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# Strategram

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The University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning

## Pacing Guides and Content Enhancement

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In some places, pacing guides—tools developed by publishing companies—rule the classroom. The guides provide detailed suggestions for teachers about what content to teach in what order, which activities to choose, and how much time to spend on each selection. Some influential states, such as California, require publishers to create pacing guides before their products can appear on lists of textbooks approved for purchase.

With such tools readily available, some SIM professionals have encountered questions about the need for Content Enhancement Routines. Aren't *Course Organizers* and *Unit Organizers* redundant or irrelevant, teachers ask?

The short answer is no. Pacing guides may be required and they may provide some necessary guidance, but they are not likely to address all of the needs of a particular district or school.

That was exactly what teams of teachers at one California high school found when they began to closely examine their textbooks' pacing guides in light of their state standards. The principal at Lodi High School wanted his teachers to learn a process for standards-based unit design. Although the district expected strict adherence to the state pacing guide provided by its curriculum's publisher, he was concerned that reliance on the

pacing guide meant teachers focused intently on the prescribed content at the expense of higher-order thinking skills students would need to demonstrate proficiency on state assessments. Literature instruction, for example, often focused on factual knowledge of a passage: who were the characters and what happened to them. Students were not learning to analyze how an author

### **Professional Development Goals at Lodi High School**

- Learn how to design standards-based units and map the curriculum
- Agree (by grade level) on a common curriculum, but have individual choice about "How" to teach the standards using agreed-upon vehicles (adopted text and supplemental materials such as novels)
- Learn how to implement the Unit Organizer Routine with students with fidelity
- Learn how to use novels as a vehicle to teach standards, not as a unit in and of itself
- Design common assessments aligned to curriculum taught
- Identify or create instructional activities that support mastery of the standards

developed the character, why the point of view the author used in telling the story was effective, or what literary devices the author used to develop the passage’s theme.

The principal requested the assistance of SIM Professional Developer Peggy Graving-Reyes, at that time the district’s secondary literacy/instructional coach and staff developer. Her task was to work with teachers on a process for standards-based unit planning and to help them develop their units for the year. The box on page 1 shows the ambitious professional development goals they established for the year.

Peggy began by presenting the *Unit Organizer Routine* to the teachers. As they worked in grade-level teams of six or seven teachers each to develop an instructional unit (cluster, in the language of the pacing guide) called narrative nonfiction, a key question arose: How do we know which standards are part of each cluster?

At that point, the teams paused to consider this question. They plotted the clusters of content recommended in their pacing guides (fiction and narrative nonfiction for example; seven clusters in all) on the academic calendar and identified all of the state standards represented in those clusters and on benchmark tests. Table 1 shows examples of ninth- and 10<sup>th</sup>-grade standards represented in the pacing guide’s Functional Documents cluster. Table 2 shows a similar analysis of standards assessed in benchmark tests. They then

**TABLE 1: STANDARDS REPRESENTED IN PACING GUIDE**

**Example for 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grades**  
Cluster 6: Functional Documents

**Reading:**  
2.1 Structures of functional workplace documents  
2.6 Following technical directions  
2.7 Sequences of information and procedures

**Writing:**  
2.5 Business letter  
2.6 Technical documents (rules, procedures)

**Written and Oral Conventions:**  
1.1 Clauses, mechanics, phrases (teach with actual student ex. as problems arise)  
1.4 Correct uses of conventions, punctuation, spelling

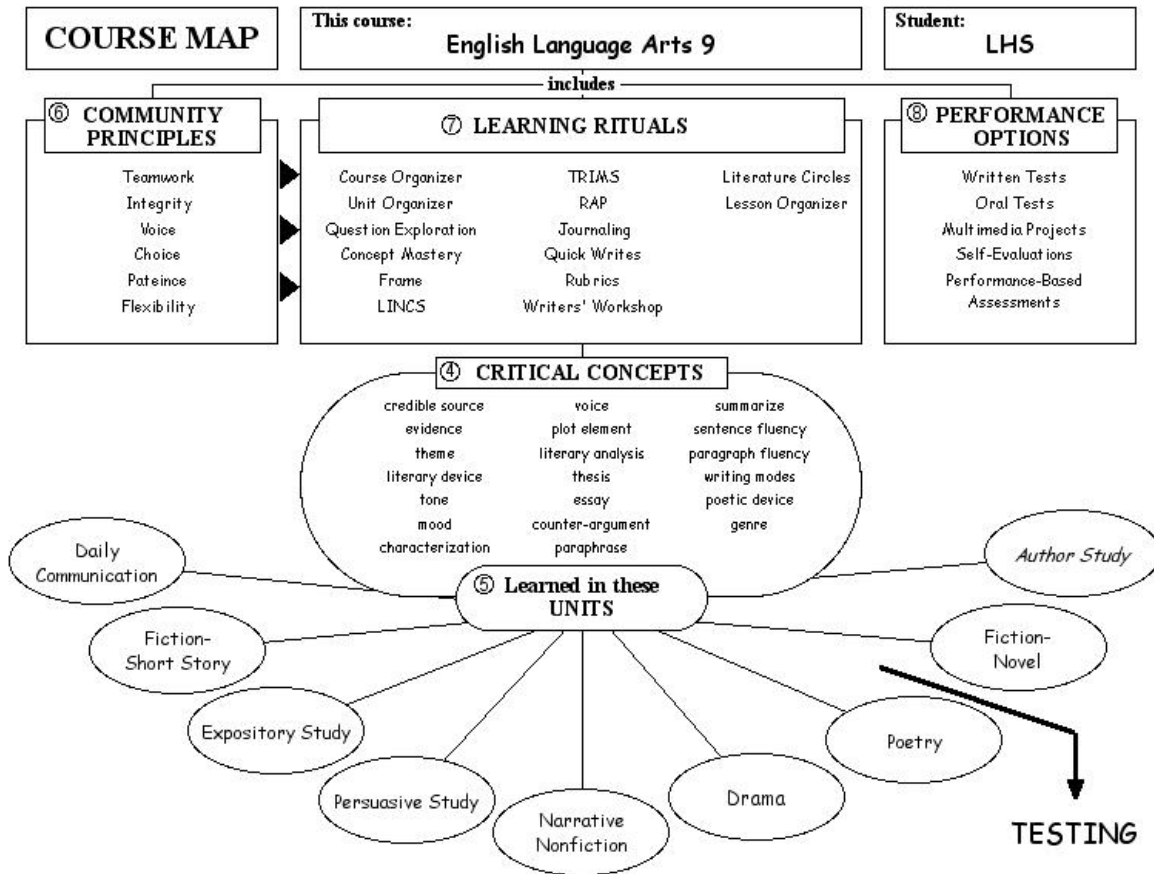
**Listening-Speaking:**

**TABLE 2: ANALYSIS OF CLUSTER ASSESSMENT**

**Example for 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grades**

Cluster 6 Functional Documents		
Questions	# of Questions	Standard/Topic
<i>Part I. Vocab</i>		
1-12	12	r1.1 Jargon, Specialized Vocab
<i>Part II. Reading</i>		
12, 13	2	r2.1 format of functional documents
1, 2, 5, 6, 9, 10, 11	7	r2.5 evaluation and analysis of sources
14, 15, 7, 8	4	r2.7 Evaluate
3	1	r3.4 describe character
4	1	r3.6 sequence
<i>Part IV. Lang. Mechanics</i>		
1-4	4	lc1.1 Punctuation, Colons, Semi-Colons, ellipses & commas
5-10	6	lc1.1, 1.4 Punctuation, spelling, capitalization, & revision

FIGURE 1: COURSE MAP FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS



compared the standards to all standards set by the state and especially to those identified as priority standards for the district. To their surprise, not only did the pacing guide not address all standards, but it did not address some of their priority standards. In addition, they found the pacing guide lacking in the number of instructional activities to address student needs for additional practice or lacking the depth and breadth to help most of their students reach proficiency in targeted standards.

The process exposed the holes and weaknesses in the publish-

er's pacing guides, but also led to a realization of the power of the concept: A common curriculum focused on standards and aligned with assessments. The teams began to construct a comprehensive curriculum by seeking supplemental materials, either from the publishing company or an outside resource.

They also determined that constructing their own instructional calendar would better suit their needs than following the recommended sequence of the pacing guides. Where the pacing guide suggested, for example, that the first nine weeks be entirely devoted to fiction, the

teachers believed it made more sense to start with units they called "daily communication." This unit would allow teachers to get to know their students and assess their strengths and weaknesses at the beginning of the year through such topics as technology skills, Internet access, and credibility of sources. (See Figure 1, the Course Map for English Language Arts developed by the teachers.)

On the Course Map, teams identified target dates throughout the year, specifically the end of each quarter and the date on which state assessments would be given. Then they plotted

**FIGURE 2: COURSE ORGANIZER DRAFT**

<b>Teacher(s):</b> Lodi USD, CA <b>Time:</b>	<b>The</b> <h2 style="margin: 0;">Course Organizer</h2>	<b>Student:</b> <b>Course Dates:</b> 2005-2006																																											
<p>① <b>THIS COURSE:</b>  <b>English Language Arts 9/10</b></p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 50%; padding: 10px; display: inline-block; margin: 10px 0;"> <p><b>is about</b></p> </div> <p>developing more sophisticated literacy strategies to analyze, evaluate and elaborate on what is read while applying and refining a command of the writing process, of speaking skills and of listening and interpersonal skills.</p>	<p>③ <b>COURSE STANDARDS:</b></p> <table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="width: 50%; border-bottom: 1px solid black;"><i>What?</i></th> <th style="width: 30%; border-bottom: 1px solid black;"><i>How?</i></th> <th style="width: 20%; border-bottom: 1px solid black;"><i>Value?</i></th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;"><b>CONTENT:</b></td> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">_____</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;"><b>PROCESS:</b></td> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">_____</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	<i>What?</i>	<i>How?</i>	<i>Value?</i>	<b>CONTENT:</b>		_____	<b>PROCESS:</b>		_____																																			
<i>What?</i>	<i>How?</i>	<i>Value?</i>																																											
<b>CONTENT:</b>		_____																																											
<b>PROCESS:</b>		_____																																											
<p>② <b>COURSE QUESTIONS:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To be completed by 9th &amp; 10th Grade teachers.</li> <li>2. <b>Questions and topics discussed during individual prep periods:</b></li> <li>3. What strategies will help me become an astute consumer and user of information?</li> <li>4. How can I communicate more effectively in my writing?</li> <li>5. How can I improve my listening and interpersonal skills?</li> <li>6. How can I present a strong, persuasive argument?</li> <li>7. How does the organization and presentation of a message change given audience, purpose and media?</li> <li>8. How can I use the internet safely, effectively and productively?</li> <li>9. How does an author's personal and cultural experiences impact their philosophical beliefs and writings?</li> <li>10. How can an author create a powerful piece of writing?</li> <li>11. How can I tell if the information before me is fiction from nonfiction? is biased or unbiased?</li> <li>12. How do I read an audience?</li> <li>13. How does improving my literacy skills lead to better problem-solving abilities?</li> </ol>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>COURSE PROGRESS GRAPH</b></p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; height: 150px; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td style="width: 50px; height: 15px;"></td><td style="width: 50px; height: 15px;"></td></tr> <tr><td style="width: 50px; height: 15px;"></td><td style="width: 50px; height: 15px;"></td></tr> <tr><td style="width: 50px; height: 15px;"></td><td style="width: 50px; height: 15px;"></td></tr> <tr><td style="width: 50px; height: 15px;"></td><td style="width: 50px; height: 15px;"></td></tr> <tr><td style="width: 50px; height: 15px;"></td><td style="width: 50px; height: 15px;"></td></tr> <tr><td style="width: 50px; height: 15px;"></td><td style="width: 50px; height: 15px;"></td></tr> <tr><td style="width: 50px; height: 15px;"></td><td style="width: 50px; height: 15px;"></td></tr> <tr><td style="width: 50px; height: 15px;"></td><td style="width: 50px; height: 15px;"></td></tr> <tr><td style="width: 50px; height: 15px;"></td><td style="width: 50px; height: 15px;"></td></tr> <tr><td style="width: 50px; height: 15px;"></td><td style="width: 50px; height: 15px;"></td></tr> <tr><td style="width: 50px; height: 15px;"></td><td style="width: 50px; height: 15px;"></td></tr> <tr><td style="width: 50px; height: 15px;"></td><td style="width: 50px; height: 15px;"></td></tr> <tr><td style="width: 50px; height: 15px;"></td><td style="width: 50px; height: 15px;"></td></tr> <tr><td style="width: 50px; height: 15px;"></td><td style="width: 50px; height: 15px;"></td></tr> <tr><td style="width: 50px; height: 15px;"></td><td style="width: 50px; height: 15px;"></td></tr> <tr><td style="width: 50px; height: 15px;"></td><td style="width: 50px; height: 15px;"></td></tr> <tr><td style="width: 50px; height: 15px;"></td><td style="width: 50px; height: 15px;"></td></tr> <tr><td style="width: 50px; height: 15px;"></td><td style="width: 50px; height: 15px;"></td></tr> <tr><td style="width: 50px; height: 15px;"></td><td style="width: 50px; height: 15px;"></td></tr> <tr><td style="width: 50px; height: 15px;"></td><td style="width: 50px; height: 15px;"></td></tr> <tr><td style="width: 50px; height: 15px;"></td><td style="width: 50px; height: 15px;"></td></tr> <tr><td style="width: 50px; height: 15px;"></td><td style="width: 50px; height: 15px;"></td></tr> </table>																																												

Adapted from The Course Organizer Protocol. Copyrights to the template are held by the authors of The Course Organizer Protocol.

content, paying special attention to ensuring that their priority standards and standards that carried the most weight on assessments were taught before the test date.

At the end of this process, each grade-level team had produced a *Course Organizer* draft blending the content of the pacing guides, state standards, their own experiences, and the knowledge of the needs of their school. The teams still needed to finalize course questions, but the resulting draft served (See figure 2, a

Course Organizer draft.) as an instructional calendar tailored to their situation.

Although the task sounds daunting and time consuming, the teams actually spent only two days mapping the standards.

“I thought it was an excellent investment of time because at that point, they felt like they had really processed the guide,” says Peggy. “The pacing guide was no longer controlling them.”

The Lodi story continues in the next issue of *Strategram*. The process so far—identifying standards, analyzing assessments, mapping the units for the entire year—set the stage for the bulk of the work Peggy and the teachers completed: Developing Unit Organizers and aligning assessments to the Unit Organizers. Learn how the teams completed this enormous task and read about the support they received from their principal in the next issue of *Strategram*.



## **SIM Impact Award Riverbank High School, Riverbank, Calif.**



**Riverbank High School and KU-CRL staff members at the awards ceremony during the 2007 International SIM Conference. From left, Don Deshler, Mike Hock, Ken Geisick, Kathy Briggs, Cris Romero, Carla Spyksma, Mary Black, Ron Costa (assistant superintendent for business and secondary educational services), Yolanda Vera, Peggy Graving-Reyes (SIM Professional Developer), Barbara Ehren, Jean Schumaker, Patty Graner, and Jim Knight.**

*Without the teachers, schools, and administrators who are willing to step out of their comfort zones and give SIM a try, our efforts would be consigned largely to musty journals or seldom-visited bookshelves. These individuals and groups breathe life into our work. To express our gratitude, we bestow the SIM Impact Award on schools or school systems that have incorporated many components of the Strategic Instruction Model™ throughout substantial segments of their entire school or school system.*

*Julie Tollefson  
KU-CRL*

Along the shores of the Stanislaus River in California's Central Valley, a remarkable success story unfolds in Riverbank. In this semi-rural town of 22,000, a team comprising high school teachers, school and district administrators, and SIM Pro-



fessional Developers has put in place an extensive literacy improvement program based on the Strategic Instruction Model™ and following the Content Literacy Continuum™ framework. Teachers across subject areas—physical education,

*Recipients of the award contribute significantly to the work of the University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning, strengthening SIM, enabling us to develop needed tools for educators, and ultimately leading to more effective instruction and better learning experiences for students. This year's recipient, Riverbank High School in Riverbank, Calif., has embraced the work of the Center and, in turn, become an outstanding example for all who desire improved outcomes for schools and students.*

computer, math, and science, to name a few—incorporate multiple Content Enhancement Routines into their daily instruction. Students learn strategies in both general education and resource classrooms. And scores on state competency tests have risen dramatically—more than 50 points in the first two years of the now

### **The SIM Professional Developers at Riverbank**

CLC Team Lead: Peggy Graving-Reyes

Leslie Herod, 3 years

Jeffrey Reyes, 3 years

Bev Colombo, 2.5 years

Jeannene Ward-Lonergan, 2 years

Susan D'Aniello, 1 year

Winona Gardner, 1 year

Andrew Walter (math facilitator for 2 years; not a SIM Professional Developer)

four-year-old program alone. "It's just beautiful to watch from afar to see how administrators and teachers across departments come together with a common purpose in mind and work against some pretty significant odds to prevail and be successful," says Don Deshler, director of the University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning.

Among the challenges Riverbank faced when it began its literacy improvement process were large numbers of struggling students, including English language learners and students

performing below grade level. Many among the predominantly Hispanic student population speak Spanish outside of academic settings yet must perform well in course work and on tests in English. "That makes the gains they are making even more incredible to me, because the students are doing what they're doing in their second language," says Jean Schumaker, retired associate director of the Center. The school's test scores continue to rise each year, and students are engaged and interested in learning, as Schumaker observed during a full-day visit in the fall. "I never saw one student do one disruptive thing," she says. "It was an incredible experience."

In launching the CLC initiative, the district looked at long-term goals as well as short-term needs. "We didn't want this to be another one of the one year or two year flash-in-the-pan changes that comes in and goes away," says Ron Costa, assistant superintendent for business and secondary educational services. Far from being a temporary fix, the Riverbank CLC initiative continues to gain strength and credibility through a collaborative approach that respects the



**Ken Geisick, Principal,  
Riverbank High School**

experience of school faculty while acknowledging the need to improve instructional methods. At the center of the collaboration is the school's site literacy team, which principal Ken Geisick views as vital to the school's long-term success. The team evaluates professional development sessions, looks at student work, and makes determinations in conjunction with the CLC professional development team about what the school should do next. "It's starting to change the culture of the campus, so that when I leave and my VPs leave and the CLC team leaves, everything will

*Peggy Graving-Reyes has done incredible work. We have had so many professional developers come out of that school in the last two years. I just reviewed a set of materials from future professional developers from Riverbank. It's astonishing to see the kind of care and the attention to detail that they put into their work. They self-reflect to be sure that what they're doing is meeting the needs of kids and teachers in the community. The folks who have come here to learn how to go through that professional development process have been so thorough and come so prepared with depth of knowledge and understanding about SIM and the processes and all of the underpinnings. Peggy does a good job of nurturing them along, and they are outstanding students of that knowledge and then take that on and use it in their own work.*

—Patty Graner, Director of Professional Development  
University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning

*Ken has provided not only outstanding leadership, but creative and focused leadership. He truly understands the CLC vision and the many roles and responsibilities that he must assume, coordinate, and distribute to be an instructional leader of a sustainable schoolwide literacy program.*

—Peggy Graving-Reyes, CLC Team Leader

still run,” Geisick says. “It will change, it will morph, but it will certainly still be there.” The collaborative process ensures that teachers are involved in decision making and opens leadership opportunities for them within the school. “We don’t have everybody completely on board, but we do have critical mass,” he says. “We have teachers in every department who are taking the lead. I really believe we’re in a good position.”

Complementing the collaboration at Riverbank is a commitment to grounding decisions in data, both qualitative and quantitative. Administrators periodically seek students’ perspectives about classroom instruction, then report their findings to faculty and the site literacy team. They also drop in to classes and record the instructional methods and SIM components they observe teachers using. Teachers are expected to collect data on all students and to use that data in making instructional decisions. The system that Riverbank has put in place and the extent to which teachers adhere to the intended instructional steps associated with SIM components is truly extraordinary. “They have taken SIM to a place that most of us can only dream about, by examining year after

year how did this go, what do we need to do differently, who else do we need to bring in,” says Patty Graner, the Center’s director of professional development. “They nurture not only the kids, but they nurture each other through that process.”

Riverbank stands out, too, in its commitment to open communication about what education looks like in the school. “I don’t think they have a lot of closed doors,” says Graner. “I think that practice is very open to the whole school community, to the parents, to the kids. People are invited to come and learn there.” Riverbank has graciously allowed the Center’s cameras in to capture examples of really good practice. In doing so, the school has helped the Center meet one of its greatest current challenges: Finding research sites at which a significant group of leaders and teachers are willing to take risks and help us understand how to bring about change in schools as a whole. “All of us at the Center have admired the work that they have done, how they’ve gone about doing it, and of course, we admire the tremendous results that they have gotten with student outcomes,” Deshler says.

## KU-CRL CALENDAR

### 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  
(crl@ku.edu | 785.864.0626)

### November 2-3, 2007

SIM NE Conference  
Mystic Hilton, Mystic Seaport, Conn.  
800 HILTONS by October 12, 2007  
Contact: Alice Henley  
(Henley@ctserc.org)

### January 17-18, 2008

Florida PD Update  
Alamonte Springs, Fla.  
Contact: Mary Little  
(projcentral@mail.ucf.edu)

### February 21-23, 2008

SIM SE Conference  
Francis Marion Hotel, Historic District,  
Charleston, SC  
Reservations: 843.722.0600 or  
877.756.2121 by January 20, 2008  
Contact: Jerri Neduchal  
(jerrinsisinc@aol.com)

[www.kucrl.org/institutes](http://www.kucrl.org/institutes)

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## INSIDE THIS ISSUE OF STRATEGRAM

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### NEW ONLINE

#### Conferences

Read about all of this year's SIM award winners, learn about the 2007 Treasures of SIM Conference, and visit the conference photo gallery.

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