

Strategic Tutoring After School

Julie Tollefson
Communications
Director
Center for Research
on Learning

In the past few years, tutoring centers using the Strategic Instruction Model and its Strategic Tutoring program have been established in several communities. In this article, three individuals involved in setting up these centers share the lessons they've learned along the way:

- **Mike Hock**, associate director at the University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning and author of *Strategic Tutoring*, has worked closely with CRL's *Pathways to Success* and *Strategic Advantage* projects, large-scale implementation of SIM interventions at six middle schools and two high schools in Topeka, Kan.
- **Cheryl Kohr** is a special education teacher and co-director of the Strategic Tutoring Center at Chase Middle School in Topeka, one of the *Pathways* schools.
- **Kathy Getto** is co-director of the center at Chase.

Strategic Tutoring vs. traditional tutoring: What's the difference?

The intent of most traditional forms of tutoring is to help students complete assignments and keep up with their classmates. Although one benefit of this form of help for students is that it keeps many students in school who would otherwise drop out, an unintended consequence is that students can become dependent on their tutors for classroom success.

Strategic Tutoring, in contrast, recog-

nizes the importance of helping students complete assignments but looks beyond that immediate need. Strategic tutors also have considerable knowledge about strategies for learning and how to use them. They use this knowledge in their work with students, teaching them to use a strategic approach to reading, writing, organizing. The key is that strategic tutors integrate explicit strategy instruction as they help students complete assignments. Additionally, *Strategic Tutoring* recognizes that students may have huge gaps in their knowledge that tutors can help fill. Finally, a goal of *Strategic Tutoring* is to establish a connection with students, with tutors serving as mentors so that there is always at least one adult with whom a student feels comfortable and therefore connected to the school.

Components of successful Strategic Tutoring centers

Setting up and running a successful after-school strategic tutoring program requires a coordinated effort on the part of numerous people. Components of leadership, funding, finding the right mix of tutors, and commitment of parents and students all influence the ability of these centers to provide the services students need.

Ownership. Site-based leadership is paramount to the success of these centers, Mike Hock said.

"One of the things that really makes these



centers run is the fact that we have directors,” he said. “They set it up. They run it. It’s theirs.”

Besides shouldering the responsibility of day-to-day operations, part of being effective in the leadership role means figuring out what works and what doesn’t in individual settings. At Chase, for example, Cheryl Kohr and an instructional collaborator who works with the school’s teachers and tutors decided the center could more effectively support schoolwide goals if they prepared tutors themselves instead of asking KU to provide the professional development.

Commitment. Another significant factor is strong commitment from students and parents. At Chase, students must attend tutoring sessions at least three days a week, although the majority attend all four days the center is open. Parents agree that their children will abide by the rules of the center, including a “three strikes” rule that removes students from tutoring if they receive three unexcused absences. Belligerence also is not tolerated.

“We’re serious about what we’re doing. We’re not going to play games; that doesn’t help students achieve academic success,” Cheryl said.

Recruiting tutors. In its first year of operation, tutors for Chase’s program were drawn mainly from teachers and paraprofessionals already employed by the school. Since then, Cheryl has used her contacts with several civic organizations to expand the pool of potential tutors.

“I really believe in this program,” she said. “Any time I get a chance, I talk about Strategic Tutoring. I’ve had people come up to me and say, ‘I want to be a tutor. Is that possible?’”

Potential tutors go through an application process. Once accepted, they are instructed in Strategic Tutoring methods and related professional development. They also tell Cheryl what subjects they’re comfortable with and the days and times they are available to work. Cheryl then goes through the laborious process of matching available tutor expertise to student needs.

Capacity can be a vexing problem. Chase’s tutoring program routinely maintains a waiting list of up to 75 students.

“Our school is 88 percent disadvantaged, 25 percent special education students. The hardest part of my job is saying no to parents, that we don’t have the room,” Cheryl said.

**Rules & Procedures for
Chase Strategic Tutoring Center**

1. The students are to attend the nights agreed upon by the parent and Center Director.
2. The parent is responsible for informing the Director if the child is absent.
3. The Director will telephone the parent if the student has not shown up for tutoring.
4. The student must follow the school rules.
5. The student will bring books, planner, assignments, and materials to tutoring each time they attend.
6. The student will be allowed three strikes (unexcused absences or inappropriate behavior) before they are excluded from tutoring for the year.
7. You, the parent, are the only one who may sign your student out of tutoring if you want them to quit, unless they are excluded for the three strikes rule.
8. Unless notified beforehand, tutoring ends at 4 p.m. each day that tutoring is being held.
9. You will be notified if tutoring is not being held on any day. If the weather is very bad, snow or storms, tutoring will be canceled for the day. We will let the students know so that they can ride the bus home or make other arrangements for transportation.

I agree to the rules and procedures of the Chase Strategic Tutoring Center.

_____ date _____
student signature

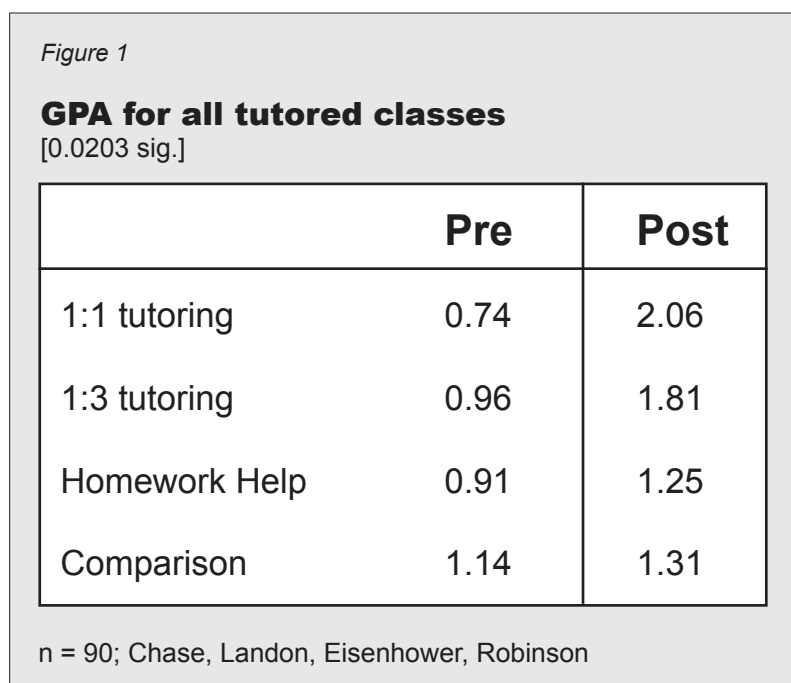
Example Rules & Procedures form

Funding. Although the Chase center is funded by a federal grant, other Strategic Tutoring centers have launched successful fund-raising campaigns and formed community partnerships to support their work.

In Lawrence, for example, a local church came to the aid of the Strategic Learning Center, providing space in its basement when high rents forced the center to leave its previous quarters. Members of the church now actively seek support from others in the community to help keep the center going. The center also has sponsored several fund-raising events, including a 5K fun run, annual rummage sales, and campaigns to solicit donors to support tutoring for students who can't afford it.

Administrative forms. The Chase tutoring center team has developed a number of forms to help ensure its smooth operation. The materials include detailed descriptions of the responsibilities of both the director and the assistant director, a job description for tutors, an application and emergency contact form for tutors, a parental consent letter, regulations, a data collection checklist, and student commitment rules. See page 2 for an example of the student commitment rules and page 5 for an example of the data collection checklist. Once students are accepted into the Strategic Tutoring program, parents are asked to sign and return a letter indicating the days the student will attend tutoring sessions.

One form that has proven to be extremely important is the session



outline. Complicated schedules don't always allow a student to work with the same tutor every session (although that would be most desirable). The session outline provides a means for tutors to record the strategy used with the student and comments about progress or other information that can be helpful for the student's next session.

The Strategic Learning Center has developed similar means of tracking student progress. One form, the Tutoractive Session Organizer, includes spaces for tutors to record overall goals, goals for the day, and results of the session. It also includes quick progress checks in the form of a couple of questions: "How well did learning go with ___ today?" (answered on a scale ranging from 1 = not well to 5 = very well) and "If the student tried to do a task similar to this tomorrow, the student would need help with...?" (answered on a scale ranging from

1 = none of the steps to 5 = all of the steps).

Related services. Some of the students in the Chase program became so good at learning that they didn't need regular tutoring sessions any more. Cheryl found, however, that the students wanted to stay in touch with the program. As a result, the program set up a related "homework center" as a way for students to stay connected while freeing tutors' time for more serious needs. In the homework center, a few teachers or tutors are available to support large numbers of students at one time. Whenever possible, homework center tutors ask students to use the strategies they have learned when working on assignments. In this manner, strategy generalization is supported.

Another related service is Parent Strategy Nights, during which parents and students work together on specific topics, such as

organization skills, how to use planners, assignment completion strategies, and note taking and test taking strategies.

Strategic Tutoring center results

Demonstrating student results is an important aspect of running Strategic Tutoring centers, especially in regard to obtaining administrators' support.

In Mike's studies, he has found that students who participated in one-to-one tutoring for at least six weeks improved their scores on tests and quizzes from "Fs" to "Cs." In one-to-three tutoring arrangements, students improved scores on quizzes from 52 percent to 60 percent ("Fs" to "Ds"). Homework help centers, established for students who wouldn't commit to attending tutoring sessions on a regular basis, did not prove to be effective in helping students improve their scores. Students in a comparison group that did not participate in Strategic Tutoring actually lost ground.

Figure 1 on page 3 shows the improvement in grade-point averages for students in one-to-one tutoring (from 0.74 to 2.06), one-to-three tutoring (from 0.96 to 1.81), homework help centers (from 0.91 to 1.25), and comparison group (from 1.14 to 1.31).

Students knowledge of strategies improved significantly for those in one-to-one tutoring (from 1.87 points to 8 points) and one-to-three tutoring (from 0.63 points to 3.89 points). Comparison group students showed no change. (See Figure 2.)

Perhaps one of the significant features of Strategic Tutoring is its ability to instill a sense of hope in students. Mike's studies have found statistically significant increases in hope in one-to-one Strategic Tutoring arrangements. (See Figure 3.)

Figure 2

Student Strategy Knowledge

[0.0182 sig.]

	Pre	Post
1:1 tutoring	1.87 pts.	8.00 pts.
1:3 tutoring	0.63 pts.	3.89 pts.
Comparison	3.00 pts.	3.00 pts.

n = 17; Chase and Landon

Figure 3

Student Level of Hope

[0.0432 sig.]

1:1 and 1:3 at Chase (pre/post test comparison)

	Pre	Post	
1:1	Total Score	20 pts.	28 pts.
	Will Power	10 pts.	15 pts.
	Way Power	11 pts.	13 pts.
1:3	Total Score	23 pts.	23 pts.
	Will Power	11 pts.	12 pts.
	Way Power	12 pts.	11 pts.

n = 17

- 1:1 = 6
- 1:3 = 11

Research Data Collection Checklist

Student Name/ID Number

Teacher Name/Class

Directions: Place a checkmark and date in the box after each pretest/posttest is administered AND collected. Place in the folder the actual tests and information from teachers (e.g., test scores).

Measures:

Scores on Tests/Quizzes
(in Tutored Subject)

Quarter Grade
(in Tutored Subject)

Semester Grade
(in Tutored Subject)

Quarter GPA
(overall)

Semester GPA
(overall)

Strategy Knowledge

Being Known

Hope Scale

Student Satisfaction

Other (e.g., interview)

Pretest/Date Posttest/Date Person Resp. Comment

Pretest/Date	Posttest/Date	Person Resp.	Comment

Research Data Collection Checklist



I worked with two eighth-grade girls who had similar core classes that they needed help with. Both came from disadvantaged families and were very needy for an adult in their lives as well as help with their education. It's really hard to let these kids go. You work with them for so long and develop this relationship. They look for you in the hall. They come and tell you good things that happen to them. They needed someone to connect with. One young lady's grades—she started at .8 GPA. She had a 3.9 GPA when we got through. Most of it was organization with her. She's a procrastinator, so we worked through organization and planning strategies and even discussed it when I saw her passing in the hall.



— Kathy Getto, co-director of the Strategic Tutoring Center at Chase Middle School, Topeka, Kan.

Sample student folders

Niki Lachica, a potential SIM Professional Developer from Virginia, offers the following tips for developing sample student folders:

“For each strategy I teach,” she said, “I develop a sample student folder. It serves two purposes:

“One, it helps me organize my materials and review the stages. Each year, I teach a number of strategies. The sample folder clearly and succinctly summarizes the stages of the strategies. It allows me to gather all needed materials as well as refresh my memory for each strategy.

“Two, it provides the students a model to use throughout the strategy instruction. If students are absent or are not sure whether materials need to be stored in the folder, they can check the sample. In essence, it helps the students become more actively involved in the strategy and more responsible for their own learning.”

For example, Niki recommends placing the following items in the folders for the *Proficiency in the Sentence Writing Strategy*:

Stage 1: Pretest and Make Commitments

- Pretest
- Score sheet
- 5 x 8 index card with student and teacher commitments
- Simple Sentence Progress Chart (depending on pretest results)
- Compound Sentence Progress Chart
- Complex Sentence Progress Chart
- Compound-Complex Sentence Progress Chart

Stage 2: Describe

- Progress chart with goal dates set
- 5 x 8 student-created cue cards

Stage 3: Model

- Progress chart with goal dates set and the Stage 2 date of completion noted for each type of sentence. Completed progress charts remain in folder

Stage 4: Verbal Practice

- Progress chart with goal dates set and Stages 2 and 3 dates of completion noted for each type of sentence. Completed progress charts remain in folder.
- Verbal Practice Checklist (for each sentence type)
- Written Quiz (for each sentence type)

Stage 5: Controlled Practice and Feedback

- Progress chart with goal dates set and Stages 2, 3, and 4 dates of completion noted for each type of sentence. Completed progress charts remain in folder.
- Sentence Lessons
 - Simple: #1-3 series
 - Compound: #1-5 series
 - Complex: #1-5 series
 - Compound-complex: #1-6 series

Proficiency in Sentence Writing Assignment Sheet	
Lesson to Complete	Topic
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Stage 6: Advanced Practice/ Post-Test and Feedback

- Progress chart with goal dates set and Stages 2, 3, 4, and 5 dates of completion noted for each type of sentence. Completed progress charts remain in folder.
- Sentence Lessons
 - Simple: #4 series
 - Compound: #6 series
 - Complex: #6 series
 - Compound-complex: #7 series
- Assignment sheet (see example on page 6)
- Sentence checklist
- Score sheets

Stage 7: Make Commitments for Generalization

- Progress chart with goal dates set and Stages 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 dates of completion noted for each type of sentence. Completed progress charts remain in folder.
- 5 x 8 index card containing IEP goals. Commitment to achieve that goal indicated with student signature. Teacher commitment noted.

Stage 8: Generalization Phase I: Orientation

- Progress chart with goal dates set and Stages 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7 dates of completion noted for each type of sentence. Completed progress charts remain in folder.
- Student’s list of current classes, kinds of assignments/tasks requiring sentence writing, cues to listen for in each class/ other setting.

(Students create and store a 4 x 6 PENS Cue Card, Formula Card,

Report of Strategy Use

Name: _____

Date	Title of Assignment	Setting

and Sentence Checklists for each of their course notebooks.)

Stage 8: Generalization Phase II: Activation

- Generalization Progress Chart (for each type of sentence taught)
- Assignment sheet
- Sentence checklists (attached to completed assignments)
- Completed “Report of Strategy Use” forms (see example above)
- Student’s work samples used for “Report of Strategy Use” (At this point, students can move into the Describe stage of the next sentence type.)

Stage 8: Generalization Phase III: Adaptation

- Student-created 4 x 6 adapted formula cards
- Completed “Report of Strategy Use” forms
- Student’s work samples used for “Report of Strategy Use,” if available

Stage 8: Generalization Phase IV: Maintenance

- Student-created student journals
- Score sheets
- Sentence checklists
- Assignment sheet
- Student’s work samples used for maintenance checks, when collected

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Editor
Julie Tollefson

Consulting Editors
Keith Lenz
Don Deshler
Jean Schumaker

Graphic Designer
David Gnojek

www.kuclrl.org

The University of Kansas
Center for Research on Learning
Joseph R. Pearson Hall
1122 West Campus Road, Room 521
Lawrence, Kansas 66045-3101
1-785-864-4780

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