

# Strategram™

## STRATEGIES INTERVENTION MODEL

VOLUME 1

The University of Kansas Institute for Research in Learning Disabilities

NUMBER 1

# What Makes a Master?

—A closer look at medal-winning teachers—

**Don Deshler**  
Director

As we watch the Olympic games, it is exciting to see the very best athletes in the world compete. I often find myself wondering how they perform so magnificently. The noted psychologist, Abraham Maslow, argued that if we want to really understand how to excel in a given endeavor, we should identify those who are the best and carefully study them. In the case of the Olympic athletes then, we should study the medal winners: how they prepare themselves mentally, how they train physically, how they set goals, how they deal with setbacks, how they accommodate disruptions in their training schedule, how they plan and execute a strategy for the final competition, and so on. By following Maslow's principle of "Carefully observing the best," we can learn a great deal about how to be successful in teaching learning strategies to LD students by carefully studying teachers who are "medal" winners.

In recent years, several SIM teachers have been honored as "outstanding teachers." For example, **Mike Hock** of Dubuque, Iowa, **Sheryl Block** of Louisville, Kentucky, and **Marie Dillon** of Shawnee Mission, Kansas, have all received "Outstanding Teacher of the Year" awards from the Council for Learning Disabilities, and **Sue Gillman** of Fayetteville, Arkansas, was honored as the Christa McAuliffe recipient in the state of Arkansas. At the same time, there are many others who haven't received similar awards but who, nonetheless, have demonstrated remarkable gains with their students through strategy instruction. To better understand why they're so successful, we've spent a lot of time asking these teachers questions, studying their room organizations,

noting how their philosophy of education is operationalized, and watching them in action. To date, we've learned a great deal about successful strategy instruction by studying and interacting with these masters! What follows is a brief description of some of the factors that seem central to their success.

**FACTOR #1: They teach with the realities of tomorrow's world in mind.** The world that LD youths will face in the coming decades will demand a high level of skills from its workers. With the dramatic decrease in the number of manufacturing jobs available to workers (over 2 million relatively high-paying manufacturing jobs were lost from the economy since 1979), those who lack skill proficiency in reading, following directions, writing, and problem solving will be relegated to low-paying jobs in the service economy, jobs that often fail to provide health and retirement benefits, for example. In short, their existence will be at or near the poverty level. In light of these realities, the instruction of many master teachers is characterized by a sense of urgency and intensity. They insist that students work very hard, and they constantly communicate their high expectations to them. The amount to be accomplished in the limited time available does not allow for loosely set or ill-defined goals.

**FACTOR #2: They use "critical" teaching behaviors frequently.** Master teachers use a set of teaching behaviors and routines that help bring students to mastery quickly; the most common of these include: helping students set and continuously focus on daily and long-term

(continued on page 2)

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**"We should identify those who are the best and carefully study them."**

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## ...Masters—A closer look at medal-winning teachers—

achievement goals, providing appropriately timed positive and corrective feedback to students, giving and eliciting from students rationales for why they are learning a given strategy as well as why each step or subroutine of a strategy is important, insisting that students meet the required mastery standards, insuring that students make commitments to learn a strategy and try their hardest to reach their goals. Finally, these teachers carefully differentiate when it is important to emphasize teacher-mediation or student-mediation in the instructional process. The really noteworthy aspect of the masters is that they are very serious about their application of these behaviors in their teaching. They are open to feedback from outsiders as to how their teaching could be improved and often solicit such feedback. In short, they are always trying to hone their craft and become even better.

**FACTOR #3: They "paint good pictures" for their students.** For low-achievers, the schooling experience can be overwhelming. For example, many students lose sight of why they do what they do or where they're headed, often resulting in low motivation. The masters have the

ability to counter these feelings and reactions by "painting a good picture" about the "whys," "wheres," and "hows" of strategy instruction. "Painting a good picture" means communicating so convincingly that students readily understand and accept what is said. These teachers are very effective in helping students see *why* it is important to learn a strategy and *why* that strategy will help them. They also help students recognize that getting there is going to be exciting and worthwhile! Master teachers clearly communicate the "hows" of strategy instruction to students by illustrating that a key formula for school and job success is: Strategies + Personal Effort = Success. In other words, they communicate that students will be successful if they consistently use the appropriate strategy in a problem-solving situation in addition to great personal effort. Finally, master teachers help students see what they can become if they seriously invest themselves in strategy instruction. In short, they raise the sights and aims of their students.

**FACTOR #4: They effectively manage instruction.** Because of the complexity of teaching and managing

instruction in a strategy classroom, it is imperative that teachers be able to keep many balls in the air at one time! The flow of activities in a master teacher's room during a typical class period is sufficient evidence that they are highly skilled at juggling! Specifically, these teachers are excellent at starting each class session quickly, having students make smooth transitions from one activity to the next, and insuring that students are engaged in productive activities through effective use of both strategy and support materials. The physical arrangement of the room is very deliberately planned to facilitate the teacher's access to various teaching stations, files, answer keys, and teaching aids such as overhead projectors. Even the posters and illustrations in the room serve either a management, instructional or motivational purpose that is supportive to strategy instruction. In short, master teachers are very adept at orchestrating an effective instructional environment.

The medal winners in strategy instruction clearly demonstrate that many factors contribute to student success in addition to careful adherence to the procedures outlined in the strategy manuals. Given the great challenge of teaching students who are at-risk in school, we must critically analyze our current practices and, where appropriate, enhance them with some of the elements that make the winning difference for the masters among us!

## Have you hugged your mainstream teacher today?

Want to get other teachers in your building involved in the *Strategies Intervention Model*? Try one of the suggestions other SIM teachers have used.

To provide teachers with "an awareness level" introduction to SIM, invite small groups of teachers to your room. Share student work and progress charts with them. You and the students can briefly explain the program and how it relates to the regular classroom. This "awareness level" exposure will provide the classroom teacher with a knowledge base to assist you and the student in successfully completing the Generalization phase of SIM.

To reinforce teachers who are assisting with strategies, put their pictures up on the bulletin board in the lounge and/or your room along with a description of their involvement.

Have students send "thank you" notes to teachers who are involved with their strategies work in the regular classroom. Some teachers like to send copies of these expressions of recognition to a building administrator.

### Strategram

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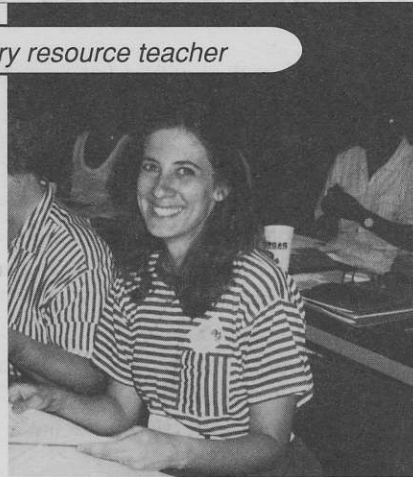
# S • I • M   S • P • O • T • L • I • G • H • T

**Linda Hickey**—elementary resource teacher

**Linda Hickey**, an elementary resource teacher in Grandview, Missouri, has been nominated by SIM trainer **Sue Nolan** as an exemplary SIM teacher.

Linda divides her day between two schools and is responsible for 18 students on a resource basis. She is also involved in collaborative consultation and is on her building's diagnostic team.

When SIM training began in Grandview two years ago, only secondary teachers were involved. Linda initiated her own involvement as the only elementary teacher in her district to be trained. As a result, she was also the first elementary teacher to go through the Potential SIM Trainers' Workshop at the University of Kansas Institute for Research in Learning



Disabilities in June, 1988. Upon completion of this training and the trainer's requirements, Linda will help coordinate the training of elementary resource teachers in her district next year.

Also, during the 1988-89 school year, Linda will be working cooperatively with a 6th-grade classroom

teacher. They will be teaching the *Sentence Writing Strategy* to the low-reading group, and Linda's co-teacher will be one of the first elementary mainstream classroom teachers to implement a strategy.

During the past two years, Linda has introduced many adaptations to make SIM more effective for younger students. One of her adaptations is the teaching of prerequisite skills prior to strategy instruction. For example, before teaching the *Paraphrasing Strategy*, she instructs her students to comfortably and effectively use a tape recorder. For the *Word Identification Strategy*, she uses a center approach for students to learn prefixes and suffixes

For her nomination as an exemplary SIM teacher, Linda will receive a personalized certificate of recognition from the KU-IRLD.

## "Introducing, Ima Mess"

Appearance makes a difference! Can you tell what a person is really like just by looking at them? Can you tell if the content of a written report is informative by the overall appearance? Most people do believe that first impressions made by outward appearances *do* make a difference. To illustrate this point when introducing the *Error Monitoring Strategy*, **Deb Sylvara** of **Blue Valley School District** in Overland Park, Kansas, dresses up—or rather down. Her clothes are torn, dirty, and out-of-style, and colors and patterns clash. Mussed hair and unmatched shoes add a "final touch" to her overall appearance as Deb introduces herself as Ima Mess.

Ima Mess now asks the audience—students or adults—"When you see a person like me, what is your *first* impression?" (These impressions could be written on the board.) This impersonation might also be used in the Describe Step when discussing rationales for learning *Error Monitoring*. If using this technique at that point, continue the discussion of overall appearance and the importance of a first impression in relation to school, employment, and community life. (See pp. 20-21 of *The Error Monitoring Strategy Instructor's Manual* for detailed instructions.)

When students reach the Verbal Rehearsal Step of the strategy, Deb does the following activity. She prepares three sacks this way:

Outside Appearance of Sack	Inside Contents
1. brown sack that is torn and greasy	1. \$1.00
2. clean, nice appearing bag or sack	2. candy bar
3. expensive, colored, decorative bag	3. 1 penny

The first three students to reach mastery on the Verbal Rehearsal Step choose a sack as a reward. The first student to reach mastery gets first choice, and so on. Students must select their sack without touching or looking inside.

After all three bags have been picked and their contents revealed, the class discusses the importance of outward appearance and internal content—how it takes both elements to produce a successful product—academically or personally.

## Introducing Learning Strategies to Adolescents

"Why do we have to do this?"  
-student lament-

Most students ask this question, not just once, but many times. Think, for a moment, about the answers you have given in response to this question—were they satisfactory to you or to the student?

The next time students pose this question try a procedure developed by **Mark Schipani** of **Ely High School** in Pompano Beach, Florida. Mark has created and used the procedure to introduce the *Strategies Intervention Model* to adolescents. A version for use with elementary students has also been developed; the latter will be featured in a future issue of **Strategram**.

Other SIM teachers have used the technique to "rekindle" motivation during strategy instruction. Students keep their copy of the worksheet in their individual folders so they can periodically discuss the information when the teacher introduces a new strategy, sets goals, or reinforces current strategy work.

### PROCEDURES

The following procedures will enable students and teachers to construct a definition and rationale for learning SIM.

1. As an advance organizer tell

students they will be listing and discussing:

- a. School demands
- b. Ways to handle these demands
- c. Strategies/effective and efficient ways to meet these demands

2. Define the following:

*School Demands*—things we must do to be successful in school  
*Efficient*—directly producing a result

3. Divide the board into three parts with vertical lines. Using the worksheet as a guide, label sections:

- **School demands**
- **Ways we handle these demands**
- **Strategies/effective and efficient ways to meet these demands**

4. Give students a copy of the worksheet, "Introduction to Learning Strategies."

5. As a group, have students suggest and list 10 demands they must meet in school. This may take some prompting from the teacher. The teacher may want to begin by listing some demands first; then as students provide demands, list them in column one also.

6. Have students explain and list the ways they do or do not handle the demands. In column two, list these on the board next to the appropriate demand.

7. Explain that teachers and students are now finding more *effective* and *efficient* ways to handle the demands of school. Tell students that research is involved in discovering better ways. The result is *strategies*. Good learners use strategies when they are meeting their school demands. The purpose of our class is to learn better ways to meet the demands of school. In doing so, we will be better students and learners in all classes. We will practice the new strategies first in this classroom, and then use them in mainstream classes.
8. Discuss with students the definition of learning strategies.
9. Discuss with students the reasons why they should learn and use learning strategies.
10. Identify any strategies the students may have listed in column two.
11. List on the board and discuss strategies/effective and efficient ways for dealing with each school demand listed. The teacher may ask students to devise a simple strategy of not more than three or four steps for some of the demands listed. (See sample worksheet.)
12. Have students place their worksheet in folder for future reference.

### Sample Worksheet

SCHOOL DEMANDS	WAYS WE HANDLE THESE DEMANDS	STRATEGIES/EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT WAYS TO MEET THESE DEMANDS
1. Complete homework	make sure assign-	(1) schedule time for homework
	ment turned in on	(2) write down assignments
	time	(3) prioritize (4) complete
2. Pass tests	study very hard	(1) use <i>FIRST</i> to study
	cheat	(2) use <i>PIRATES</i> while taking a test

### Special Thanks

A special thanks goes to Mark Schipani's 1988 summer school class for assisting in the creation of this Sample Worksheet.

### Photocopy Note

The "Introduction to Learning Strategies Worksheet" may be photocopied for classroom use only.

# Introduction to Learning Strategies Worksheet

SCHOOL DEMANDS	WAYS WE HANDLE THESE DEMANDS	STRATEGIES/EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT WAYS TO MEET THESE DEMANDS
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		

Developed by Mark Schipani, Ely High School, Pompano Beach, Florida  
 University of Kansas Institute for Research in Learning Disabilities

# What's New

## New Manual Focuses on Motivation

Do your students act independently? Do they advocate effectively for themselves? Do they operate with a sense of control over their learning?

If your answer is "No" to any of these questions, perhaps you should start using one of SIM's newest products: the *Education Planning Strategy* ("I PLAN" Strategy). This

is not another task-specific learning strategy from the *Learning Strategies Curriculum*; it is a motivation strategy. Through the "I PLAN" Strategy, students are taught how to: identify their strengths, weaknesses, goals, and choices for learning; get organized before a planning conference (e.g., an IEP); effectively advocate for themselves; and communicate their goals to others. In short, "I PLAN" empowers students and enables them to be active participants in making decisions about their own education.

The results are impressive! The percentage of goals appearing in IEPs

specified by students trained in "I PLAN" versus a comparison group was 86% and 13%, respectively! Many teachers who have used "I PLAN" recommend that students be taught it before any task-specific learning strategy.

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•*The Education Planning Strategy* was written by Tony Van Reusen, Candy Bos, Jean Schumaker, & Don Deshler. It's available from EXCELLENTERprises for \$10.75, plus \$2.00 handling (P. O. Box 972, Lawrence, KS, 66044).

IDEAGRAM

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Use this form to share SIM ideas with others:

- ideas to facilitate implementation
- teacher-developed forms
- trainer-developed resources for teachers
- human interest stories
- student and teacher success stories
- topics for articles
- any other ideas

Please return this form to **Strategram Editor**.

# Research Report

## Institute Insights

Jean Schumaker

Coordinator of Research

We're often asked, "What's really going on at the Institute for Research in Learning Disabilities?" Since the answer to this question is complex and lengthy, we're going to provide **Strategram** subscribers with an ongoing series of "Insights" into our work.

The Institute serves three main functions: research, training, and product development and distribution. These three elements are closely intertwined since the results of our research activities feed directly into what we train teachers to do and the information that subsequently is included in our products. In turn, comments and suggestions from trained teachers lead us to do new research or to revise our products. Several projects are underway which are related to each of the Institute's functions. For example, in the area of research, ten projects are currently going on.

One of these, the *Math Strategies Project*, is in its fourth year with one more year of funding available. At the beginning of the project, we mistakenly thought we would be able to "fill-in-the holes" in LD students' math skills by teaching them a few math strategies within the resource room format. Instead, we found that: (a) most LD students' math deficits are so basic and so all-encompassing that these students need a highly structured program beginning with the basic concepts associated with addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division; (b) most LD students with math deficits have not learned the basic math facts to the level of fluency required by complex, secondary-level programs; and (c) the resource room format does not allow

the kind of concentrated effort that is required to ameliorate these kinds of deficits, especially if other strategies like learning strategies and social skill strategies are to be taught in that setting.

As a result of these findings, the Math Strategies Program is now conceptualized as a two-year sequence to be taught in a remedial math course. Instruction includes: (a) concept instruction and manipulation of concrete devices through which students come to understand the ideas behind an operation like addition; and (b) strategy instruction through which students learn a strategy for solving problems related to each concept. To date, strategies have been designed for each of the

## "Results of field tests for the Math Strategies Project are promising."

whole number operations and for solving word problems. Emphasis has been placed on reducing memory requirements. For example, if students use the addition math strategy, they need not hold addition results in memory as they work through a problem in which they must add seven multi-digit numbers. Also, nine strategies have been designed for the decimals unit.

Results of field tests are promising. Students appear to easily learn the math strategies and are able to generalize their use to standardized tests. Unfortunately, materials will not be ready for distribution until additional field tests can be conducted and several remaining problems have been solved. First, the cumulative effects of learning so many strategies

within a year must be determined, and the maintenance of skills must be assessed. Second, the management issue must be addressed. Teachers have expressed an urgent need for related enrichment activities for "quick" students who are waiting while slower peers catch up. Such enrichment activities will need to be designed and tested before the program can be made available. In addition, units on fractions, two-step problems, and "formula-type" problems are also planned.

The resulting curriculum should prepare students to successfully participate in mainstream math programs at the secondary level.

### Editor's Note

*This column is designed to inform you of current work conducted by the University of Kansas Institute for Research in Learning Disabilities. Products related to the information are not currently available for use by teachers or school districts. It is only through the careful step-by-step process of development, testing, and revision that the Institute can guarantee that the products you receive as teachers really work. When these new programs or products are available, related information will appear in **Strategram**.*

## Calendar

### October 13-15

Council for Learning Disabilities  
10th International Conference  
Hyatt Regency  
Louisville, Kentucky

### October 28-29

Council for Exceptional Children  
Denver, Colorado

# MAILBAG

## Class Shares Success

My Learning Strategies class wanted to let you know how they are doing. We're into the *Sentence Writing Strategy* as you can tell. We're doing it in conjunction with heavy usage of the computer/word processor. The computer has really rekindled the kids' interest in writing.

*Best wishes,  
Judy Wingard, teacher  
Oregon*

This is C.A. from Oregon. We are doing sentence writing, and all of us are on the Generalization. For me, it has helped my grade in English and in U.S. history.

*Sincerely,  
C.A., student  
Oregon*

How is it over there? It's been pretty good over here. So let me change the subject. The strategy is helping me in school. I don't like the strategy, but it does help me in school. We are almost done with the simple sentence part, so now we are starting the compound sentences. After this is done, we might quit, but we are still thinking about it. I'm going to give you a paragraph using the PENS strategy:

Dogs

People have many types of dogs. (S.V.) Chows and Sharpeis came from China. (S.S.V.) Guard dogs fight

and bite prowlers. (S.V.V.) Huskeys and Malamutes work and race. (S.S.V.V.)

So there is my knowledge on PENS. Next, we are going to start compound sentences then I will write you another letter.

*Sincerely,  
T.K., student  
Oregon*

## Thanks for SIM

I would like to thank you for allowing me to take part in the learning strategy project. As I am sure you are aware, I was a rather outspoken critic at first. Now I am one of the most enthusiastic participants in the program, and I would like to tell you why.

Recently, I gave the *Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test* (Blue Level, Form B) as a year-end posttest. Each student who had participated in the *Word Identification Strategy* made a two year plus

*Mailbag* is an exchange of information, concerns, and ideas on SIM-related topics. Your name, address, and telephone number should be on all correspondence. Items become property of **Strategram** and may be edited for publication. Names may be withheld upon request. Please send letters to **Mailbag Editor**.

gain in Vocabulary Development over their September pretest scores. Not only that, but their comprehension scores had also improved substantially. Thanks!

*Sheila Nigh, teacher  
Kansas*

## For Controlled Practice

In using the *Sentence Writing Strategy* with my students, I often need additional sentences to use for Controlled Practice. Do you have any suggestions?

*Cecilia Andersen, teacher  
Arkansas*

Dear Cecilia,

For additional sentences to use for Controlled Practice, some teachers periodically ask advanced students to write sentences which are kept on file. Such sentences could be personalized to help motivate the students who are having trouble. For example, use the students' name or personal information about their family, school, or special interests. You'll be surprised how eager the student becomes to complete these personally created worksheets.

When advanced students create additional sentences for others to use, they gain self-confidence. In addition, a feeling of cooperation develops between participating students as well as between students and teachers.

## Subscribe today!

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