Big Ideas
in schoolwide change

In recent years, one of the messages we've received from the network is that members are struggling with a number of issues in regard to implementing the Strategic Instruction Model or Content Literacy Continuum. Just getting started in a new school or district presents an initial challenge, and keeping them going is an even bigger challenge.

In response to these concerns, KU-CRL convened a panel during the 2005 International SIM Conference to discuss "big ideas" that can help ease some of the difficulties involved in implementing SIM, CLC, and schoolwide change.

Panelists consisted of KU-CRL's Barbara Ehren and Jim Knight as well as Reed Deshler, a senior consultant with Aligna Solutions and Don's son. Don moderated the discussion.

Each panelist had the opportunity to share three big ideas about change. All three know a great deal about the process of change, but each has a slightly different perspective.

Barb Ehren

Drawing on the work of William Bridges, Barb's first big idea involves understanding the human side of change.

"Events change, but people transition," Barb says. "Really, the process is more about helping people move and grow than it is altering events."

A building-level principal might, for example, declare that the school will begin implementing the Content Literacy Continuum and order the guidebooks, manuals, and other materials necessary to make the change. However, Barb says, this approach does not account for some of the very important psychological variables connected with the people who are expected to participate in the change.

"One of the key constructs in transition is the notion of loss—that when you accept something new, you are really giving up something that you're used to," Barb says. "To really pay attention to this process, you have to understand the grief process in the sense of losing comfortable ways."

Consequently, as we think about helping schools or districts adopt the CLC or SIM components, it's important to pay attention to the people involved in the process and to the variables connected with helping them make the transition from their old, comfortable ways to the new way.

Barb's second big idea is that change facilitators—people who are heading up or participating in efforts to help systems move and grow and people transition—should be "Labrador retrievers," not "pit-bulls."

"There's nothing wrong with pit-bulls. They're a wonderful breed," Barb says, "But we certainly don't want them within the change/transition process. We need Labrador retrievers. They have to be kind, gentle, but *ever so persevering*."

People working for change/transition have to understand that change is difficult for everyone, including themselves, Barb says. "We have to be kind to ourselves as well as kind to others, allowing ourselves to have a learning curve in terms of our change/transition work."

Barb's last big idea has to do with picking best bets. Always look for the golden opportunities and work to cultivate the people, places, or things that are going to prove most helpful in the change/transition process.

"Sometimes when you go into a school, you want to have change and you want to involve the whole faculty," she says. "Well, the whole faculty might not be your best bets up front because there may be some folks who need some convincing. In order for some people to get on board the change train, they have to

see results. They are not the risk takers. They have to see the other social studies teacher getting better success in content mastery from using the content enhance-ment routines."

Barb advises thinking about this big idea as akin to a marketing tactic: How can we use the successes of our "best bets" to convince others that the change is worthwhile?

Reed Deshler

Although much of Reed's work has been done in the context of the business world, he believes that all organizations in the midst of change have certain char-acteristics in common.

Reed's first big idea is that change occurs at many different levels—the district, the school, and the classroom, in the case of education.

"Many of us, I believe, think that we can affect all of them, and sometimes it's very, very difficult to do," he says. "That leads to this notion that you have to have some tools in your toolkit that help you do more than just influence your sphere."

Reed's second big idea is that the emerging area of change mastery is an imperative for educators and administra-tors alike.

The importance of developing a skill set related to change mastery is evident when considering the many factors that combine to make an individual who he or she is, factors that also contribute to how the individual performs his or her professional role. Personal attributes, subject-matter expertise, and teaching mastery combine to define an individual teacher. Similar characteristics apply to administrators—personal attributes, administrative effectiveness, and orga-nizational leadership. When these indi-viduals are inserted into an organization, things change.

"The organization itself creates new dynamics that are no longer in the control of the person," Reed says, reinforcing the importance of developing change mastery skills.

"It's facilitation skills. It's planning skills. It's the ability to ask questions. It's the ability to take various piece of information and make decisions," says Reed. "It's also tools: the ability to take frameworks and techniques and move groups of people through them."

Reed's third big idea involves deter-mining whether the time is right for change.

"The real question is how do you know if you're ready for this?" he says.

After identifying what is going to change, organizations must ask them-selves "How big is this for us?"

"There are some organizations, some schools, that have the capacity to bring about a significant amount of change. They've done it before. They've suc-ceeded. They've got people with change mastery skills," Reed says. "Other orga-nizations don't."

Among the components that organiza-tions need to consider are whether there is a compelling need for the change, whether people understand what the orga-nization is doing and why, and whether there is leadership commitment. Other questions to consider include are the tools and resources needed to make the change available both to the people involved and to the organization, how will stakehold-ers respond to the change, and are there competing resource demands or events that might prevent the organization from moving forward successfully.

"Good intentions aside, great interven-tions aside, if we're not ready, it might not be the right time," Reed says.

Jim Knight

Jim's first big idea is that "learning conversations" are at the heart of lead-ing change.

"When we are effectively leading change, we should and the people we work with should be better for the experi-ence," Jim says. "It usually involves some kind of conversation."

Learning, he says, should be energiz-ing, empowering, enjoyable, and fun. It should bring us alive. Too often, though, just the opposite occurs when the sub-ject is change. Jim points to the idea of identity issues as the root of difficult conversations about change, drawing on the book *Difficult Conversations: How to Discuss what Matters Most* by Douglas Stone, Bruce Patton, and Sheila Heen.

Resources

Stone, D., Patton, B., & Heen, S. (1999) Difficult Conversations: How to Discuss what Matters Most. New York: Viking Penguin.

www.instructionalcoach.org

www.kucrl.org/partnership: Download Partnership Learning Fieldbook.

"They say an identity conversation is all about who we are and how we see ourselves," Jim says. "When you find yourself in some kind of conflict with another person, more often than not, it's because of some kind of identity conversation. If they feel somehow the conversation is telling them that they're not a good person or they're not competent or they're not skilled, you're going to encounter resistance."

To counteract such perceptions, Jim recommends using "partnership feedback," in which a teacher and an instructional coach conduct a dialogue about data. Instead of presenting the conversation as a means of "fixing" the teacher, he says, the attitude should be "here's what I saw."

"If you set yourself up as the only expert in the room, you're likely going to get drawn into identity conversations," Jim says. "We have to turn the conversation away from that. What we're trying to do is protect their identity so we can focus on what matters, which is improving instruction for kids."

Jim's second big idea is that enabling change involves discontinuity.

"Since we started the Pathways to Success project in Topeka, we've had nine different principals in our first three schools, we've had three superintendents, and they introduced this thing called No Child Left Behind," he says. "If we had made a six-year plan and expected it to be implemented, we would have found ourselves with a bit of a problem because things change dramatically."

Jim says planning for change means incorporating a mechanism for adapting when the course alters.

His third big idea is that enabling change involves deep thinking. To really be a change agent, he says, you have to get clarity on what you want to accomplish and look for simple words to express complicated concepts.

When explaining modeling or constructive feedback, for example, "it's critically important to go deep in your thinking so you can find the words to explain it. If you're not sure why that relationship box is there or what it's for, you need to figure it out," he says.

Jim recommends going so far as to put a paragraph or two in writing to prepare for presenting the information orally.

"It's very, very useful to use writing as an act to help you become a better communicator," he says. Helpful exercises include writing out the stories and anecdotes that will support the points you want to make.

A second aspect of deep thinking involves formulating implementation plans.

"If you're going to lead change in school, you need to break it down," he says. "You need to say what's going to happen when, what that professional learning community is going to look like. There may be people who are going to be dysfunctional—how are you going to deal with that? To plan for execution is really key."

Julie Tollefson, KU-CRL

SIM Garden Report

The seeds have been planted, and we expect a fabulous harvest during the 2006 International SIM Conference.

This year's keynote speaker, Elizabeth B. Moje, specializes in urban youth culture and youth literacy, content area/disciplinary literacy, and qualitative research methodology.

The University of Michigan professor has written widely on these topics, including the 2000 book *All the Stories We Have: Adolescents' Insights on Literacy and Learning in Secondary School,* published by the International Reading Association. She was co-editor of 2001's *Constructions of Literacy: Studies of Literacy Teaching and Learning In and Out of Secondary Schools,* published by Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, and the forthcoming *Identity, Agency, and Power: New Directions in Sociocultural Research on Literacy,* also from Lawrence Erlbaum.

The conference will introduce several new tools designed to make the job of tending your SIM garden easier. New CDs for Concept Comparison, Concept Anchoring, Question Exploration, Concept Mastery, and Organizing Together will be available.

Special sessions will help you sharpen your implementation and modeling skills, and preconference workshops offer many opportunities for cultivating healthy habitat for your professional development efforts.

So join us this summer and prepare to discover new ideas for making your SIM garden thrive. More conference information, including registration forms for the conference and preconference workshops, are available on the conference web site: www.kucrl.org/conference.

HOW DOES YOUR GARDEN GROW?

2006 International SIM Conference
July 19-21, 2006 ♦ SpringHill Suites ♦ Lawrence, KS

Tentative Conference Schedule
Wednesday-Friday, July 19-21, 2006
SpringHill Suites • Lawrence, Kan.

Wednesday, July 19

8:45 a.m.-10:15 a.m.	Welcome, opening session
10:30 a.m.-11:30 a.m.	Breakout sessions
11:30 a.m.-1:00 p.m.	Lunch on your own
1:00 p.m.-3:15 p.m.	Breakout sessions
3:30 p.m.-5:00 p.m.	Kaleidoscope
5:00 p.m.-6:30 p.m.	Social
6:30 p.m.-8:00 p.m.	Dinner for first-time attendees

Thursday, July 20

8:00 a.m.-9:15 a.m.	Keynote speaker
9:30 a.m.-11:15 a.m.	Breakout sessions
11:30 a.m.-1:00 p.m.	Recognition luncheon
1:30 p.m.-5:00 p.m.	Breakout sessions

Friday, July 21

7:30 a.m.-8:45 a.m.	Poster session and continental breakfast
9:00 a.m.-12:15 p.m.	Breakout sessions
12:30 p.m.-1:00 p.m.	Closing session

Preconference Sessions

Behavior Coaching

Tricia McKale & Jim Knight

This presentation offers an overview of the methods that have been developed through the collaborative effort of Randy Sprick (Safe and Civil Schools), Tricia McKale (KU-CRL), Wendy Reinke (Johns Hopkins), and Jim Knight (KU-CRL). Among the topics to be discussed are methods instructional coaches can use to help teachers teach behavioral expectations, increase time on task, increase opportunities to respond, and decrease disruptions.

Building Proficiency in Content Enhancement with GIST: The Basics

Keith Lenz, Trent Steffen, Peter Lenz, Aaron Sumner, and Brad Nelson

This workshop will explore the integration of many current and new content enhancement devices using the commercial version of GIST, formerly known as the Interactive Organizer software.

Using GIST as a Tool in Presentations: Advanced

This advanced GIST workshop is designed for professional developers who already have some working knowledge of the GIST software. The workshop will cover the same topics as the Basic workshop, but will be more detailed.

> Registration forms are available on www.kucrl.org/conference. They also were printed in the January issue of *Stratenotes*.

C-BAM: Digging Deeper

Barbara Ehren and Patty Graner

This preconference session will provide more practice and deeper understanding of C-BAM. Participants in this session will learn how to:

1. Gauge the Stages of Concern without the SOC questionnaire.
2. Ascribe Levels of Use reliably
3. Integrate the process into professional development
4. Differentiate professional development based on C-BAM.
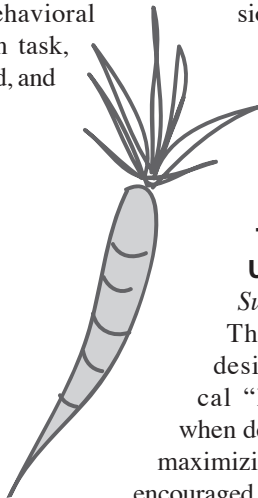
Making Professional Development Fun and Thought Provoking Using Video Clips

Sue Woodruff

This half-day workshop is designed to share the practical "how-tos" of using video when developing presentations and maximizing their use. Participants are encouraged to bring their laptop computers because part of the session will be devoted to hands-on practice.

Partnership Communication

Jim Knight

This presentation offers an overview of several partnership practices related to listening, promoting a language of ongoing regard, building emotional connections, avoiding difficult conversations, and recognizing communication barriers within ourselves. The presentation is intended to enhance the way participants communicate with all of the people in their lives.

The most noteworthy thing about gardeners is that they are always optimistic, always enterprising, and never satisfied. They always look forward to doing something better than they have ever done before.
—Vita Sackville-West

SIM Impact Award

Leslie Herod, SIM Professional Developer and chair of the science department at Turlock (Calif.) Junior High School, made the following comments in regard to the SIM Impact Award bestowed upon the department:

"We have been fortunate in being presented many of the strategic instruction routines and strategies and then given time by our administration to work on implementing those techniques into our curriculum. Early in this process, the teachers in the science department recognized the importance of all departments in the school being responsible for reading and writing, along with the regular curriculum unique to our subject matter. The science teachers were eager to work together to devise many creative ways for helping our students learn more effectively and easily.

"Many times this year, I have heard students say that science is the easiest subject in school. Our curriculum and state standards in science have not changed. They are still very demanding of the teacher and the student. What has changed is the way in which we select the most critical information and then work together with the students. Together, we set learning goals and help students realize those goals by teaching them how to learn most effectively and be successful in recalling information through the use of graphic organizers and learning strategies. Science is 'easier' because the students are successfully remembering the critical information demanded of them.

"I hope that some of our ideas and efforts have transferred to other teachers in other departments. We have shared many of our more creative Frames and vocabulary devices and lessons with teachers throughout our area as we attend workshops and conferences."

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