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The University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning

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Cultivating a culture of continual learning

As we celebrated the 30th anniversary of our Center during the past year, we savored the many successes of our first three decades of work to lighten the burden of struggling adolescent learners. Working hand-in-hand with you, we have made a difference in the lives of thousands of students and their teachers. Now at the beginning of a new year, we look forward to helping thousands more in our next 30 years, or 50, or beyond.

If there's one thing we've learned in our long history, it's the importance of constantly evaluating our work and cultivating a culture of continual learning. In that spirit, here we explore several qualities that can strengthen our efforts, and we recommend publications that have shaped and continue to shape our thinking.

QUESTIONING ASSUMPTIONS AND PERSPECTIVES

Recommended Reading:

- Arnold, M. (October 1986). Playing catch with the egg. *BYU Magazine*, 5-8.

The longevity of the Strategic Instruction Model would never have been realized without the collective resolve of teachers, professional developers,

and researchers dedicated to helping struggling learners succeed. The passion driving our work is one of our greatest assets.

Another of our great assets has been the ability to occasionally reassess our situation. Taking time for reflection may seem counter-intuitive. Don't we risk slowing the momentum we've built over the course of three decades when we take that step back? On the contrary, such reflection is vital to the continued success of our efforts and to developing an understanding of the challenges we still face.

The needs of schools and the realities of classrooms have changed since we began our work. Do we understand today's educational climate? Do we know what today's students need? What today's teachers need? Our passion may lead us to answer "Yes-SIM!" or "Yes-CLC!" In many cases, SIM or CLC *will* be the appropriate response or *part* of the appropriate response to the challenges facing those with whom we work.

If we take time to confront our assumptions, however, we may find that SIM or CLC is not a comprehensive answer to these questions. If we don't take this extra step, we risk fall-

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ing short of our goals and, more importantly, we risk failing to meet the needs of our clients or students.

In the words of Stephen Covey, if we “seek first to understand” the challenges each school, teacher, or student faces, we will be better able to offer effective solutions designed to meet unique needs.

In a larger sense, asking these questions can be scary. The answers may threaten our beliefs regarding our work and our role. Nonetheless, as the world changes and as we consider how these changes affect our work in teaching students or working with teachers, we must continually ask ourselves whether we are doing it right. We can’t be afraid to ask these questions or to face the answers, whatever they might be.

CONFUSING THE MAP WITH THE TERRITORY

Recommended reading:

- Taleb, N. (2007). *The black swan: The impact of the highly improbable*. New York: Random House.
- Ferguson, M. (1980). *The aquarian conspiracy*. New York: McGraw Hill.

We humans, in an attempt to create order out of disorder, have a tendency to cut reality into crisp shapes—enclosing pieces of information in squares and circles as we try to understand our world. In *The Black Swan*, Nassim Taleb discusses this desire to reduce complexity as a

means of defining, talking about, and coping with the messiness of reality.

Do we do this in the SIM world? Of course! One of our greatest challenges as professional developers and teachers is to bring clarity to those we’re trying to teach. In much of our work (think about all of our Content Enhancement devices, for example), we rely on categorizing bits of information and arranging it into shapes to help us reach this goal.

The message of *The Black Swan* is a caution. When we reduce the complexity of our message into boxes and circles to facilitate conversations and understanding, we run the risk of confusing the map—our simplified version of reality—with the territory—the messiness of reality. As a result, we lose sight of the nuances and depth of understanding we may need. A Unit Organizer is not a unit. It is a useful tool for understanding the relationships among pieces of information students will encounter during the unit, but it is no substitute for an effective teacher with deep content knowledge and a battery of effective instructional practices at his or her command.

FOCUSING ON VITAL BEHAVIORS

Recommended reading:

- Patterson, K., Grenny, J., Maxfield, D., McMillan, R., & Switzler, A. (2008). *Influencer: The power to change anything*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

(This book is the Stratereaders selection for November through January.

Read the book and join the discussion at <http://courses.stratopedia.org/course/view.php?id=45>.)

In an era in which outcomes rule—state test scores, No Child Left Behind mandates—the authors of *Influencer* say focusing on outcomes is just wrong, diverting time and energy that could be better spent making a difference.

Outcomes are static measures, results that can’t be changed. Rather than studying outcomes, the authors urge us to identify the vital behaviors or factors that we can influence and that, in turn, may affect future outcomes. What should we communicate most clearly to students or to the teachers and administrators with whom we work? What are the vital behaviors that we must collectively address?

We would err to equate a manual, a strategy, or a routine with a vital behavior. In some ways, this point is a corollary to the previous: Confusing the map with the territory. Just as circles and squares that reduce complexity and facilitate conversation are simply a representation of reality, interventions and tools available to us are not the factors or behaviors we are trying to influence. They aid us in addressing important behaviors, but we cannot confuse them or their use with our ultimate goals.

BEING A SUSTAINER OR DISRUPTOR

Recommended reading:

- Christensen, C.M., Horn,

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M.B., & Johnson, C.W. (2008). *Disrupting class: How disruptive innovation will change the way the world learns*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

From every industry, including education, clear leaders emerge. A couple of decades ago, the clear leaders in the computer industry were manufacturers of million-dollar mainframe computers. These companies basked in the megabucks they collected from creating bigger computers with newer innovations and more features than the average customer would ever use. The cost, however, limited their customer pool to a subset of the population. Then along came Apple and its little Apple IIe, a small, insignificant blip compared to the massive mainframe computers. But Apple—a significant disruptor in the computer industry—continued to improve, and the small, nimble personal computer gained a following. Its relatively low cost opened the power of personal computing to millions of individuals. And where are all the mainframes today?

When we look at our work, are we sustainers—adamant about doing our work the way we always have? Do we cling to old methods with the stubbornness of mainframe manufacturers' insistence that a little apple could never threaten their world? Or are we disruptors—constantly looking for better ways?

The SIM family has a long his-

tory of improving practices and knowledge. Learning Strategies developed in the last decade differ from early strategies because we learned something new each time a professional developer worked with teachers or a teacher worked with students. The interventions under development now may look more different still as the feedback of 30 years shapes the work we do today.

Our ability—as researchers, teachers, or professional developers—to continue to adapt to changing situations and to improve on current practices will ensure that we never become the obsolete mainframe computers of the education field.

LEARNING FROM THE WORK OF OTHERS

Recommended reading:

- Alvermann, D., & McLean, C. (2007). The nature of literacies. In L. Rush, A. Eakles, & A. Berger (Eds.), *Secondary school literacy: What research reveals for classroom practice*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.
- Applebee, A. (1996) *Curriculum as conversation: Transforming traditions of teaching and learning*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Hoy, W.K. (2006). Academic optimism of schools: A force for student achievement. *American Educational Research Journal*, 43(3), 425-437.
- Lee, C.D. (2007). *Culture, literacy, and learning: Taking bloom in the midst of the whirlwind*. New York: Teachers College Press.

- Leu, D.J. (2007). What is new about the new literacies of online reading comprehension? In L. Rush, A. Eakles, & A. Berger (Eds.), *Secondary school literacy: What research reveals for classroom practice*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.
- Moje, E.B., Dillon, D.R., & O'Brien, D. (2000). Reexamining roles of learner, text, and context in secondary literacy. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 93(3), 165-180.
- Moje, E.B., & Speyer, J. (in press). The reality of challenging texts in high school science and social studies: How teachers can mediate comprehension. In K. Hinchman & H. Thomas (Eds.), *Best practices in adolescent literacy instruction*. New York: Guilford.
- Rush, L., Eakle, A., & Berger, A. (2007). *Secondary school literacy: What research reveals for classroom practice*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.
- Shanahan, T., & Shanahan, C. (2008). Teaching disciplinary literacy to adolescents: Rethinking content-area literacy. *Harvard Educational Review*, 78(1), 40-57.
- The New London Group (1996). A pedagogy of multiliteracies: Designing social futures. *Harvard Educational Review*, 66(1).

Many bright people are doing work in areas directly related to ours but with differences in perspectives that can deepen our understanding of literacy and

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learning. Just look at the titles listed at the beginning of this section. Clearly, many of these great thinkers cover aspects of the challenges facing education that we simply don't have the time, or the resources, or the expertise to pursue on our own.

Fortunately, we in the SIM family share a deeply ingrained culture of learning. Every one of us who has recommended an insightful book to colleagues, contributed materials to *Strategram*, attended a SIM workshop, or commented on a SIM e-mail list or education-related blog contributes to this culture in a profoundly positive way.

Our work is difficult, and we recognize that it is beyond any one of us to do it on our own. The fact that we are aware of our limitations and that we come together in creative ways to

overcome them speaks volumes about the quality of the people in this organization.

RELATING, CONNECTING, AND HOVERING ABOVE

Recommended reading:

- MacKenzie, G. (1998). *Orbiting the giant hairball: A corporate fool's guide to surviving with grace*. New York: Viking.

If you can choose only one book from all of those listed in this article, choose this one. The author, the late Gordon MacKenzie, was enormously creative and insightful. Despite the humor of the book's title, the premise is serious: Organizations pile policy on top of policy, always adding new policies, but never subtracting the old. The result is an enormous policy "hairball" that can drag down individuals. Remaining a vital, contributing member of the organization

despite the gravitational pull of the hairball requires a delicate balance.

If you are hypnotized by an organization's culture, you become separated from your personal magic and cannot tap it to help achieve the goals of the organization. In losing connection with your one-of-a-kind magic, you are reduced to nothing more than one of the headcount deep inside the hairball (p. 53).

Achieving the balance that allows us to continue to make a difference for the teachers and students with whom we work is one of our great challenges. But if there ever is a group that sparkles with that one-of-a-kind magic, it is you, the teachers and professional developers who make up our SIM family.

Strategram Volume 20 Index (2007-2008)

ISSUE 1

In focus: Elmore shares expertise during visit to KU-CRL. Richard Elmore of Harvard University presented "Preparing Leaders and Teachers for School Improvement," in which he put forth the opinion that "education is a profession without practice."

2008 SIM Institute schedule

2008 Instructional Coaching institutes

Index for Strategram Volume 19

ISSUE 2

In focus: Content Enhancement and Literacy. This article clarifies the role of Content Enhancement Routines in improving literacy.

In the classroom: Diagrams to Help Students Understand Verbs. Bonita Cox

shares a series of verb "family" diagrams.

Order form for "The Link Between Content Enhancement and Literacy" DVD.

ISSUE 3

In focus: Focusing Together. Joyce Rademacher introduces a new program to help build learning communities.

ISSUE 4

In focus: Edge e-Learning Programs. Joseph Fisher, Paula Lancaster, and Sue Vernon describe the development work that is leading to a line of e-learning programs for professional development.

In the classroom: Flip Notes for the Test-Taking Strategy. Bonnie King describes how to make and use flip notes.

ISSUE 5

In focus: Fusion Reading. This article describes one of our newest lines of research and initial study results.

Technology Update. Introducing the potential of Web 2.0, social networking, blogs, RSS, Twitter, and more.

ISSUE 6

In celebration: Extraordinary Teachers: Their Attributes Revisited. Don Deshler reflects on characteristics of master teachers, 20 years after the first issue of *Strategram* featured *What makes a Master? A closer look at medal-winning teachers* (reprinted in this issue).

Knowledge Sharing at Its Best, by Patty Graner.

Snippets: 20 Years of Knowledge Sharing

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES 2009

Register at www.kucrl.org/institutes

The University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning invites you to explore effective instructional methods through our series of institutes geared toward classroom teachers, higher education faculty, and instructional coaches. These institutes are practical, hands-on experiences that will enable you to implement Strategic Instruction Model® (SIM) interventions or instructional coaching methods effectively. For experienced SIM teachers who successfully complete an application process, we offer two institutes to begin the process for SIM professional developer certification.

FOR CLASSROOM TEACHERS

SIM Strategies for Reading and Writing

\$675 (after May 16: \$700)

June 16-19, 2009

(8 a.m. Tues.-noon Fri.)

Lawrence, Kan.

This institute will introduce teachers to the foundations of SIM, then teach them to implement research-based interventions to help students acquire the skills necessary to understand grade-level reading materials. Institute participants will be offered two reading strategies, one vocabulary strategy, and the two-level *Sentence Writing Strategy*. Time will be allotted to planning for implementation.

More SIM Strategies

\$675 (after May 16: \$700)

June 16-19, 2009

(8 a.m. Tues.-4 p.m. Fri.)

Lawrence, Kan.

This institute will offer instruction in additional SIM reading and writing strategies and other interventions from the SIM Learning Strategies Curriculum. Participants who have previously received instruction in the *Sentence Writing Strategy (Fundamentals and Proficiency)* and have already implemented strate-

gies in their classrooms will be able to select more strategies to support their literacy efforts. In addition to reading and writing strategies, selections may include strategies related to motivation, improving assignments, and studying and remembering information.

SIM Institute: Introduction to Teaching with Content Enhancement

\$675 (after May 23: \$700)

June 23-26, 2009

(8 a.m. Tues.-noon Fri.)

Lawrence, Kan.

In this institute, teachers learn methods to teach large amounts of content to academically diverse classes in “learner-friendly” ways without diluting the content. Participants will plan how to use Content Enhancement (CE) Routines in their own courses to enhance the way they present subject-area content and improve students’ ability to organize, understand, and remember critical information. CE Routines include ways to plan courses, units, and lessons; teach the mastery of concepts; promote the understanding of reading assignments; teach the mastery of the meaning of vocabulary words; guide the development of answers



to critical questions; and support understanding and remembering key information. General and special education teachers will find this institute relevant and stimulating.

FOR ADMINISTRATORS

SIM for Administrators

\$500 (after May 23: \$525)

Registration is limited to 20

June 24-26, 2009

(noon Wed.-noon Fri.)

Lawrence, Kan.

During the last 30 years, KU-CRL has focused its research on students at the secondary level in both special and general education settings. We have learned about the critical nature of providing responsive, systematic, and intensive instruction in both settings. This session will provide an overview of the research conducted by KU-CRL researchers and examine the dimensions of high-quality SIM® implementation at the teacher, department,

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OPPORTUNITIES (cont. from page 5)

and school levels. Administrators will gain an understanding of the foundations of the SIM® Learning Strategies and Content Enhancement Routines crucial for the successful implementation in their schools or districts.

Note: This institute will run concurrently with *SIM Institute: Introduction to Teaching with Content Enhancement* (for teachers) to allow administrators and teachers from the same school to explore different aspects of Content Enhancement relevant to their specific roles. The *SIM for Administrators* schedule includes time for administrators to learn one Content Enhancement Routine from the teacher's perspective. Both institutes will build in time for administrators and teachers from the same school to develop a plan for using Content Enhancement at their site.

FOR COLLEGE/ UNIVERSITY FACULTY

SIM Learning Strategies Institute for Preservice Educators

\$975 (after April 26: \$1,000)
May 26-30, 2009
(8:00 a.m. Tues.-noon Sat.)
Lawrence, Kan.

This institute will enable preservice educators in teacher education programs to provide empirically validated SIM interventions to prospective teachers. This institute will focus on exploring strategies from the SIM Learning Strategies Curriculum. Participants will explore several strategies and will be provided sample syllabi, books, and teaching resources that can be used to modify existing courses or construct new courses.

Teaching Content to All: Content Enhancement for Preservice Educators

\$975 (after April 26: \$1,000)
May 26-30, 2009
(8:00 a.m. Tues.-noon Sat.)
Lawrence, Kan.

This institute, which is designed for college/university faculty who are engaged in teacher preparation, will enable participants to implement a variety of empirically validated teaching routines from the SIM Content Enhancement (CE) Series. Content will emphasize inclusive course planning and the implementation of a variety of explicit teaching routines designed to ensure content-area mastery of critical ideas and concepts by all students. Participants will explore several routines in depth so that CE Routines can be infused into existing courses or new courses can be constructed. Information related to meeting additional SIM CE Professional Developer certification requirements for inservice professional development will be provided. Teams of individuals from the same institution are encouraged to apply.

FOR POTENTIAL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPERS

Institutes for Potential SIM Professional Developers in Learning Strategies and Content Enhancement

\$800
June 22-26, 2009
(8 a.m. Mon.-3 p.m. Fri.)
Lawrence, Kan.

These two, five-day SIM professional development institutes will be conducted simultaneously. Each will use the Content Literacy Continuum as a unifying framework. Instruction in specific Content

Enhancement Routines and Learning Strategies will not be offered during this week; the focus will be on the professional development process. Participants will be selected through an application process. More information may be found at <http://www.kucrl.org/institutes/>.

INSTRUCTIONAL COACHING

Instructional Coaching Institute, Level 1

\$450
Choice of three dates in 2009:
January 12-14, 2009
August 10-12, 2009
October 5-7, 2009
Lawrence, Kan.

The Instructional Coaching Institute, Level 1, will provide a foundation upon which a solid, effective instructional coaching program can be built. The content of the institute is based on more than eight years of research on instructional coaching conducted by the University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning.

Instructional Coaching Institute, Level 2

\$450
Choice of three dates in 2009:
March 12-14, 2009
August 12-15, 2009
October 8-10, 2009
Lawrence, Kan.

This institute provides a comprehensive overview of the classroom management tools and teaching practices included in *Coaching Classroom Management* (2007), a collaborative effort of Randy Sprick, Wendy Reinke, Tricia McKale, and Jim Knight. Participants will learn about important variables they should observe while coaching teachers as well as powerful strate-

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Strategram Subscription Form 2008-2009

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Mail completed form and your **payment of \$15** (U.S.) to KU-CRL, Joseph R. Pearson Hall, 1122 West Campus Road, Room 517, Lawrence, KS 66045-3101

Your subscription entitles you to all six issues of the current volume. Use this form to renew for the 2008-2009 publication year (Volume 21).

SIM Professional Developers: Your *Strategram* subscription is included in your *Strateworks* membership fee. Do not pay separately.

KU-CRL CALENDAR

January 12-14, 2009

Instructional Coaching Institute,
Level 1
Lawrence, Kan.

March 12-14, 2009

Instructional Coaching Institute,
Level 2
Lawrence, Kan.

May 26-30, 2009

SIM Learning Strategies Institute
for Preservice Educators
Lawrence, Kan.

May 26-30, 2009

Teaching Content to All: Content
Enhancement for Preservice
Educators
Lawrence, Kan.

June 16-19, 2009

SIM Strategies for Reading and
Writing
Lawrence, Kan.

June 16-19, 2009

More SIM Strategies
Lawrence, Kan.

June 22-26, 2009

Institutes for Potential Professional
Developers in Learning Strategies
and Content Enhancement
Lawrence, Kan.

June 23-26, 2009

SIM Institute: Introduction to Teaching
with Content Enhancement
Lawrence, Kan.

June 24-26, 2009

SIM for Administrators
Lawrence, Kan.

August 10-12, 2009

Instructional Coaching Institute,
Level 1
Lawrence, Kan.

www.kucrl.org/institutes

OPPORTUNITIES (cont. from page 6)

gies they can use to support teachers in the creation of safe learning communities. Participants also will have ample time to apply the new materials while observing tapes of teachers and discussing case studies. Finally, all participants will learn how to integrate classroom management practices into the instructional coaching model. The research-based tools and techniques shared during this workshop should help any coach be better prepared to address classroom management issues.

Got a SIM tip,
activity, or
suggestion
for the
classroom?
E-mail
[jtollefson@
ku.edu](mailto:jtollefson@ku.edu)

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KU-CRL invites you to learn more about effective instructional methods through our series of SIM® and Instructional Coaching institutes. New this year: An institute geared just toward the needs of administrators.
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NEW ONLINE

Videos

In November, we added several video presentations to our online media archives, including many clips from the October Instructional Coaching Conference. To learn more about statistics and education research, watch KU's Vicki Peyton and Bruce Frey explain Hierarchical Linear Modeling.
<http://media.kucrl.org>

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