

Set the Stage for Learning

—use advance organizers—

Keith Lenz
Research Associate

Teachers and parents often lament that their students “just can’t get organized.” It is a lament as well as a statement of fact because the ability to organize information is an important skill both academically and personally.

One teaching approach that: (a) helps students organize information more efficiently and effectively, (b) requires minimal teacher preparation, and (c) is easily incorporated into both special and regular education classrooms is the advance organizer.

Used at the beginning of the lesson, the advance organizer sets the stage for everything that is to be learned, and the entire lesson that follows is based on the structure that the teacher presents at this point.

How does this fit into the *Strategies Intervention Model*?

Each instructor’s manual for the *Learning Strategies Curriculum* includes an advance organizer within many of the strategy steps. However, to enhance instruction and promote student learning, the teacher may wish to embellish these and expand the advance organizer concept to other areas of learning.

The use of advance organizers with adolescents with learning disabilities also provides an excellent opportunity for cooperative teaching and learning between regular education and special education.

Regular classroom teachers, as well as those in special education, have implemented advance organizers with minimal teacher training. These teachers expressed satisfaction with the effects of advance organizers regarding the response of adolescents with learning disabilities to instruction and the improvement in the overall quality of their own instruction.

In addition, teacher use of advance organizers greatly facilitated learner awareness of the lesson and improved the learning of adolescents with learning disabilities without negatively affecting the learning of normally achieving students.

However, how the advance organizer is presented is important to its effectiveness. For example, it is not something “done” to students. Instead, background knowledge, concepts, and rationales are elicited from students. The teacher also prompts students to become involved in “forecasting” what will be learned. In addition, the use of graphics, pictures, stories, and outlines brings variety and meaningfulness to the advance organizer message.

Components of Advance Organizers

The concept of advance organizers was first introduced in 1960. Since that time, hundreds of studies have investigated the concept of advance organizers. When used appropriately, they can help students organize information more efficiently. Advance organizers generally refer to activities that a teacher uses before the learning task and that incorporate some of the following components:

- a. announcement of the benefits of the advance organizer
- b. topics and subtopics
- c. physical requirements needed for the learner and instructor to accomplish the task
- d. background information related to the new learning
- e. concepts to be learned (specific or general)

(continued on page 2)

Use
advance
organizers
to enhance
instruction
and promote
student
learning.

Set the Stage—Advance Organizers

- f. examples to clarify the concepts to be learned
- g. the organization or sequence in which the new information will be presented
- h. motivational information
- i. relevant vocabulary
- j. goals or outcomes desired

Developing Effective Advance Organizers

As stated earlier, an advance organizer is information of an organizing nature that is presented before the actual lesson. The lesson can be a lecture, film, reading assignment, or classroom activity. The advance organizer serves to introduce the learner to the lesson or learning.

The *Teacher's Cue Card for Developing an Advance Organizer* on pp. 3-4 lists 10 steps and their various subcomponents found to be useful in presenting information effectively to adolescents with learning disabilities. Depending on the teacher, the students, and the nature of the content or activity, the steps included may vary. These steps represent a general framework for making the advance organizer maximally effective.

For regular classroom teachers, the following is an example of an advance organizer used by a teacher in presenting content to an American government class. Shorter advance organizers are possible; they generally can be delivered in less than five minutes. The numbers in the margin indicate the specific advance organizer steps listed on the *Cue Card*.

- 1,2 *Today we are going to continue to discuss American citizenship. Before we start, I want to give you an overview of the lesson that will help you follow the lesson better. I suggest you take some notes on my overview.*
- 2 *Today we will turn our attention to the question of how political parties get and spend money.*
- 4,8,10 *During the lecture and discussion, I want you to take notes. You will be responsible for this information on the test. If you have questions, raise your hand, and I'll try to answer them.*
- 5 *Yesterday, we saw what is*
-
- 6 *The most important idea for you to understand is that while support and experience are important, money and how it is used, is the driving force behind an election.*
- 8 *An understanding of the money*

issues surrounding an election may help you better judge political candidates. This may also help you understand the upcoming election that some of you may be voting in.

- 9 *Two words you should know before we start are (write on board):*

telethon—a special fund raising program for TV

deduct—this means to take away

- 10 *At the end of today's lesson you should be able to state the different ways candidates can get money from supporters and how they can spend it.*

After the presentation of this advance organizer, the teacher would engage the students in the actual lesson on how political parties obtain and spend money.

Student Training

Training adolescents with learning disabilities to use advance organizers is also an important consideration. Student training in the LD program can consist of giving the student a worksheet with each of the 10 steps as headings. Once the LD teacher has described and provided practice in the use of advance organizers, the student can take the advance organizer worksheet to the regular classroom to use. Later the LD teacher and student meet and discuss how the advance organizer information can be used to organize notes. The worksheet can be modified to assist the student to cue in on the most common organizing principles of particular teachers.

Regular Classroom Considerations

The use of advance organizers by regular classroom teachers has limitations. However, most opposition to the use of advance organizers by regular classroom teachers is diminished when their implementation is compared to other content modifications commonly

(continued on page 5)

Advance organizers directly address some of the major organizational deficits commonly found in the LD adolescent population.

needed to win an election. We saw that it takes experience, a lot of support, and a lot of money. Today we will expand on the last area, money, and we will see how money helps a candidate to win an election.

FOR THE CLASSROOM

TEACHER'S CUE CARD FOR DEVELOPING AN ADVANCE ORGANIZER

Topic: _____

<p>Step 1: Inform students of advance organizers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Announce advance organizer b. State benefits of advance organizer c. Suggest that students take notes on the advance organizer 	<p><i>I am going to describe what we will (<u>do, cover</u>) to help you better understand today's lesson.</i></p>
<p>Step 2: Identify topics or tasks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Identify major topics or activities b. Identify subtopics or components 	<p><i>Remember that (<u>we are still on, or will be starting on</u>) (<u>Major Topic</u>) today. The topics or subjects that we will (<u>go through, cover, or discuss</u>) will be (<u>Subtopic</u>), (<u>Subtopic</u>), and (<u>Subtopic</u>) (whatever number of topics).</i></p>
<p>Step 3: Provide an organizational framework</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Present an outline, list, or narrative of the lesson's content 	<p><i>First, we will discuss _____ , second _____ , and third _____ . Here is an outline for you to follow (hand out or put on the board).</i></p>
<p>Step 4: Clarify action to be taken</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. State teacher's actions b. State student's actions 	<p><i>I will (<u>give a lecture, lead a discussion</u>) over this material. I want you to (<u>take notes, listen to my lecture, do this homework</u>).</i></p>
<p>Step 5: Provide background information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Relate topic to the course or previous lesson b. Relate topic to new information 	<p><i>Yesterday we talked about (<u>topic</u>) . These three ideas were brought out, 1. _____ , 2. _____ , 3. _____ . With this background we are ready for (<u>today's topic</u>) . This topic is related to (<u>relevant information</u>). Understanding this will help you better understand today's topic.</i></p>

FOR THE CLASSROOM

<p>Step 6: State the concepts to be learned</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. State specific concepts/ideas from the lesson b. State general concepts/ideas broader than the lesson's content 	<p><i>The topic that we are going to discuss today illustrates the idea <u>(general concept)</u>. Specifically, in today's lesson the fact that <u>(specific concept)</u> and <u>(specific concept)</u> occur shows this.</i></p>
<p>Step 7: Clarify the concepts to be learned</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Clarify by examples b. Clarify by non-example c. Caution students of possible misunderstandings 	<p><i>An example of this concept would be <u>(example)</u>. This concept is not the same as <u>(example)</u>. Be careful not to confuse <u>(example of concept)</u> with <u>(example of dissimilar concept)</u>.</i></p>
<p>Step 8: Motivate students to learn</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Point out relevance to students b. Be specific, short-term, personalized, and believable 	<p><i>You will use this <u>(concept)</u> every time you need to <u>(example of concept)</u>. This may be surprising to learn but... This will help you to <u>(positive consequences)</u>. If you don't understand this <u>(concept)</u>, then <u>(negative consequences)</u>.</i></p>
<p>Step 9: Introduce vocabulary</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Identify new terms and define b. Repeat difficult terms and define 	<p><i>These are the <u>(words/terms)</u> that I want you to know today. This word means <u>(definition)</u>. The word <u>(word)</u> means <u>(definition)</u>, etc.</i></p>
<p>Step 10: State the general outcome desired</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. State objectives of instruction/learning b. Relate outcomes to test performance 	<p><i>At the end of this lesson I want you to be able to <u>(know, write, define, explain, compare, contrast)</u> <u>(content)</u> on the <u>(next test, quiz, assignment)</u>. OR Now that you know this, you should be able to <u>(outcome)</u> if I asked you to <u>(performance)</u>.</i></p>

Developed by Keith Lenz

The University of Kansas Institute for Research in Learning Disabilities

SIM Achievers Unite

Students and their teachers at **North High School** in Wichita, Kansas are excited about their achievements. To share this excitement with others, they created a student publication—*Achievers Newsletter*.

After students completed the *Word Identification Strategy*, the *Sentence Writing Strategy*, and the *Paraphrasing Strategy*, **Sheila Nigh**, SIM resource teacher, suggested the idea of such a publication to her 3rd hour class.

In January, the first four-page issue of *Achievers Newsletter* was distributed by The Achievers Student Staff. Apparently, district teachers and students are very excited about the *Achievers Newsletter* because staff members—Debbie Dear, Robert Fraizer, Christina Reyes, and Cedric Taylor—have received contributions for the second issue from many students with learning disabilities at North as well as three other district schools.

This energetic group of students hopes to publish several more editions of their newsletter during the spring semester with the help of two new student staff members—Tanya Franz and Reynalda Iniquez.

In addition to their publication, students have formed an Achievers club, and Robert Fraizer has suggested that members wear club



Top left: Tanya Franz, Cedric Taylor
Lower left: Debbie Dear, Christina Reyes

jackets. Robert states, "I don't participate in school sports, but I can relate to others the experiences and accomplishments I've made here. I'd be proud to wear an Achievers club jacket."

Staff members, Debbie Dear and Robert Fraizer were among 20 students selected district wide to participate in the Executive Internship Program—a program which provides an opportunity for students to explore the career of their choice. Debbie, interested in teaching, works alongside an elementary teacher; Robert rides with a pilot as part of his exploration of the aviation field.

The following article appeared in the first issue of *Achievers Newsletter* and is reprinted with permission of the Achievers Staff.

AIM HIGH

by Robert Fraizer

Some people say an LD student couldn't be an Air Force pilot if he tried. I think they are wrong, and I, with the help of God, will show them. It all started when I was thirteen. I was at my family reunion. I was talking to my brother, and I saw something that changed my life. It was a cousin that I had never seen before; he was wearing a green flight suit. I was introduced to him and found out his name was Gregory, and he was an Air Force Pilot. I got to know him; he was a great guy. The next August, I went to Reese Air Force Base where he was stationed. I really got into the jets and learned as much as I could about them.

I went to a private school my ninth grade year, and everything was fine. The next year I started North. The counselors said that there was a good possibility that I may not be able to handle it. That made the fight harder, and I went from a 1.8 to a 2.8 grade point average in three years.

I know LD is a problem, but it's only as big a problem as you let it be. For me to overcome this problem, I had to have God. He was very important, and I had to have the drive for the Air Force and the love for this country. With these things and the great backing from my teachers and family, I'm achieving goals that I never thought possible.

Set the Stage . . . *continued from p. 2.*

proposed for mainstreamed adolescents with learning disabilities. In addition, advance organizers directly address some of the major organizational deficits commonly found in this population. The insertion of advance organizers into the regular content curriculum will not eliminate the problems of adolescents with learning disabilities in these classrooms.

Effective teaching resulting in active and meaningful learning is contingent upon a great many factors. Advance organizers should be implemented in addition to good overall lesson organization, not in place of it. However, by systematically addressing each factor that contributes to learning, we may begin to make measurable progress toward more practical and effective programming

for teaching adolescents with learning disabilities.

Acknowledgment

The Pointer, Vol. 27, No. 2, pp. 11-13, Winter, 1983. Reprinted, in part, with permission of the Helen Dwight Reid Educational Foundation, published by Heldref Publications, 4000 Aldermarle, N.W., Washington, D.C., 20016 © 1983.

Enhance your *Test-Taking Strategy* cue cards

What do **George Poore** from **El Camino Junior High School** in California, and **Deb Sylvara, Vicki Cotsworth,** and **Nancy Meyers** of **Blue Valley School District** in Kansas have in common?

They are all SIM teachers who have organized and enhanced the cue card information from the *Test-Taking Strategy* into different formats.

George Poore combined the various cue cards into a one-page chart about which he says, "Students more quickly grasped the concepts with this one-page 'visual prompt' . . . as a teacher, I found that the chart assisted me when presenting the material—particularly through Describe, Model, and Verbal Rehearsal."

Deb, Vicki, and Nancy created a laminated 3 x 4 card which students easily carry in a billfold or purse. All the cue card information appears on one side of the card, and *Test-Taking Strategy* affirmations are on the other. Regular education teachers allow students to have this small card on the desk when taking a test.

The *Test-Taking Strategy*—PIRATES

STEP 1: Prepare to succeed

PASS Put name and PIRATES on the test.
Allot time and order to sections.
Say affirmations (I will. . .).
Start within 2 minutes.

STEP 2: Inspect the instructions

RUN Read instructions carefully.
Underline what to do and where to respond.
Notice special requirements.

STEP 3: Read, remember, reduce

Read the whole question.
Remember what you studied.
Reduce (eliminate) the choices.

STEP 4: Answer or abandon

Answer the question.
Abandon (leave) the question for the moment.

STEP 5: Turn back

STEP 6: Estimate (guess)

ACE Avoid absolutes (all, always, none, never).
Choose the longest or most detailed choice.
Eliminate similar choices.

STEP 7: Survey (look over)

Survey to make sure all questions are answered.
Switch an answer only if you're sure.

The *Test-Taking Strategy* Affirmations (reverse side of card)

I will be successful when I use the *Test-Taking Strategy*.

I believe that use of the *Test-Taking Strategy* will help me achieve my goal: _____

I work through tests easily using PIRATES.

I am a successful test-taker when I use PIRATES.

Compiled from information provided by Vicki Cotsworth, Nancy Meyers, George Poore, and Deb Sylvara

A Fast-Paced Activity

—the Word Identification Strategy—

Kathleen Gabriel, resource specialist at **Chico Senior High School** in Chico, California, developed the following activity as part of teaching the Describe Step of the *Word Identification Strategy*. She uses this activity extensively and reports that “high school students especially enjoy the fast pace and competitiveness of this activity.”

To speed up the process of exposing students to the *Prefix List* and *Suffix List* before they practice isolating the prefixes and separating the suffixes in individual words, try these alternative approaches to “Describe the *Prefix List*” (*Instructor’s Manual*, p. 19, #2 under b. Step 2: Isolate the Prefix) and “Describe the *Suffix List*” (p. 21, #2 under c. Step 3: Separate the Suffix).

What you need:

- *Prefix List* and *Suffix List* (pp. 72 & 73 of the *Instructor’s Manual*)
- Paper and pencils for students
- Dictionaries (one per student)
- Watch or clock

How to prepare:

- Divide students into pairs or groups of 3-4 depending on class size
- Divide the items on the *Prefix List* and *Suffix List* by the number of groups to calculate how many prefixes/suffixes to assign to each group
- Make sure students have paper, pencil, and dictionaries

How much time to allow:

- Total time for both prefix and suffix lists: 20 minutes

What to do:

- Assign each group a section of the prefix or suffix list
- Set a 2-3 minute time limit for this portion of the activity

Prefixes

- Instruct students to write down 3-4 words for each prefix they have been assigned. Dictionaries are to be used as a resource
- Call time after 3 minutes (sooner if most students are finished)
- Ask each group to report their examples to the class (monitor reporting time to keep activity fast paced)

Suffixes

- Carry out the same activity with these modifications:
 1. When generating examples, each group must “brainstorm” since using a dictionary* is too time consuming and sometimes ineffective for finding suffixes.
 2. Some groups may not be able to generate words for certain suffixes. If this occurs, ask the other students to suggest words during the reporting session.

*Some dictionaries do not list suffixes; others list them alphabetically and give a definition(s) of the suffix. Other dictionaries also include examples of words utilizing the suffix. Check student dictionaries before doing this step.

Editor’s Note: If you want to reinforce the activity and provide students with a reference list of the words generated, collect each group’s list and make a master list. Copy and distribute a master list to each student for his/her strategy notebook.

Strategram

Vol. 1: Issue number 5. Published six times per year by The University of Kansas Institute for Research in Learning Disabilities, 223 Carruth-O’Leary Hall, Lawrence, Kansas, 66045-2342. Subscription rate: \$10 per year. No part of this publication may be reproduced without written permission from the publisher, unless otherwise stated.

©1989 by The University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas, 66045. All rights reserved.

Editor

Katie Alexander-Sturtridge

Consulting Editors

Fran Clark

Keith Lenz

Don Deshler

Jean Schumaker

I am aware of my strengths and weaknesses.
I can solve problems independently.
I can set goals and evaluate my progress toward those goals.
I know the teachers' expectations.
I know when and how to ask for help and who to ask for help.
I have a major voice in my educational program.
I'm intrinsically motivated to learn.
I am responsible for my own learning.
I'm excited about learning. I feel more competent.
I ask questions and seek answers.



I am an independent, active learner !!

I can generalize and adapt new learning.
I set goals for the future.
I can anticipate the next step.
I have social skills which enable me to converse with adults, make friends, and resist peer pressure.
I can gain meaning from new learning situations.
I have a strong support system.
I like myself. I feel good about life.
I have good active listening skills.
I am purposeful. I act with purpose.

Prepared by SIM trainer Barbara Millikan and teachers in the Beaverton, Oregon school district. Use as a handout or poster to remind yourself and students of the characteristics of an independent, active learner.

Subscription Information

Your subscription entitles you to ALL six issues of the current volume being published.

The current volume is Volume 1, and the publication period is from September, 1988 to August, 1989.

When you subscribe, allow 6-8 weeks for processing and mailing.

Subscribe today!

Mail a \$10 check or money order and this form to:

Strategram
 University of Kansas
 Institute for Research in Learning Disabilities
 223 Carruth-O'Leary Hall
 Lawrence, Kansas 66045-2342

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Telephone (include area code) _____

Moving???

Check Box

To insure accurate address change, include mailing label and new address below.

Strategram

The University of Kansas
 Institute for Research in Learning Disabilities
 223 Carruth-O'Leary Hall
 Lawrence, Kansas 66045-2342
 1-913-864-4780

Address change requested

Nonprofit Org.

U.S. Postage
PAID

Lawrence, Kansas
 Permit No. 65