

# Lab offers strategic help after school

## *Project's success helps spread SIM ideas*

**A** strategic collaboration in Kentucky has carved a new path to helping students succeed in school.

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Editor  
The University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning

Bonnie Kitchens, teacher of exceptional children and certified SIM Trainer, and Laura McGrail, school psychologist in Henderson County Schools, worked together to develop a Model Learning Lab in conjunction with the South Junior High School Youth Services Center. They received support from a state of Kentucky grant designed to allow schools to take chances and try new ideas.

The Model Learning Lab project began during the 1993-1994 school year, when the school received an Extended School Services Innovative Grant from the Kentucky Department of Education. Laura wrote the grant proposal and served as the program evaluator. Bonnie served as program coordinator. Of the 1,100 students attending the junior high school, 200 to 300 participated in the Model Learning Lab during each of the three years it operated.

The lab offered learning and study skills instruction to students during after-school hours. It met with such success that this year, when grant funding ended, the school incorporated the lab's services into regular after-school offerings, and Bonnie now has turned her efforts to a wider audience.

Although the Office of Exceptional Children at the Kentucky DOE has endorsed the Learning Strategies

Curriculum and provided training to teachers for several years, the focus of the state effort has been on students with disabilities. The Model Learning Lab shifted this focus slightly by delivering learning strategies instruction to students with *and without* disabilities. The lab specifically targeted general education students who were experiencing academic difficulty.

### ***Generalization was a planned component of the Model Learning Lab project.***

Bonnie and Laura recognized that the overriding instructional goal of secondary general education teachers is to deliver content and that many teachers do not have the time or training to provide instruction to students who have not mastered study skills. They designed the Model Learning Lab to address this need and to provide classes to help even high-achieving students to better prepare for college-preparatory high school classes.

Including high-achieving students in their plan also enhanced the image of the lab. Bonnie said they took care to avoid projecting an image of the lab as remedial. For example, they provided support for geometry class, one of the highest-level classes offered at the school. This contributed to a more inviting environment for lower-achieving students.

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**The school even offered a parents' night, in which parents learned about the strategies.**

# Model Learning Lab

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In addition to Bonnie and Laura, 16 South Junior High School teachers participated in the lab as instructors. Each instructor received a full day of training in the learning strategies he or she was to teach. Several teachers also requested additional training associated with strategies they could teach in their own classrooms.

Initially, the Model Learning Lab offered classes in 15 different learning strategies for one hour after school four days a week. The lab conducted three sessions; each session was six to eight weeks long. During that time, 31 lab classes served 223 students. During each class, staff members provided instruction to six to ten students on a specific element of the Learning Strategies Curriculum. Students, who were referred to the lab by teachers or parents or who elected on their own to take lab classes, attended one session per week per strategy. Students could elect to attend one or more strategy classes at a time.

Additionally, all of the teachers taught learning strategies to their own classes, and strategies instruction was provided to classes of students whose teachers were not lab instructors. Once teachers saw the success others had teaching learning strategies, they sought training, too. The resulting widespread generalization of the curriculum to students who did not participate in the Model Learning Lab has become an integral part of the instructional curriculum at South Junior High School.

"So many teachers at school teach strategies now," Bonnie said. "They're teaching them all

## Model Learning Lab Facts

South Junior High School, Henderson County, Kentucky

### The Beginning

**1993-1994:** Initial grant funds received

### The Project

**Duration:** Three years

**Target:** General education students experiencing academic difficulty; students with and without learning disabilities

**Organization:** Classes offered one hour a day, four days a week

**Number of Students Served:**

200-300 each year

**Most Popular Classes:**

Reading and writing strategies

### The Future

**1997-1998:** Lab services folded into regular extended services

**Word Spreads:** Bonnie continues working with elementary schools in Henderson County

over the place."

Generalization was a planned component of the project. Grant funds were allocated for substitute teachers to free Bonnie to help teachers introduce the curriculum to general education classes in all grades and subject areas.

The school even offered a parents' night, in which parents learned about the strategies the lab taught. Bonnie said this generated a lot of interest from parents and gave them another

tool for helping their children at home.

During the initial phase of the project, Laura developed questionnaires for students, parents, and teachers and reviewed the results after each of the three sessions of learning strategy instruction. She also collected grades for each student before he or she participated in any Model Learning Lab classes and again for the grading period after the student's involvement

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# Model Learning Lab

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in the project.

Her findings indicated that although there was no significant increase in grade-point average (GPA) from pre-test to post-test overall, dramatic gains were seen in some students. One student who participated in an organizational skills class increased his mean pre-test GPA from 1.1 to a post-test GPA of 2.5 over the course of one nine-week period. The overall findings reflect all student grades in all classes. Many of the students took classes that covered specific content areas, and the skills they acquired in these classes could not be expected to generalize to their other classes.

However, when Laura looked at grade-point averages for specific classes, her findings indicated improved performance. Students who participated in math strategy classes, for example, increased their mean pre-test GPA from 2.25 to a mean post-test GPA of 2.43.

Comments from students, teachers, and parents were consistently positive and indicated that the students found the Model Learning lab classes to be both enjoyable and academically beneficial,

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***“That’s how much we believe in learning strategies. We’re branching out.”***

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as reflected in the following evaluation from a student: “It helped me on my grades and it brought some of them up from D’s and C’s to B’s.”

Reading and writing strategies were the most popular classes offered. The lab also offered instruction in test-taking strategies to help students cope with state-mandated testing, as well as instruction in study skills and math strategies.

Bonnie said the students liked learning in a brand new way. As a teacher, she too enjoyed the lab, in part because it gave her the opportunity to work with a larger student population than usual.

Word of the Learning Strategies Curriculum continues to spread in the Henderson County school system. Almost all of the English teachers at both junior high schools are trained in Sentence Writing, Paragraph Writing, and RAP. Bonnie now is taking the learning strategies message to

younger students in many more schools. She trained the teachers at one elementary school last year, and she’s working with another elementary school this year. She hopes to work with all of the elementary schools in the Henderson County system eventually.

Bonnie’s goal in working with elementary teachers is to introduce the Sentence Writing Strategy to all fifth-grade students and continue with more writing strategies in sixth grade so students will be ready to complete state-graded writing portfolios in the seventh grade.

“That’s how much we believe in learning strategies,” she said. “We’re branching out.”

## Hot off the presses: *The Clarifying Routine*

The newest guidebook in the Content Enhancement Series, *The Clarifying Routine* by Edwin S. Ellis, is now available.

This routine addresses the challenges teachers face in teaching students the meaning of important terms. When the routine is used, students hear, talk about, and use the terms multiple times. It helps students understand the meaning of a term by talking about information related to it, connecting their own knowledge and experiences to it, and using it in a variety of ways.

Look for more information about *The Clarifying Routine* in the next issue of *Strategram*.

*The Clarifying Routine* is available from Edge Enterprises, (785) 749-1473. The cost is \$8, and training is required.

### For more information...

Details of the Model Learning Lab project can be found in the following articles by Laura McGrail and Bonnie Kitchens:

- “Extended School Services Innovative Grants: The Model Learning Lab,” KAPS Review, Spring 1995, published by the Kentucky Association of School Psychologists
- “Model Learning Lab: An Alternative for Delivering Learning Strategies Instruction,” Communiqué, October 1995, published by the National Association of School Psychologists

# FOR THE CLASSROOM

## COPS Cues: Reminders for students & teachers

Aven Tallman, a SIM Trainer and teacher at Mountainview Elementary School in Morgantown, West Virginia, and her co-teacher, Cindy Bucy, developed the cue sheets on this page and

page 5 for students to laminate and put in their notebooks. Some teachers also post them on their walls as cue reminders.

USE COPS!

**C CAPITAL LETTERS**  
**O Overall Appearance**  
**P Punctuation - ! ?**  
**S Spelling**

**Use the COPS test every time you write.**

# COPS

## Capitalization

1. Did I capitalize all proper nouns?
2. Did I capitalize the 1st word in each sentence?

## Overall Appearance

1. Is my handwriting easy to read, on the line, and not crowded?
2. Are my words and sentences spaced right?
3. Did I indent and write close to the margin?
4. Are there any messy errors?

## Punctuation

1. Did I use the right punctuation mark at the end of each sentence? (. ? !)
2. Did I use commas and semicolons where needed?
  - Compound **I,cI** or **I;I**
  - Complex **D,I**
  - Compound-Complex **D,I,cI** or **ID,cI**  
or **I,cID** or **ID;I** or **I;ID** or **D,I;I**
  - Items in a series (red, blue, and green)

## Spelling

1. Does it look right?
2. Can I sound it out?
3. Have I used the dictionary?
4. Have I used a spell checker?

# Taking the plunge, writing for *Strategram*

*Strategram* is a tool for communicating, and we don't want it to be a one-way tool.

Consider this your invitation to shape the future of *Strategram*. We designed the newsletter to help us get news to teachers in the field: updates on strategies, classroom tips, implementation techniques, and answers to questions about the Strategic Instruction Model.

It's your turn, now, to tell us whether we're doing a good job. Tell us what changes you would like to see. Tell us what you want to read about.

Additionally, we want you to contribute to *Strategram*, to make it your tool, to ensure it's useful for you. To help you generate ideas, consider doing the following:

- Provide feedback about articles you enjoyed or changes you would like to see in *Strategram*
- Submit articles that would be of interest to other readers
- Ask questions about implementing SIM
- Share classroom tips or supplemental materials you have found helpful in implementing SIM

## Now you know

what we're looking for. If you have an idea now, fill out the form on page 7 and mail it to us at

The University of Kansas  
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Lawrence, KS 66045

You may e-mail your idea, comment, or suggestion to Julie Tollefson at [jtollefson@ukans.edu](mailto:jtollefson@ukans.edu). You may want to send your suggestions with your subscription renewal form (see page 7 for details).

- Share charts, graphs, visual aids, and forms you have found to be useful

**General articles:** We are always interested in articles that deal with such broad topics as implementing the Strategic Instruction Model, classroom management, or the teacher's role in communicating with administrators, parents, or students. Articles should be 1,000 to 1,500 words long.

### "For the Classroom" articles:

"For the Classroom" articles are designed to share classroom tips. Worksheets, puzzles, games, or ideas from students fit nicely in this category. When you submit an article "For the Classroom," include a detailed description of the activity, how it is used in the classroom, any materials needed, documentation of success, and visual aids that can be reproduced.

**Spotlight articles:** Spotlight articles focus on an individual's or team's experiences with the Strategic Instruction Model. These articles should include a summary of the education, background, and current position of the people involved. A photograph of the individual or team would be a nice accompaniment for the article.

**Miscellaneous articles:** Any articles that don't fit in one of the above categories but that are of interest to teachers in the SIM family fall in this category. These articles should be 250 to 500 words long and may cover such topics as book reviews, data on SIM implementation, and solutions to any implementation problems.

## Remember

- We may not be able to accept all articles for publication because of space and topic constraints.
- CRL staff review all articles to ensure they are consistent with elements of SIM.
- We may not be able to return articles and pictures.
- Revisions to articles are made at the discretion of CRL staff and the editor. We will make an attempt to contact the author to discuss major changes before publication.
- Please include your name, address, and telephone number with every submission.

**Q&A:** We welcome questions. If you have questions for members of our staff, please send them to us. Chances are, other teachers are wondering about the same thing. Your questions can guide us in writing articles or provide an opening for a discussion of pertinent topics.

**Success Stories:** Please share your good news. From just a sentence to multiple paragraphs, we want to hear about successes in the field. These experiences can help motivate administrators, teachers, parents, and students to commit to learn about a strategy.

**Challenges:** Send tricky problems or challenges facing you and request help (anonymously) from those who know how you feel. These challenges will be published in *Strategram* to solicit advice and answers from readers.







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