples as illustrations.

Time

The path to schoolwide implementation began when some of the school's teachers enrolled in a Content Enhancement professional development series offered by Jerri

and her colleagues at FDLRS/Action Resource Center in Florida. The decision to attend the series was voluntary, so not all teachers at the school attended at the same time.

The teachers who did attend and who began to use Content Enhancement Routines in their classrooms began to see results in their students. Soon, the benefits of Content Enhancement spread by word of mouth to others, piquing the interest of teachers and administrators alike.

After a year, the school's principal was impressed enough to advocate the use of Content Enhancement throughout the school and to set minimum requirements: All teachers are now required to use the *Unit Organizer* and *Concept Mastery* routines. Teachers have implemented an array of additional routines, including *Framing*, *Clarifying*, *Concept Anchoring*, and *Concept Comparison*.

"That's the idea of Content Enhancement. You have a wealth of resources and you choose what works best for your students," Jerri said. "The more routines students have, the more attentive they are, the less agitated the children become when they're learning something new, and the more connections they have" to content throughout elementary school.

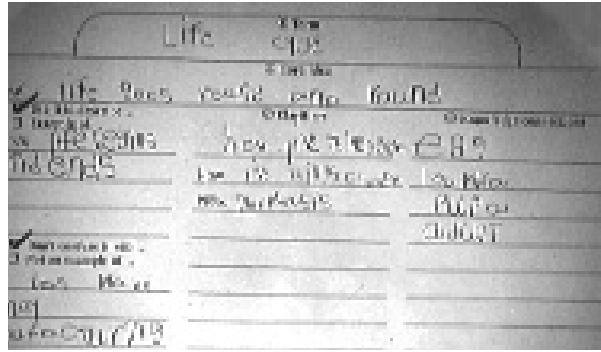
Creative connections

The elementary teachers have made numerous small adaptations, including turning the Concept Comparison Table into a "life



sized” device by enlarging it and placing it on the floor. Completing the table becomes a kinesthetic process for the children as they attach strips of paper to the device using a different color for each of the concepts being compared. When the students finish the device, the teacher attaches it to the wall where everyone can see and refer to it.

Example of a Clarifying Table completed by an elementary student in Florida.



The connections elementary students make when using Content Enhancement Routines are creative and elegant: “Metamorphosis is like switching grade levels as the butterfly grows up,” one class decided. Or this, from an Anchoring Table completed by a first-grade class: “A rain cloud is like a sponge because it has a soft appearance, water falls from it, and it cleans.”

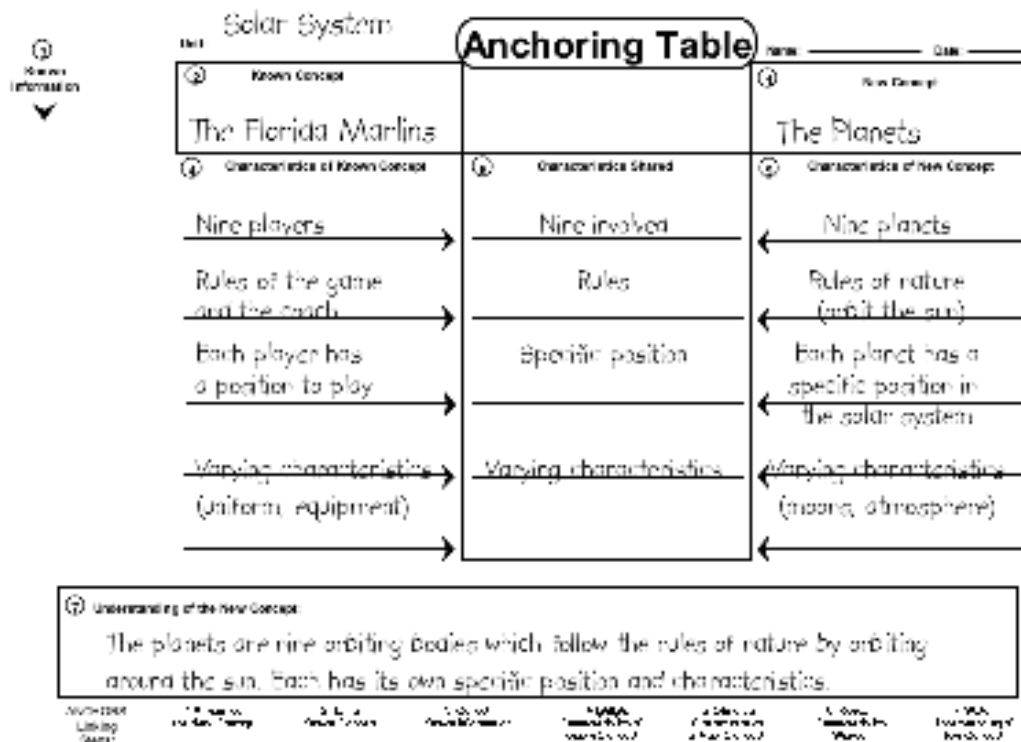
Just like Content Enhancement instruction for older students,

elementary teachers use familiar things to help students understand new information. The concept of constructing a paragraph can be “anchored” to the concept of running a relay, as in this example: “A paragraph is like running a relay because the different parts support each other. Each part has a different function all working together to form a whole that begins and ends at the same place.”

One class completed an

Anchoring Table using the Florida Marlins baseball team to help students understand the solar system (both involve nine things—nine players on the baseball team, nine planets in the solar system; both involve rules—rules of baseball, rules of nature). See the example below.

In a Clarifying Table examining the term “density,” students grasped the idea using prior knowledge of different foods: The density of raisins is greater than



the density of corn flakes.

Jerri emphasizes that the classrooms in which these routines have been implemented successfully are diverse and include students with specific learning disabilities.

“They certainly can do this,” she said. “This gives them structure. This gives them a way to record what’s important. A big problem with students with exceptionalities or special needs is they can’t distinguish the important from the unimportant. This is the way you do it—with Content Enhancement Routines. You have to do direct instruction, and you deliver.”

The teachers in this school have been creative in their own uses for Content Enhancement Routines. The Unit Organizer, for example, has replaced lesson plans. The organizers are developed by teams of teachers: The first-grade team meets to develop Unit Organizers for first-grade classes, the second-grade team meets to develop Unit Organizers for second-grade classes, and so on.

2nd Grade DRAFT

① Term government		
③ Core idea A group of people that makes laws and leads our country.		
⑤ <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Use it to describe... <input type="checkbox"/> Example of...	② Clarifiers	④ Knowledge connections
people who lead our country	Supreme Court President	I heard about the government at school.
people who make laws	Congress Senate House of Representatives	My Mom taught me about the government.
⑥ <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Don't confuse it with... <input type="checkbox"/> Not an example of...	Mayor/Orlando Governor of Florida Vice President	I heard about the government on the news.
⑦ Example sentence The government is a group of people that makes laws and leads our country.		

Example Clarifying Table draft completed by a second-grade teacher.

“They’ve really come to a great system where the Unit Organizer keeps everybody on track,” Jerri said. “They’re moving to Course, which is a little more involved at elementary school because teachers teach all the subject areas.”

Layers of support

The successful implementation of Content Enhancement at any school relies on establishing multiple layers of support. Administrative support is key,

and Jerri recommends writing Content Enhancement into school improvement plans as an effective way to ensure implementation. In addition, she suggests that Content Enhancement be a permanent agenda item when grade-level teams meet so that it becomes woven into the thought patterns of the school.

From a professional development perspective, a one-shot workshop is never effective, Jerri and her colleagues have learned. Participants in their Content Enhancement series receive instruction in two Content Enhancement Routines during a session, then return for two more in a follow-up session five weeks later.

“The first hour of the next session is spent with those teachers sharing how they used Content Enhancement in their classrooms since we saw them last,” she said. “You want them to have some accountability. No one knows how good it is until they use it.”

Jerri’s tips for using Content Enhancement with elementary students

- When you are co-constructing a Content Enhancement device on an overhead projector, use a construction paper frame to project only the part of the device on which you are working and to cover up the rest of the device. This helps avoid some confusion.
- For very early grades (kindergarten through second grade), elementary teachers have eliminated the “Sometimes” column on the Concept Diagram. In addition, teachers often fill in part of the definition at the bottom of the diagram, leaving blanks for the students to fill in critical pieces.
- With younger children, use pictures and illustrations as well as words to aid understanding.

Starting young Sentence writing for k-2

Mary Sue Crowley, a SIM Professional Developer in Vermont, provides SIM instruction in a relatively rare setting: She teaches in one- and two-room schoolhouses. The challenges she faced in these multiple-grade and multi-age classrooms have resulted in adaptations that allow her to use *Fundamentals in the Sentence Writing Strategy* with very young children—kindergartners through second graders.

She shared advice and examples during the 2003 International SIM Conference.

The first step, she said, is to adapt the strategy's learning sheets for the first- and second-grade reading level. She begins with text that is familiar to students—copying sentences out of books they are using in class and inserting familiar words such as a student's name, when possible.

The second step is to simplify and color code the directions. Mary Sue breaks the directions

down into steps and asks the student to color code each one using highlighters. In the sample Learning Sheet above, for example, the students might choose a pink highlighter for the first step, Look for Capitals. Mary Sue instructs the students to color the circle in front of the step pink, then highlight the key word, Capitals, to help them remember what they are to use the pink highlighter for. When they Look for Capitals in the sentences on the learning sheet, they highlight them in pink. Students use a different color of highlighter for each step in the directions.

The third step is to incorporate movement into instruction. Mary

Name _____
Date _____

Learning Sheet 1A

- Look for Capitals
- Look for End Punctuation (.!?)
- Read the sentence. Does it make sense?

1. nathan went to the library.
2. We go to the park
3. We pool.
4. i go to the beach.
5. We go to the farm

Mary Sue's tips

- Have the students take caps off their highlighters and leave them off to avoid excessive movement in the classroom.
- Have the students keep their highlighters in their student folders.
- Follow the I do it, We do it, You do it sequence of instruction. Mary Sue repeats the "I do it" part three times and the "We do it" part four times before beginning "You do it."
- Instead of using worksheets for lessons in which students write their own sentences (see example on page 5), Mary Sue has students write on large sheets of wide-lined paper before color coding.
- With very young first-graders, Mary Sue has a student say a sentence aloud. She then writes it on the board, the students copy it, and then they color-code it.

Sue plays a game she calls “Kangaroo.” In it, students are given cards that say “verb” or “subject” or some other term related to instruction. Mary Sue then reads a sentence, writes it on the board, and reads it again by pointing to each word. When she comes to the subject, for example, the student holding the subject card jumps up. When she comes to the verb, the student holding the verb card jumps up, and so on.

“There is no doubt in my mind that first-graders can get every piece of the *Sentence Writing Strategy*,” Mary Sue said. “I’ve seen it. They do know what infinitives are. They do know what prepositions are. They can use them.”

Julie Tollefson

CRL Communications Director

Name _____

Date _____

Learning Sheet 2A

- Find the Action Verb. Highlight it.
- Look for Capitals
- Look for End Punctuation (>!?)
- Read the sentence. Does it make sense?

1. the horse ran fast.
2. Nathan swims every day
3. paige danced today.
4. My cat ate me.
5. I like pizza

Name _____

Date _____

Learning Sheet 4A Writing simple sentences with action verbs

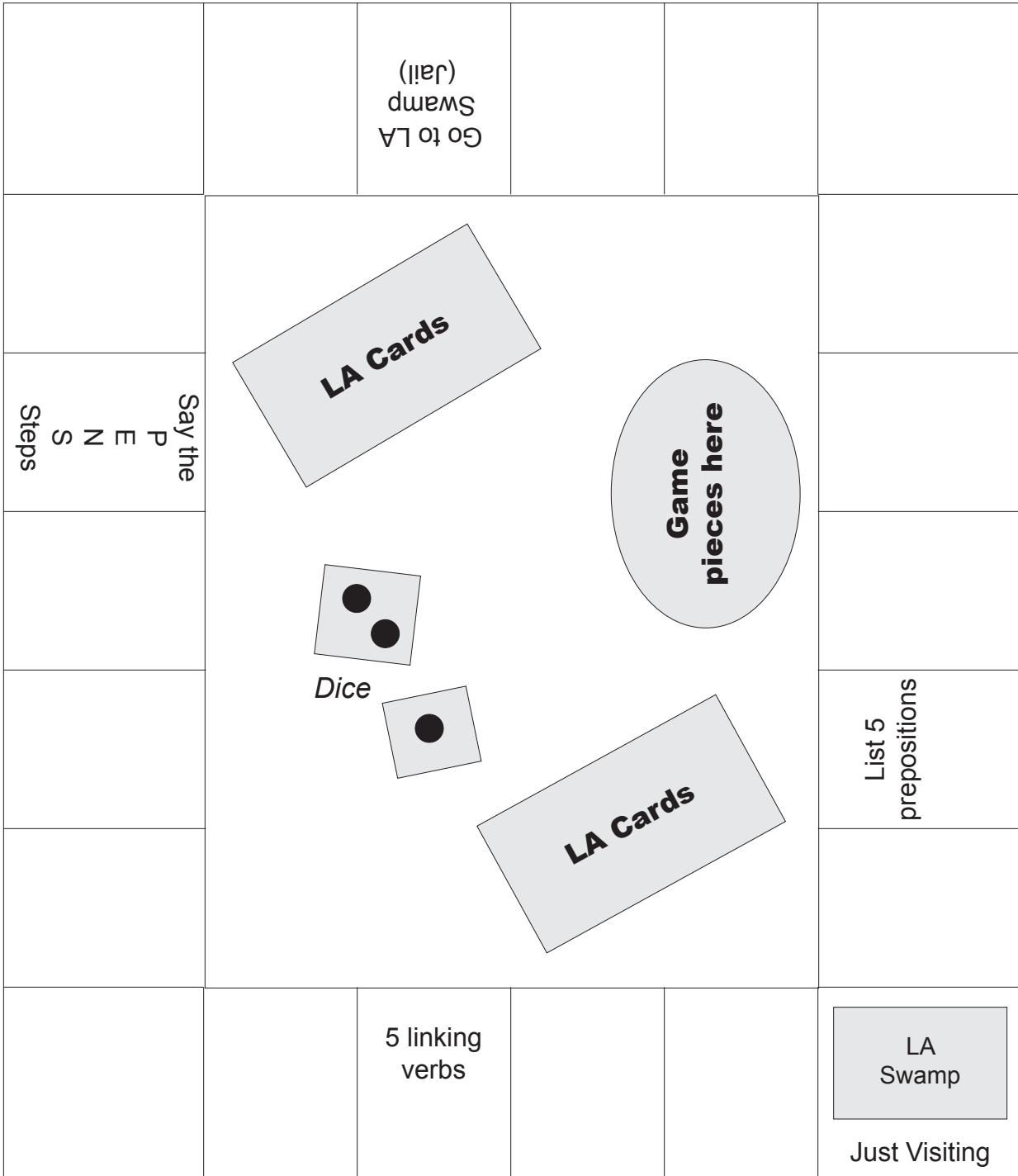
- Do you have an action verb? Highlight it.
- Do you have a Subject? Highlight it (different color).
- Do you have a Capital? Highlight it.
- Do you have an End Punctuation (.!?)? Highlight it.
- Read the sentence. Does it make sense?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Example Learning Sheets adapted for very young students.

Language arts board game example

(see story on page 7)



Success story in Florida

Letti Obradovich, a SIM Professional Developer who has retired from Palm Beach County School District, reports that she was asked to work with a sixth-grade student who had scored 1.3 on the writing portion of the Florida-State Assessment Test. A score of 1 was a rock bottom score.

The student was bright and scored exceptionally high on the

math test but was not able to write. His parents (both professionals) asked Letti to teach him for an hour a week but not give him any homework.

During the school year, Letti worked with the student, teaching him the SIM writing strategies: all four levels of *Sentence Writing* as well as *Paragraph Writing*. She worked with him in this manner for a year and a half.

When the student took the next state writing assessment test, he received a perfect score.

Everyone was amazed, and Letti was emphatic that the SIM writing strategies made all the difference. The student's teacher told the mother that the student was the best paragraph writer of all her students.

We also congratulate Letti for her work with the student.

Student activity:

Create your own board game to reinforce language arts lessons

Each year, **Glenda Fries** challenges her students to work in teams to develop a language arts board game.

Glenda, a middle school language arts teacher in Topeka, Kan., says her students look forward to this activity every year. Students will require about one week to complete this activity correctly.

"I make my directions very broad so that the students really get creative with their games," Glenda says. "You will be surprised with what they can create!"

Students are required to develop the following parts to the game:

1. A **title**, such as "Lost in LA" or "Can You Survive LA?"

2. A **board** on which to play the game. Glenda usually shows students a Monopoly board as an example, but students have adapted many different ideas, including one game board that resembled a racetrack.
3. **Game cards**. The cards are usually kept in the middle of the board game. Players choose a card and then follow its instructions.
4. **Game pieces** to move around the board.
5. **Rules**. Glenda requires the students to be very specific in developing their game rules.
6. A **spinner or die**, created by the students.

Glenda also notes these important aspects of the activity:

1. The game should be fun!

2. Two or three people may work together to create a game.
3. The game board should be neat, creative, colorful, and easy to understand.

Page 6 shows an example of the kind of game board students might create.

Stratagem

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