Strategram™

SUPPORTED INCLUSION

The Challenge For Secondary Schools

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The SIM has been implemented in the Wethersfield Public School System in Wethersfield, Connecticut since 1988. Prior to this, support services for students with mild disabilities primarily emphasized tutorial assistance for classroom assignments or remedial instruction in basic skills. Institutionalization of the SIM across multiple teachers and schools required several years and has involved a steady and deliberate plan to ensure application in both the special and general education programs. After seven years of application, the SIM is deeply embedded in the educational system of the district. It has become part of a strategic plan to meet the needs of diverse student populations within general education settings and to ensure more genuine inclusion of students with special education needs.

Factors Contributing to Success

Successful application of the SIM in the Wethersfield District has been the result of carefully adapting its components to the unique characteristics of school programs and staffs as well as the following factors:

- District educators have embraced a unique philosophical approach to student achievement that is congruent with the SIM approach;
- A strong set of support mechanisms for the program has been available throughout the district, including strong central-office and building-level administrative support;
- Teachers and administrators have had access to ongoing training opportunities to hone their skills in the various SIM interventions

as well as to discuss problems and plan together during implementation;
- A scope and sequence of learning strategy instruction has been developed and implemented across the grades and is continually updated to respond to the unique setting demands encountered by students throughout the district;
- Parental support and involvement has been encouraged for the purpose of linking school services to home activities;
- An instructional emphasis has been adopted within both special and general education programs throughout the district to bring increased attention to the process of learning (rather than devoting total attention to content learning) for the purpose teaching students "how to learn;" and
- Careful and deliberate collaboration has been encouraged between special education and general education teachers.

Philosophical agreement. Foremost, the philosophical underpinnings of the SIM are congruent with those in the mission statement of the school system. The SIM is based on the belief that all students should develop their potential as independent and strategic learners across learning, social, motivational and executive domains. In keeping with this view, the educational goals of Wethersfield Public Schools are that each student (a) acquire skills and knowledge for lifetime learning, (b) develop a positive sense of self, (c) develop self-discipline and function as a responsible citizen in society, and (d) understand one's own ethical, aesthetic, and intellectual values and respect those of others. Additionally, the

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SIM philosophy emphasizes the shared responsibility of each member of the learning community. Similarly, the Wethersfield goal statement specifies that, "Education in Wethersfield is the continuing responsibility of students, families, schools, and other community institutions working together so that Wethersfield students may realize their fullest potential. Teachers are viewed as facilitators of learning rather than simply as imparters of content knowledge." In short, the strong congruence between the philosphical underpinnings associated with the SIM and those valued by the district has aided the adoption process.

Support mechanisms. Administrative support (both central-office and building-level support) has also been a critical element in the development and integration of SIM in the district. This support has been manifested by administrators ensuring funding for district-level professional-development opportunities, providing release time for teachers to engage in training, supplying monetary support for materials, and guiding the creation of strategic plans that explicitly accommodate for the implementation of the SIM across grades, schools and programs.

Specific administrators have further demonstrated the sincerity of their commitment to the SIM in several ways, including the following. The Superintendent frequently speaks of local SIM implementation at staff meetings and at each annual orientation session for all district personnel. He also writes personal letters to staff members who demonstrate success in SIM implementation. The Assistant Superintendent ensures that SIM interventions are included as an ongoing professional training strand as he develops each year's staff development program. The Principals use faculty meetings to talk about the program to faculty, publicize the

program in school newsletters, and offer insights to visiting administrators about how to integrate SIM in light of site-based reform efforts. The Director of Pupil Personnel and the Supervisor of Special Education frequently publicize information about SIM implementation in the local newspaper. Administrators attend *and actively participate in* training sessions with faculty members. During these sessions, many opportunities surface for extended dialogues and problem-solving discussions between teachers and administrators regarding

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instructional issues. Faculty members have become aware that the SIM is not just another "pop-in, pop-off, pop-out" professional-development activity that will never impact the school system. The message has been made abundantly clear from all key administrators that the SIM is a central part of the educational process of the Wethersfield School System and that all staff are to be engaged and supportive.

Training opportunities. Ongoing SIM training sessions in the district continue to support and expand SIM implementation. Teachers are trained by the district's SIM Trainer through formal professional development strands that last from one to three years. Following initial training on an intervention package, teachers practice implementing the procedure with their students and then return to subsequent training sessions for debriefing and problem-solving. With district support, the training sequence has been arranged such that training strands involve

multiple sessions over an extended period of time so as to enable teachers sufficient opportunities to become comfortable with teaching the new strategy or using a new routine.

For general educators, training has focused in two areas: (a) learning strategies that relate to specific course requirements and demands students encounter in their classes, and (b) content enhancement routines that promote learning for all students in academically diverse classes. The training for special education teachers focuses on learning, social, and motivational strategies that empower students to learn and perform more effectively in responding to the demands in the general education classroom. In addition to the training sessions, many opportunities exist for collaboration and consultation between the SIM Trainer and teachers. Regular observations of classroom implementations, feedback sessions, and troubleshooting meetings are available to all teachers. Additionally, the SIM Trainer frequently does demonstration teaching within various teachers' classes.

Curriculum development. A scope and sequence of strategies instruction has been developed by the instructional staff and is continually updated to ensure that the program responds to the setting demands faced by students at each grade level. Students are taught only those strategies within this sequence that are germaine to their own needs and that assist them in responding to the demands present in their general education classes. Given the shortage of instructional time for skill and strategy instruction, especially at the secondary level, great emphasis is placed on collaborative and coordinated decision-making between general and special educators as well as between personnel at different schools and grade levels with regard to what strategies a given student will learn, thus minimizing fragmented interventions that do not markedly improve students' effectiveness as

learners. Additionally, to make the most of the small amount of instructional time available, 90% of a student's time spent in the resource room is devoted to strategy instruction. Further, to ensure that current instruction systematically builds on previous instruction, cumulative records are carefully kept of student progress within the SIM sequence of instruction and accompany each student through each grade level and/or school.

The scope and sequence of strategy instruction applied in Wethersfield resource rooms builds from the simpler strategies to the more complex strategies across grades five through twelve. Simpler strategies are taught in the upper elementary grades to introduce the concept of strategic learning and to provide students with some tools for coping with academic tasks. In grades seven and eight, at least four additional strategies are taught to students. Generally, these are strategies that bolster their ability to respond successfully to advanced reading and writing demands in secondary schools. As students move into high school, the most complex strategies are taught. At each grade level, teachers deliberately prompt students to review and use strategies they have learned in previous years since continual reminders to apply and refine previously learned strategies are critical elements in the development of independent learners and performers. Typically, high school students who have completed this sequence of strategies instruction are able to apply at least eight to ten core strategies across a variety of settings.

In addition, general education English, foreign language, and social studies courses at the middle-school and high-school levels integrate learning strategies instruction and the use of Content Enhancement Routines regularly. For example, strategies are taught in English and foreign language classes to help students master new vocabulary.

As students experience strategic learning opportunities across a variety of settings and during multiple years, they become increasingly more independent and proactive as learners. Students who have mastered several strategies achieve higher grades and progress to higher course levels (e.g., from remedial courses to low-track courses to medium-track courses to high-track courses) more rapidly and more often than their peers who do not receive this type of instruction.

Parental support. Parental involvement in and support for the SIM program at Wethersfield has been a critical part of impacting student growth. When the SIM program was initially adopted, some parents were apprehensive about shifting from a tutorial model to a strategic model because they were comfortable (yet not always satisfied) with methods that centered on content instruction and tutorial review. Thus,

Resource Implementation Sequence - Wethersfield

Grade Level	Strategies Taught	Content Enhancement
5 + 6	● Sentence Writing (Preskills & Simple & Compound Sentences) ● Paraphrasing (Preskills) ● Word Identification	
7 + 8	● Assignment Completion ● Sentence Writing ● Error Monitoring ● Test Taking ● LINCS ● Paraphrasing ● Visual Imagery ● SLANT	Concept Mastery
9 -12	● FIRST-Letter ● Self-Advocacy ● Paragraph Writing ● Theme Writing ● "Intra-strategy" Integration	Lesson Organizer Unit Organizer Concept Anchoring TRIMS "Intra-strategy" Integration

during the first few years of SIM implementation, parental support was enlisted at meetings of the local Learning Disabilities Association. Presentations were made by the SIM Trainer and by the Special Education Supervisor. Opportunities for parents to observe the program first hand were made available through a demonstration site at the middle-school level. As a result of these measures and seeing their childrens' success, parents have become very supportive of the program. They regularly prompt their children to use strategies they have learned to complete homework assignments, and they insist that the program emphasis be strategic instruction in each grade. Their active involvement has contributed greatly to bringing focus and stabilization to the program. Presently, overviews at annual school "Parent Nights" are given as a means of informing all parents of the program's objectives and practices. After learning of the success of strategic instruction for special-needs students, many parents of general-education students have requested that SIM instruction be provided within general-education classes.

Focus on the learning process. In both special education and general education settings, SIM instruction focuses on both process and content. Continual attention is given to exploring the learning process, talking about how to learn the content in the class and complete particular tasks,

and discussing the benefits gained through use of strategic tools. Additionally, in each class, students are encouraged to determine which parts of the strategies work best for them and apply those parts as they see fit. For instance, students are encouraged to analyze which parts of the *LINCS Strategy* for vocabulary learning and retention are most critical to their success; one student might decide that the visual images are most critical, whereas another might rely more heavily on strong reminding words. Students are also encouraged to create and apply adaptations of the strategies they have learned. For example, they might combine steps from several strategies or combine several whole strategies to approach a new academic task. Once students identify aspects of the strategies that work best for them and apply them in a variety of situations in a variety of combinations, they become more invested in independently using them.

Collaborative efforts to ensure generalization. Another key to the successful implementation of the SIM in Wethersfield is the strong emphasis on collaboration between special education and general education teachers to maximize student generalization of mastered strategies since generalization is a difficult process for students with disabilities. Although powerful instruction in a strategy may be provided in a special class, students may not identify those situations where application is suitable. Thus, in Wethersfield, special and general education teachers communicate to ensure that students are learning strategies that are applicable in classes in which the students are enrolled. When a student is ready to use a strategy(ies), the general education teacher cues the student to use that strategy(ies) when an appropriate situation arises. This teacher also monitors the student's use of the strategy(ies) and may provide immediate feedback to the student concerning that application. The general education teacher also provides critical information to the special education teacher about the student's performance. As a result,

decisions can be made about aspects of strategy use that need to be bolstered in the resource setting under controlled learning conditions.

Because of the success of these collaborative efforts, the SIM has become increasingly connected to the idea of "authentic inclusion" within the Wethersfield District. Additionally, because of the collaborative relationships that have been built, SIM interventions have been taught successfully as part of the

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district's pre-referral effort to minimize the number of formal special education placements. The relationship and support between special and general education programs has truly enhanced learning for all members of the school community. Teachers and students often interchange roles in this process. For instance, two resource students currently teach learning strategies to their peers and teachers within mainstream English classes. Other students welcome visitors to the resource room by engaging these adults in actual class lessons. The process is one which has developed interdependence and equality among the community members.

The Special Education Component

As described above, instruction within the resource room programs at

the upper elementary, middle, and high school levels is based on the specified scope and sequence of strategies created for each level. **See Figure on pg. 3 for the resource implementation sequence.** Students enrolled in these programs have mild to moderate learning disabilities. All students are enrolled in mainstream content courses at low, middle or high tracking levels for a majority of the school day. The overall goal for a large majority of these students is to enter into postsecondary educational experiences.

In order to tie together a student's educational experience with regard to learning strategies across the grades and to ensure that successful transitions are made to postsecondary settings, students are taught the *Self-Advocacy Strategy*. This strategy has been found to be essential to the initation of a specialized educational program for an individual student as well as subsequent instruction and evaluation of student growth and progress. **(See Strategram Vol 8-1 for a description of this strategy).**

Once students can identify strengths they bring to school, the seed of empowerment has been planted. By comparing their strengths to the demands present in their classes, students also are able to identify what skills and strategies they need to

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learn. Based on these analyses, each student sets personal learning goals each school quarter and has a major voice in decisions about what strategies will be learned. As new skills and strategies are mastered, students add them to their skills inventories.

Students also learn to use the *Self-Advocacy Strategy* to prepare for and

participate in Pupil Planning Team (PPT) meetings, transition conferences, and other conferences with teachers. Instruction in the strategy is used to assist older students in thinking about transitioning from high school to postsecondary life. The Transition Planning Inventory is used for this purpose whereby students identify their strengths and areas that need improvement with regard to postsecondary living. Again, goals and needs are specified.

This information is shared by students at their individual Pupil Planning Team (PPT) meetings. First, students review the inventory with their parents and other team members. As the guidance counselor reviews course selections for the upcoming school year, students check off the courses and course levels on the worksheet to ensure accuracy of the scheduling process. As each PPT meeting proceeds, students actively participate by using their "SHARE" Behaviors to convey the information that they have prepared on their inventory sheets and their goals with the team members.

The results are powerful. Each year, students take more ownership in the development of their programs. As students progress through high school, they become more and more independent in preparing their unique learning plans for the up-coming school year and are supported by the team in this endeavor. Self-motivation, discipline and commitment are heightened because students "own" their programs.

The overriding goal associated with using the *Self-Advocacy Strategy* as the foundation for individual student programs is to prepare students to be able to function totally independently upon transition to postsecondary institutions. The majority of students who have gone through the Wethersfield program have successfully transitioned to postsecondary settings and are funtioning independently there. This

is happening, in large measure, because they can discern setting demands that they face in each new learning situation and can then apply, adapt, and evaluate their use of strategic approaches to learning.

The General Education Component

General education teachers play a central role in enabling students to be successfully included within the general curriculum. First, they work closely with resource room teachers

to inform them of the types of curriculum requirements students with disablties are having difficulty meeting in the regular classroom. This information is used to determine the learning strategies that should be taught to students in the resource room. After students acquire basic fluency on a strategy in the resource room, the general education teacher prompts students to use that strategy in completing assignments in the classroom. Second, some general education teachers choose a limited number of strategies (i.e., one to three) that they will teach to the entire class and emphasize throughout the school year. Third, some general education teachers use Content Enhancement Routines to facilitate the acquisition of the content information that they deliver. In each setting, aspects of the intervention are adapted to fit the unique aspects of the teacher and the class setting.

Additionally, strategies are taught in some general education classes. For example, several strategies have been included in the curriculum of a high-school English class. The

"SHARE" Game

Bernie Gabel, second grade teacher at Turner Elementary School in the Turner School District of Kansas City, Kansas has developed a catchy game to enhance her students' learning of the SHARE Behaviors. She designed a bean bag toss with each square representing one of the SHARE Behaviors and assigned a random numerical value to each (see photo). The students take turns tossing the bean bag and reciting the name of the SHARE Behavior corresponding to the letter the bean bag lands on. With the correct response the student earns the points on the square. The game can be played by individuals or teams with each side of the game area assigned to a team. As students become proficient at reciting the names of the Behaviors, additional information about the behavior can be required to earn the points. All of Bernie's second graders were quickly able to memorize the strategy steps using this game as reinforcer.

Mrs. Gabel's class is participating in Turner's movement to infuse Self-advocacy Strategy training into the general curriculum. Cris Siebenlist, SIM Trainer in the Turner District, has trained general and special education elementary teachers about the SHARE Behaviors, use of the Skills Inventory Sheets and Goal Setting. Beginning implementation in the general education elementary grades enables students with special needs to practice and perfect these skills which they will need for self-advocacy in high school and beyond.
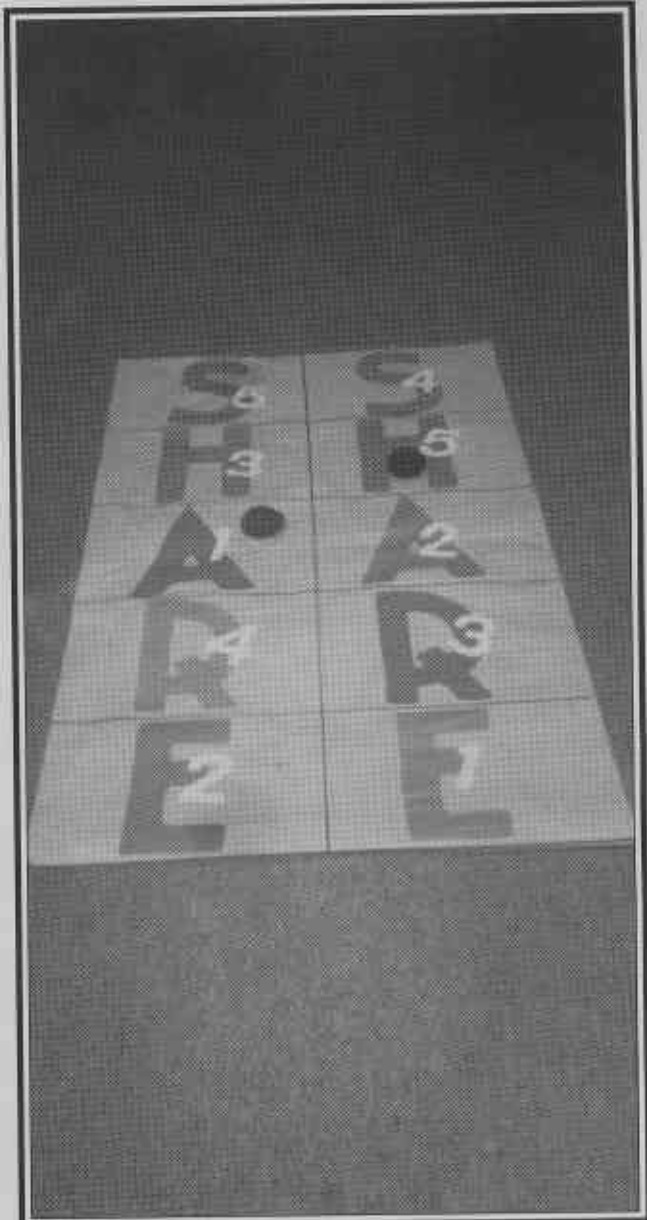
SHARE Bean Bag Toss

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PROBABLE CLAUSES

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GOAL:

To construct sentences using various sentence formulas.

MATERIALS:

- Strips of oak-tag paper of various lengths and about 3" wide (old file folders work great)
- Markers
- Index Cards

PREPARATION:

Cut several strips from the oak-tag paper. On some strips, write dependent clauses; on others, write independent clauses. On shorter strips, make several of the following: subjects, verbs, coordinating conjunctions, subordinating conjunctions, the abbreviation "CAP," commas, semi-colons, and periods. On the stack of index cards, write the following sentence formulas as follows (several cards for each formula):

SIMPLE	COMPOUND	COMPLEX	COMPOUND-COMPLEX
SV	I,cI	· D,I	D,I,cI
SSV	I;I	ID	D,I;I
SVV			ID,cI
SSVV			ID;I
			I,cID
			I;ID

RULES OF THE GAME:

1. Distribute clause strips, subjects, verbs, conjunctions, "CAP", and punctuation strips until supply is exhausted. Each student should have several.
2. The teacher shuffles the index cards containing the formulas, draws the top card, and reads the formula.
3. A student who thinks he has a strip that fits any part of the formula may come to the front of the classroom and hold up his/her strip. You can do this as a race or call on students.
4. In turn, other students come to the front to complete the sentence to match the formula, punctuate, add conjunctions, and indicate capital letters.

EXAMPLE:

Teacher:	Formula I,cID
1st Student	"Henry slept in a shabby dog house"
2nd Student	"everyone else slept on the lawn"
3rd Student	"because I snore loudly"
4th Student	Adds a comma after dog house
5th Student	Adds a period for end punctuation
6th Student	Adds "and" after comma

(No need for "CAP" because Henry is already capitalized.)

Sentence Writing Strategy is taught to develop stronger sentence-writing and grammatical-usage skills. The *Error Monitoring Strategy* is introduced to improve student ability in detecting and correcting errors in written products. Other strategies are introduced to help students apply study techniques for content mastery. For example, the *LINCS Strategy* is introduced early in the school year and is used to assist students in learning content-based vocabulary for weekly tests. The *Word Identification Strategy* is taught to help students pronounce and spell the new vocabulary words. Students' test scores prior to and after strategic interventions are used as pretest and posttest measures of performance. Progress is monitored on a weekly basis. Peer review of strategy implementation provides opportunities for constructive feedback and peer support. Strategy application is monitored and graded as a part of the course work. Students may also receive credit for using the strategies in other courses and in out-of-school settings.

For another example, in a Spanish II course, students learn and apply aspects of the *Self-Advocacy Strategy* to assist them in goal setting and management of the course content. The Spanish teacher has developed this approach to assist students who demonstrated weak skill development in Spanish I. As these students enter into Spanish II, they evaluate their needs based on perceptions of their previous study habits and achievement levels. They set goals to ensure greater success for the upcoming school year. Students identify personal learning approaches that work best for them and attempt to structure learning opportunities within the class to maximize their learning styles. The *LINCS Strategy* is also taught in Spanish classes to help students understand and recall Spanish vocabulary words.

The Content Enhancement Routines are used to introduce and clarify new concepts across all course levels to elevate learning for students of varying abilities. For example, the Concept Mastery Routine may be used to introduce a concept such as feudalism in a social studies course. Later in the course, the Concept Comparison Routine may be used to compare and contrast feudalism with another concept such as manorialism. This approach allows students to explore concepts in new and exciting ways. It also allows teachers to emphasize critical aspects of the curriculum which require mastery. Students who benefit from concrete representations of abstract concepts are helped through the process, while other students gain enrichment opportunities.

Summary

In Wethersfield, adoption of the SIM has happened slowly, steadily and with careful reflection. True system change is occurring because key components of the model have been carefully shaped to meet the unique strengths and needs within the district. The strong and long-term support of administrators and parents in addition to the commitment of staff to work together in meaningful collaboration within and across school settings have provided the foundation for successful implementation. While the experience within the Wethersfield School District has clearly shown that students with mild disabilities can successfully compete in general education course offerings and graduate from high school prepared to enter meaningful postsecondary options, these results were not achieved by "blindly" including students in the mainstream through administrative fiat. Inclusion has worked in this district only because it has been *supported* inclusion. ▓