

S_trat_egram

Volume 19 • Number 4 • June 2007
The University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning

SIM, Texas-Style

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KU-CRL

Wow! What a difference dedicated people can make in just a few years!

Since 2001, the number of certified SIM Professional Developers in the El Paso (Texas) Independent School District has grown from two to 20. During that time, nine out of 15 middle schools in the district implemented SIM school-wide, and two of the 10 high schools nurtured their own SIM Professional Developers on staff. More importantly, thousands of students have learned SIM strategies, hundreds of teachers have integrated SIM routines into their classroom instruction, and test scores and other indicators of success have improved dramatically.

All since 2001, when two SIM Professional Developers—Lee Schwartz and Liz Gaidry—launched a districtwide SIM initiative. In collaboration with veteran SIM PD Conn Thomas of Amarillo, Texas, who had been a mentor for the district for half a decade, they designed the Strategies for Academic Success (SAS) initiative.

“Our vision was to make this mandatory instruction in every special education resource room in middle school and high school and down through fourth and fifth grade,” Lee says.

Although changes in district leadership derailed the grand vision, something surprising happened: General

education teachers embraced SIM and led the way for widespread adoption of SIM interventions.



Lee Schwartz, recipient of the 2006 SIM Leadership Award

PROGRAMMING FOR SUCCESS

Lee, Liz, and Conn set these changes in motion with a methodical plan that allowed schools to get to know SIM gradually and experience its benefits first-hand before making long-term commitments. The SIM PDs in El Paso continue to use this process of introduction, trial, and evaluation with more

schools every year.

First, the district SAS team asks campuses new to the program to form SAS committees comprising representatives of a range of academic disciplines and special interests: math, science, social studies, athletics, and more. These representatives attend district workshops and then return to use the SIM intervention with their students.

At the end of the first, introductory year, the district and school SAS team members sit down together to evaluate the

program and plan for the future. By this time, school staff members are familiar with SIM and have used some SIM interventions with students. Together, team members review campus data and decide what to do next, an important step in gaining the confidence of school staff in the efficacy of SIM.

“To ask them to do that before they have an idea of what it is didn’t work,” says Lee. “When I sat down with the principal, and we made the decisions, it was top down and it wasn’t always

accepted.”

In the team approach, schools adopt SIM more readily based on data and personal experiences, but getting to that point requires patience on the part of the professional development team. At one remarkably successful school in the district, Lincoln Middle School, full-scale acceptance took two years.

“They didn’t feel like after one year, they were ready,” says Lee. “They didn’t want to *not* do it, but they said to their principal, ‘let us go for some

SCHOOL & COMMUNITY DEMOGRAPHICS

Community of El Paso
Population, City of El Paso: 624,365
Population, El Paso County: 130,720
Total Population: 755,085
The community is 87% Hispanic.

El Paso Independent School District
Student Population: 63,000
90 Campuses
55 Elementary Schools
15 Middle Schools
10 High Schools
10 Special Schools

	Elementary Schools	Middle Schools	High Schools
Number of Teachers	2,246.6	993.5	1,301.1
School Enrollment (Ranges)	215 to 885	616 to 1,900	1,170 to 3,120
Minority Enrollment Percentages (Ranges)	50% to 100%	73.1% to 99.7%	72.9% to 99.7%
Economically Disadvantaged Percentage (Ranges)	12.6% to 98.9%	30.1% to 98.3%	28.4% to 93.2%
Limited English Proficient Percentages (Ranges)	2.7% to 88.9%	2.9% to 46.5%	5.8% to 35.9%

more training.”

The school’s test scores have since jumped tremendously in the areas on which its staff focused their SAS energies.

GOOD TEACHING IS GOOD TEACHING

Such increases in test scores have been an important factor in the acceptance of SIM/SAS. In the beginning, the SAS team struggled to make explicit connections between SAS and test benefits because of the strong emphasis on high-stakes testing in Texas, says Conn. As students and teachers become more comfortable with and adept at using the strategies and routines, some of the early difficulties have eased.

“I think schools are finding that good teaching is good teaching, that the skills are good for teachers and students,” Conn says.

SIM Professional Developers have found champions for the initiative in some unexpected places. At one school, athletics led the way in adopting SIM interventions. After the football coach figured out how to use the TRIMS worksheet from the *Survey Routine* to explain football

plays, universal student use followed quickly.

“We didn’t have any trouble getting buy in from the kids because the coach was doing it and all the football players were doing it,” Lee says.

General education teachers, too, have been instrumental in schoolwide use of SIM interventions, easily incorporating Content Enhancement Routines into their instruction. Although Learning Strategies are often considered too intense for general education instruction, the strategies in the writing strand stand as the exception. Several El Paso schools have adopted the writing strand as their curriculum for basic writing instruction. Three schools have combined instruction in the writing strand with cross-curriculum projects in which all departments assign content-relevant writing projects on a rotating basis.

“They’re all using the IDEA diagram. That’s the glue that holds it all together,” says Lee. “The kids are getting writing every week, but the individual content teachers are only having to do it once every six weeks.”

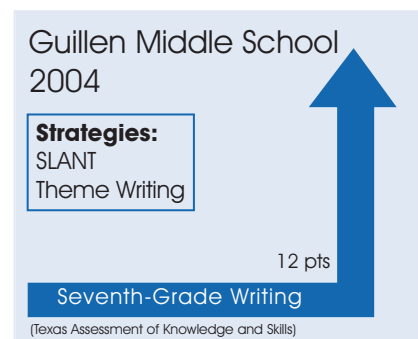
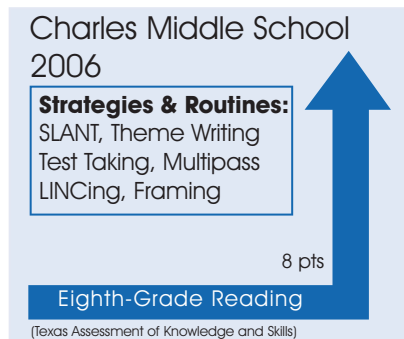
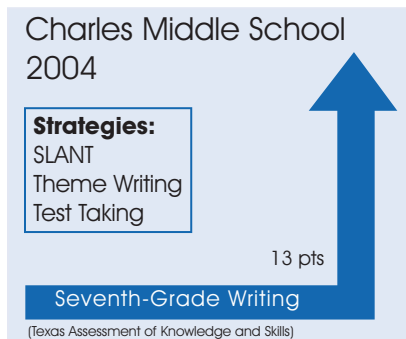
At first, students are incredu-

Learning Strategies Curriculum Writing Strand

- Fundamentals in the Sentence Writing Strategy
- Proficiency in the Sentence Writing Strategy
- Paragraph Writing Strategy
- Fundamentals in the Theme Writing Strategy
- Error Monitoring Strategy
- InSPECT Strategy

lous that they have to write in math. And in social studies and in science and in physical education classes. The results, though, have been phenomenal. In schools that have used this approach, students receive adequate time on task and enough repetitions to learn how to write. As a result, their scores on Texas’ high-stakes assessments jump as much as 18 points in the first year and then level off in subse-

Success Snapshots



quent years.

BOTTOM UP

The SIM Professional Developers who work with Lee on the SAS initiative are all based at schools and most of them are teachers. Three of them have received teacher of the year awards, and one is a finalist for district teacher of the year award this year. (“The program just attracts the best teachers out there,” Lee says.) The professional developers often have full teaching or non-SIM coaching schedules, but still find time to provide on-site staff development, assistance, modeling, and coaching related to SIM, when needed.

“It’s been fun watching them grow,” says Conn, who likens the team to a family in the way they protect one another and work closely together. “They take the initiative, and they run with things. It’s been a lot of hard work, but we’ve had a lot of fun, a lot of laughs, along the way.”

Now, SAS is known throughout the district, and administrators request the assistance of SIM PDs, a success Conn says is a testament to perseverance.

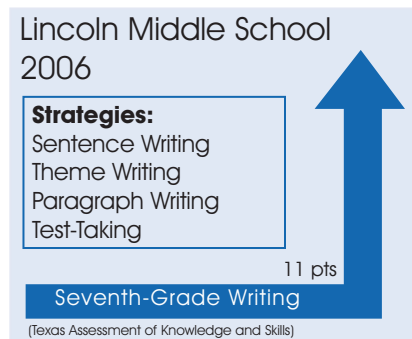
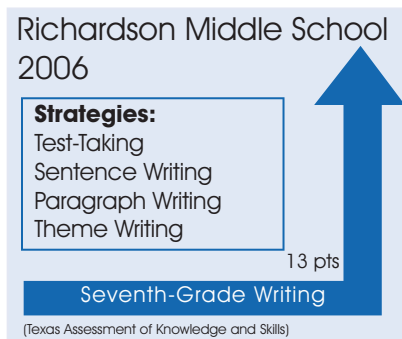
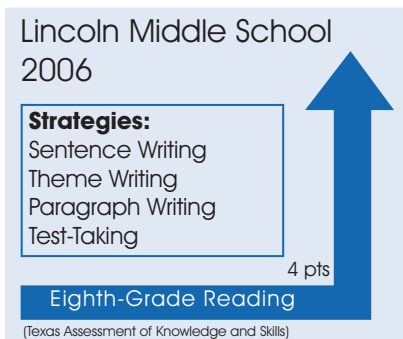
“I think Lee has been the catalyst to make it go,” he says, “but now it’s embedded in the buildings.”

Who Benefits?

Lee, who also works with several Native American schools across the country, has yet to find a student population that can’t benefit from SIM interventions. Kindergarten teachers in one of her Native schools have even adapted the *LINCS Vocabulary Strategy* for use in their classrooms.

English as a second language teachers praise the *Sentence Writing*, *LINCS Vocabulary*, and *Paraphrasing* strategies and the *Framing Routine*. One ESL master teacher, who is also a SIM Professional Developer, saw Reading Test of Proficiency in English scores among her first-year immigrant students skyrocket when she started using SIM.

Success Snapshots



WWW.KUCRL.ORG SCAVENGER HUNT



KU-CRL recently redesigned and reorganized its web site. Join the hunt for information and learn about the new site. The first 10 readers to e-mail all of the correct answers to jtollefson@ku.edu or fax them to Julie at 785.864.5728 will receive a small gift from KU-CRL!

1. Section of the site for which you need a password.

2. What does the acronym "CLC" stand for?

3. Name 2 current KU-CRL projects that focus on improving students' reading skills.

4. Name KU-CRL's director of professional development.





5. The number of CLC levels.



6. The phone number for the KU-CRL order desk.

7. The full name of the Center.

8. Name the strategies in the Learning Strategies Curriculum for studying and remembering information.

9. The number of research institutes/divisions that fall under the KU-CRL umbrella.

10. The number of students involved in the experimental study of the Concept Comparison Routine.



11. Name the associate director of KU-CRL.

12. What section of the site contains a complete list of journal articles published by KU-CRL researchers?

13. The number of routines in the Content Enhancement Series.

14. Five goals of KU-CRL.

15. Name the newsletter for teachers.

16. Where can you find a link to information about professional development opportunities for teachers?

17. What does the acronym “SIM” stand for?



18. Name the director of KU-CRL.

19. The percentage of complete sentences written by students after learning the Sentence Writing Strategy.

20. What are instructional coaches?

KU-CRL CALENDAR

August 6-8, 2007

Instructional Coaching Institute

Contact: Kathy Schmidt or Mona Katz

(crl@ku.edu | 785.864.0626)

August 9-11, 2007

Coaching Classroom Management

Contact: Kathy Schmidt or Mona Katz

(crl@ku.edu | 785.864.0626)

October 10-12, 2007

Instructional Coaching Institute

Contact: Kathy Schmidt or Mona Katz

(crl@ku.edu | 785.864.0626)

October 14-17, 2007

Instructional Coaching Conference

Contact: Kathy Schmidt or Mona Katz

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www.kucrl.org/institutes

STRATEGRAM

Vol. 19: Issue number 4. Published six times per year by The University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning, Joseph R. Pearson Hall, 1122 West Campus Road Room 521, Lawrence, Kansas, 66045-3101. Subscription rate: \$15 per year. No part of this publication may be reproduced without written permission from the publisher, unless otherwise stated.

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NEW ONLINE

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