

## Why writing, why now, and what can you do?

Julie Tollefson  
KUCRL

Steve Graham, a nationally recognized expert on writing and author of two essential reports examining the role of writing in learning, gave us seven reasons to think about writing as important when he delivered his keynote address during the 2011 International SIM Conference.

With his address, *Why We Must Teach Writing and How To Do It Effectively*, we continued our exploration of issues in literacy and education as they relate to the work we do in the International Professional Development Network. Our focus this year was on writing.

Graham, professor and Currey Ingram Chair in Special Education and Literacy at Vanderbilt University, is co-author of *Writing Next: Effective Strategies to Improve Writing of Adolescents in Middle and High Schools* (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2007) and *Writing to Read: Evidence for How Writing Can Improve Reading* (2010, Alliance for Excellent Education). Both publications may be downloaded from <http://all4ed.org>,

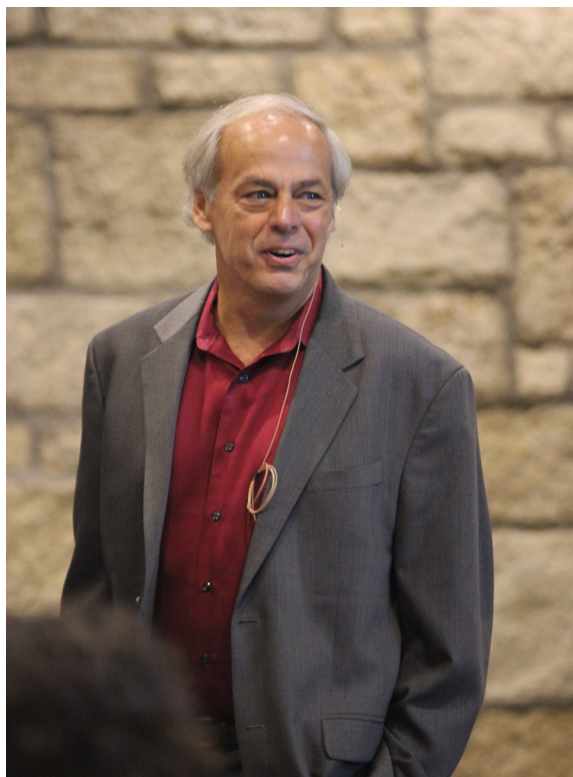
and we recommend you read them.

"Writing is pretty much nowhere in the national reform movement," Graham said during his presentation. "Reading, math, and STEM really are getting their due, and should be, but writing has been left out."

But that neglect may be changing, with the arrival of the Common Core State Standards Initiative, an effort to develop consistent and clear goals for student learning that cross state boundaries. The Common Core Standards have been adopted by 45 states and the District of Columbia to date.

"Common Core is upon us. It's going to up the ante for all of us," Graham said.

With that thought for context, Graham outlined reasons that writing



Steve Graham

is important for students, beyond its role as a communication tool.

### 1. Writing improves learning

When students write about the things they are learning in their class-

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rooms, Graham said, it increases their ability to understand and remember that information.

“One of the things that we know absolutely about learning is that if you handle something in a new way, it makes it more understandable and is likely to make it more comprehensible,” Graham said.

When students—or anyone—write about a topic, they have to think about what information is most important, then organize it, make connections, and manipulate the information. Because writing is permanent, students can review their work, think about it, share it, and revise it. All of these activities help students understand the information they are expected to learn.

## 2. Writing enhances comprehension of material read

Graham’s *Writing to Read* meta-analysis uncovered four writing activities that prove to be effective in increasing students’ understanding of the materials they are required to read: generating or responding to questions, taking notes, writing summaries, and analyzing and interpreting.

### Take note

Taking notes is one activity that has been proven effective in increasing students’ reading comprehension, and studies have found even better results when teachers explicitly teach students how to take notes. Our newest strategy, *Listening and Note-Taking*, helps students master the art of taking notes. This easy-to-learn strategy helps students identify and quickly capture important information during a lecture, sort main ideas and details as they write, and study their notes to earn the best test grades possible. *Listening and Note-Taking* is suitable for instruction in core subject courses as well as supplemental skill-based classes. To order your copy, contact the Center.

**BONUS:** Author Gwen Berry posted a series of videos on YouTube showing *Listening and Note-Taking* instruction. Take a look at this terrific resource: <http://bit.ly/qt144m>

## 3. Teaching writing enhances reading skills

Reading and writing share a common pool of knowledge, Graham said, citing spelling and word recognition as simple examples of where reading and writing knowledge overlap. At a deeper level, if a student knows about the structure of persuasive text—what it does, what it looks like—that knowledge should help with both reading and writing persuasive texts.

“I am not suggesting to you that you replace reading with writing instruction. The two are complementary,” Graham said.

## 4. Look beyond high school

The ability to write well is critical to getting into and succeeding in college, but it’s also crucial to succeeding in the world of work. Graham cited reports that almost all employers of white-collar workers say writing is key in making decisions about hiring and promotions. Even in jobs that don’t traditionally require report preparation or presentations, writing is becoming increasingly important, with 80 percent of blue-collar work-

ers saying writing is important to their jobs.

## 5. The kids are not all right

Data and anecdotal reports reflect huge numbers of students—different sources say two-thirds, 80 percent, and similarly large proportions—do not write well enough to meet their classroom demands. These numbers are even more alarming in light of increased expectations of Common Core State Standards.

“Too many kids, whatever the percentage, don’t write well enough to be successful in the new schools if Common Core does take place,” Graham said.

## 6. Kids can’t get better if writing is not taught

Graham cited numerous factors that contribute to teachers not teaching writing: It’s not a favorite subject, individual teachers don’t believe they are good writers, teacher preparation (both inservice and preservice) is inadequate, use of evidence-based practices is infrequent. Even when students have assignments that require writing, they frequently involve filling in worksheets or creating lists.

“The problem here is that very seldom did they write anything longer than a paragraph,” said Graham. “That’s not going to get you ready for doing reports in college or in the world of work.”

## 7. The Common Core is upon us

Graham thinks adoption of Common Core State Standards holds the potential to improve literacy education by replacing the widely varying standards that exist across the United States today, and that will be good for students.

“The Common Core is going to be a good thing for writing, but it’s going to be a challenging thing for those

# THE WRITE STUFF



## *The 2011 International SIM Conference*

*July 13-15, 2011 • Preconference: July 12, 2011*

of use who are interested in writing because it ups the ante," he said.

### **WHAT CAN BE DONE TO TURN THIS AROUND: 4 SIMPLE PROPOSITIONS**

First and foremost, students have to write, write, write. That may not be a popular answer for many teachers or students, but it is effective. The evidence says writing a lot makes a difference in how well students write.

Graham's second proposition is that we must find ways to assess writing that minimize "gaming the system" and narrowing the writing curriculum.

"A single writing test is in no way going to reflect writing ability," he said. Students' writing skills differ when they tackle writing assignments in different genres, so a test assessing a student's skill in writing a persuasive essay will not provide a complete picture of a student's writing ability.

Likewise, when teachers are focused on preparing students for a specific writing test—such as Ten-

nessee's narrative writing test given to all fourth-graders—other forms of writing may get less attention, thus "narrowing the curriculum."

"The advantage of the Common Core is it's going to force us to think about persuasive, expository, and narrative, all three," Graham said.

Third, we need good materials and better instruction to enhance the capacity of teachers to teach writing, and fourth, we need to help teachers apply proven instructional practices. Strategy instruction—including SIM's writing strategies as well as strategies developed by others—is at the top of Graham's list of proven instructional practices.

"When we look at these things, 20 studies, we're dancing on the moon in terms of writing quality," he said, referring to explicitly teaching students to use strategies for writing. "The big thing here is that when you teach process, kids get better at process and the overall quality of their writing improves as well."

Other effective instructional methods to apply include teaching sum-

marization, enlisting peer assistance, setting product goals, using a process approach to writing, engaging in pre-writing activities, and studying models of a specific type of writing. Using word processing technology, too, can improve students' writing performance.

"We have considerable evidence for struggling writers and for good writers that we can improve writing by half a standard deviation by simply switching from handwritten to word processing tools," he said.

Another effective practice is to teach sentence combining, in which students put small, "kernel" sentences together to make more complex sentences.

"This is a powerful tool for reading comprehension, for writing, and for improving syntax and grammar in writing," he said.

Throughout his examples of effective practices, Graham emphasized the importance of explicitly teaching students how to write—how to summarize, how to take notes, how to combine sentences—and how to write in different situations.

"Don't assume that they're going to generalize what you teach them for writing if you don't make a direct link and connection to it," he said.

### **On text messaging, social networks, and other hip things:**

"At no time that I can think of—I'm 60 years old now—has writing had the privileged position among adolescents that it does now. They're constantly writing and communicating with one another."—*Steve Graham*

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# My favorite part of #simcon11...

\*#simcon11: the Twitter hashtag we used to identify the conference

During the poster session on Friday morning, we asked participants to pick favorites—their favorite thing from the conference, be it a session, an activity, an event, a feeling. Anything they could connect in some way to the conference was fair game.

**“...learning more about how the 3 R’s can be/are incorporated into the CERs.”**

*Integrating the New “Three R’s” into Your Content Enhancement Routines: Reading, Writing, and Reasoning*, a strand led by Jan Bulgren and Keith Lenz, used GIST and integrated sets of Content Enhancement Routines to show how we can embed reading, writing, and reasoning strategies into the delivery of courses, units, and lessons. The session looked at recent trends that present new challenges in how we roll out Content Enhancement in schools, including those linked to states’ adoption of Common Core State Standards that emphasize literacy and reasoning across the curriculum. Jan and Keith placed special emphasis on the use of the *Question Exploration Routine* to link the planning routines to the teaching routines by focusing on critical questions.

**“...the session strand ‘Helping Schools Move to a Better Place Through a Process of Thoughtful Engagement.’ Please offer again!”**

Improving how an individual struggling learner performs is a challenge. Changing the instructional practices and culture of an entire school so the performance of *many* students

improves can be daunting. Several professional developers have been taking on—and succeeding at—this challenge, and important insights are emerging from their work. In this session, Don Deshler assembled a cast of experts to share their first-hand experiences in working with schools to make improvements. SIM Professional Developers drew from actual examples to present case studies to share key findings and engage all participants in problem-solving discussions. This strand, like all the others, was presented twice. However, Don solicited the help of different co-presenters for the morning and afternoon sessions, resulting in slightly different case studies and discussions. Look for more about these case studies and the resulting discussions in future issues of *StrateNotes* and the SIM email discussion list, SIMTRAINER-L.

*“Strands” are extra-long sessions for exploring topics in depth. Conference participants had the opportunity to attend two of the five half-day strands offered this year.*

The three other strands offered this summer were *Designing Professional Learning to Have an Unmistakable Impact*, *Learning Strategies and Writing*, and *Strengthen Your SIM Core*.

*Designing Professional Learning to have an Unmistakable Impact*: Jim Knight led this exploration of how schools and districts can focus their

professional learning on easy-to-understand professional learning targets; how workshops, professional learning communities, and other forms of professional learning can support implementation of school improvement targets; what principals, coaches, and central office staff need to do to accelerate professional learning; and which teaching practices have the greatest impact in the classroom. The content drew from ideas described in Jim’s recent book, *Unmistakable Impact*.

*Learning Strategies and Writing*: In this strand, Jean Schumaker, Bev Colombo, and Mary Black covered the latest research being conducted across the country on writing strategy instruction. They looked at several research projects, examining scope and sequence of instruction, pacing guides, lesson plans, coordination with an RTI model, new products, and instructional products being tested.

*Strengthen Your SIM Core*: In this session, Patty Graner guided participants in an exploration of the tools and information available to aid SIM Professional Developers as they offer a comprehensive, sustained, and intensive approach to improving educator’s effectiveness in raising student achievement. This session was particularly valuable for novice professional developers or those who wanted a refresher on the resources that can help them in their work.

**“...learning about new LS and CER supports and networking with others.”**

**“...integration of CE/SIM, impact with J. Knight, GIST 2.0 is coming, networking & rich resources (human & technology).”**

The conference overflowed with new technology supports and new resources. Gwen Berry introduced the new *Listening and Note-Taking* and Bradley Kaffar brought us two entries in the Strategic Math Series: *Addition with Regrouping* and *Subtraction with Regrouping*.

Plus, Stratepedia developers Aaron Sumner and Amber Nutt talked about their work with technology for distance coaching and how Stratepedia can help you conduct online professional development through webinars. They also offered a first look at the all-new Stratepedia (<http://stratepedia.org>).

**“...the keynote speaker, learning from others and networking with such consummate professionals.”**

**“...being energized.”**

So many fabulous opportunities to learn from others this year! Four folks volunteered to present during our annual Enlightening Rounds (brief, focused presentations). Jean Piazza shared the scoop on StrateReaders, the SIM book club (see more on page 7); Kathleen Gabriel presented ideas for increasing secondary stu-

dents' motivation; Nate Bunnyfield talked about using analytics in professional development; and Gail Cheever described how she merged the essences of *Sentence Writing* and *Error Monitoring* to create an embedded strategy for a K-8 school.

Plus, Leighton Helwig reviewed *Explicit Instruction: Effective and Efficient Teaching* by Anita Archer and Charles Hughes; Rebecca Shankland reviewed *Focus: Elevating the Essentials to Radically Improve Student Learning* by Mike Schmoker; and Susan D'Aniello reviewed *The Self-Organizing School: Next Generation Comprehensive School Reforms* by Alan Bain. For this year's list of "What We're Reading at KUCRL," see page 7.

During the poster session, Diane Larson shared true examples of SIM beyond the classroom, including the use of SIM interventions in corporate offices and in the science labs at the Mayo Clinic; Sue Meyer described a successful implementation of the *Inference Strategy* with 450 ninth-grade students; and Frances Ihle introduced her work on teaching students a strategy for dealing with academic writing. Posters from various KUCRL projects rounded out the offerings.

**“...the PEOPLE and the many opportunities to network. It's great to hear what's going on across the country (actually the world!!) with SIM.”**

**“...networking and seeing old friends.”**

Oh, the networking! In addition to the annual social, this year's organized networking options included an "Orbit the Author" event, during which participants could talk infor-

mally with authors of many of the SIM manuals. We also built two "meet the author" sessions into the schedule to allow small-group discussions of *Word Mapping* with Monica Harris and the *Question Exploration Routine* with Jan Bulgren.

**“...hearing of the incredible success of the Virginia Project.”**

Six years ago, two school divisions in Virginia embarked on a journey toward full implementation of the Content Literacy Continuum. For their efforts—and their outstanding results—they received the 2011 SIM Impact Award. Read all about their successes in next month's *Stratenotes*.

**Order the videos!** You can order copies of all conference sessions using the DVD order form on page 8.

## Strategic Math Series

If you have been waiting for strategies for solving addition and subtraction problems that require regrouping, your wait is finally over! This session, presented by Bradley Kaffar, introduced two new instructional programs for solving multi-digit math problems that require regrouping. The instructional methods follow the same concrete-representational-abstract sequence found in the other programs in the Strategic Math Series. See the Edge Enterprises website for ordering information: <http://www.edgeenterprisesinc.com>

# Welcome, new SIM Professional Developers!

## **Alaska**

*Learning Strategies:* Sherri Bauer, Vicki Bowker, Brenda Montgomery, Steve Montgomery, and Joel Thomas (PD Leader: Lee Schwartz)

## **Arizona**

*Learning Strategies:* Saeeda Safi (PD Leader: Ann Hoffman)

## **Arkansas**

*Content Enhancement:* Karen Robinson, Kathy Sadler, and Gia Taylor (PD Leader: Debbie Cooke)

## **California**

*Content Enhancement:* Elsa-Jennie Bliss, Terri Elkin, Ellen Mulholland, and Rebecca Vester (PD Leader: Cathy Spriggs)

*Content Enhancement and Learning Strategies:* Allison Lee (PD Leader: Cathy Spriggs)

*Learning Strategies:* Kimberly Conley, Rebecca Gibson, and Cassi Ross (PD Leader: Bev Colombo); Carla Greathouse (PD Leader: Cathy Spriggs)

## **Florida**

*Content Enhancement:* Deborah Azeff, Christine Cheshire, and Janice Creneti (PD Leader: Jerri Neduchal)

*Learning Strategies:* Jolene Ahlschwede, Dara Kaasa, Ami McCall, Alice Walker Owen, Chandrieka Palmer, Christina Williamson, and Jami Yost (PD Leader: Sharon Bittle)

## **Illinois**

*Content Enhancement:* Lynn Stack (PD Leader: Rosemary Tralli)

*Learning Strategies:* Leighton Helwig (PD Leader: Ann Hoffman)

## **Iowa**

*Content Enhancement:* Janet Stremel (PD Leader: Ann Hoffman)

*Learning Strategies:* David Cole, Tiffany Lammers, and Julie Meyer (PD Leader: Ann Hoffman)

## **Kansas**

*Content Enhancement:* Jeanne Disney (PD Leader: Jim Knight); Marti Elford (PD Leader: Rosemary Tralli); Frances Ihle (PD Leader: Patty Graner); Patricia Whitney (PD Leader: Latricia Bronger)

## **Kentucky**

*Content Enhancement:* Tammy Wall (PD Leader: Gayla Scott)

## **Massachusetts**

*Content Enhancement:* Ben Eisen, Ana Rivera-Passalacqua, and Jason Surprise (PD Leader: Sue Woodruff)

## **Michigan**

*Content Enhancement:* Kathy Keehn (PD Leader: Sue Woodruff)

## **Missouri**

*Content Enhancement:* Susanne James and Amanda Wise (PD Leader: Rosemary Tralli)

## **North Carolina**

*Learning Strategies:* Christine Lange (PD Leader: Ann Hoffman)

## **Ohio**

*Content Enhancement:* Sharon Cooley, Susan Gardner, and Lucinda Peters (PD Leader: Peggy Graving-Reyes); Ginna Fall (PD Leader: Sue Woodruff)

## **Oregon**

*Content Enhancement:* Julie Coburn, Lindsay Deacon, Angela Scotto, and Pamela VanDerWolf (PD Leader: Cathy Spriggs)

## **South Carolina**

*Learning Strategies:* Tara Grover (PD Leader: Conn Thomas)

## **Texas**

*Content Enhancement:* Karen Gossett (PD Leader: Candace Bixler); Matthew J. Dearmon, Kathleen Green, Marisa Ramirez, and Victoria Zuehlke-Kelly (PD Leaders: Candace Bixler and Gail Cheever)

*Content Enhancement and Learning Strategies:* Mary Black (PD Leader: Peggy Graving-Reyes)

*Learning Strategies:* Becky Kephart (PD Leaders: Candace Bixler and Gail Cheever); Jill Yonnone (PD Leader: Candace Bixler); Vicky Yarbrough (PD Leader: Conn Thomas)

## **Vermont**

*Learning Strategies:* Kristina Hansen (PD Leader: Ann Hoffman)

## **Virginia**

*Content Enhancement:* Holly Drake, Lalisha Fitchett, April Harris, Kendall Hunt, Janice Largen, Terri Lent, Dana McCaleb, Hannah Sacra, and Jocelyn Washburn (PD Leader: Shari Schindele)

*Learning Strategies:* Phyllis Haynes (PD Leader: Sharon Bittle); Mary Murray Stowe (PD Leader: Ann Hoffman)

# What We're Reading at KUCRL

- *The Self-Organizing School: Next-Generation Comprehensive School Reforms* by Alan Bain
- *Organizing Schools for Improvement: Lessons from Chicago* by Anthony S. Bryk, Penny Bender Sebring, Elaine Allensworth, Stuart Luppescu, and John Q. Easton
- *Visible Learning: A Synthesis of Over 800 Meta-Analyses Related to Achievement* by John Hattie
- *Bounce: Mozart, Federer, Picasso, Beckham, and the Science of Success* by Matthew Syed
- *The Speed of Trust: The One Thing that Changes Everything* by Stephen R. Covey and Rebecca R. Merrill
- *Making Ideas Happen: Overcoming the Obstacles between Vision and Reality* by Scott Belsky
- *Unmistakable Impact: A Partnership Approach for Dramatically Improving Instruction* by Jim Knight
- *Explicit Instruction: Effective and Efficient Teaching* by Anita Archer and Charles Hughes
- *No More Teams! Mastering the Dynamics of Creative Collaboration* by Michael Schrage
- *Talent is Overrated: What Really Separates World-Class Performers from Everybody Else* by Geoff Colvin

## SIM & KUCRL on Facebook

"Like" us on Facebook to get news, announcements, and fun SIM- and KUCRL-related stuff delivered right to your Facebook news feed.

### **SIM on Facebook:** <http://www.facebook.com/kucrl.sim>

This Facebook page is for anyone interested in SIM. Encourage your SIM teachers and administrators to "like" this page, too!

### **KUCRL on Facebook:** <http://www.facebook.com/kucrl>

The official page of the Center, featuring news from all six divisions.

### **Stratopedia on Facebook:** <http://www.facebook.com/stratopedia>

Education technology research and development.

### **CRL Learns on Facebook:** <http://www.facebook.com/crllearns>

Presenting guest speakers, workshops on research practices, and other learning opportunities.

## StrateReaders

Looking for another way to expand your knowledge this year? Join StrateReaders, the interactive, virtual book club that focuses on current literature addressing our changing world and implications for education, professional development, and leadership.

Led by SIM Professional Developer Jean Piazza, the group is open to anyone—SIM Professional Developers, SIM educators, book study groups—interested in reading, learning, and contributing.

StrateReaders members read a new book every three months from September through May. Each reading period wraps up with a conference call discussion of the book.

The following are the featured books for 2011-2012:

- September-November: *Unmistakable Impact: A Partnership Approach for Dramatically Improving Instruction* by Jim Knight. Conference call: Nov. 29.
- December-February: *Switch: How to Change Things When Change Is Hard* by Chip Heath and Dan Heath. Conference call: Feb. 28.
- March-May: *The Death and Life of the Great American School System: How Testing and Choice Are Undermining Education* by Diane Ravitch. Conference call: May 29.

To join StrateReaders, log onto [www.stratopedia.org](http://www.stratopedia.org), then click on StrateReaders to contribute your thoughts and ideas.



## 2011 SIM Conference Session DVD Order Form

DVDs of several of this year's conference sessions are available for purchase at a **cost of \$15 per session**. Please use this form to order. For session descriptions, please visit <http://sim2011.kucrl.org/descriptions/>

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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VISA/Mastercard #: \_\_\_\_\_

Expiration Date: \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Personal Card

☐ Name of Institution: \_\_\_\_\_

Card Billing Address (required) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature authorization: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_

☐ **Keynote Address: Why We Must Teach Writing**—*Steve Graham*

☐ **Close Encounters with SIM Authors**—*Jan Bulgren and Monica Harris*

☐ **Closing the Gap between Professional Development Sessions and Classroom Implementation—What can Professional Developers do to Partner with Administrators?**—*Ken Geisick, Barb Millikan*

☐ **Countdown to the New GIST 2.0**—*Keith Lenz, Sheri Wagner*

☐ **The EDIT Strategy**—*Sheri Fiskum*

☐ **Enlightening Rounds and Book Reports** *Gail Cheever, facilitator*: **Book Reports**—*Susan D'Aniello, Leighton Helwig, Rebecca Shankland*. **Enlightening Round Presenters**—*Nate Bunnyfield, Gail Cheever, Kathleen Gabriel, Jean Piazza*

☐ **The Genius Model: Disciplinary-Specific Writing Strategies for the Common Core Initiative Standards**—*Ed Ellis, Rachael White*

☐ **Listening and Note-Taking Strategy**—*Gwen Berry*

☐ **Literacy Leadership Team: One of the Keys to Successful Blast-Off!**—*Sue Woodruff*

☐ **The New Stratepedia: Coaching, Data and Collaboration in the Cloud**—*Amber Nutt, Aaron Sumner*

☐ **SIM and Common Core Standards: Timeline > Leads Us To > Our Lifeline for a State**—*Latricia Bronger*

☐ **SIM for Preservice Educators**—*Barb Duchardt and Joyce Rademacher*

Number of sessions selected @ \$15 each: \_\_\_\_\_

Total for Order: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

☐ **SIM Overview Make and Take**—*Patty Graner*

☐ **Speaking with Power**—*Sue Vernon*

☐ **STRAND: Designing Professional Learning to have an Unmistakable Impact**—*Jim Knight*

☐ **STRAND: Helping Schools Move to a Better Place through a Process of Thoughtful Engagement**—*Don Deshler, Susan D'Aniello, Ken Geisick, Ann Hoffman, Donald Latham, Pam Leitzell, Jerri Neduchal, Jean Piazza, Vicki Ricketts, Sue Woodruff*

☐ **STRAND: Integrating the new "Three Rs" into your Content Enhancement Routines: Reading, Writing, and Reasoning**—*Keith Lenz, Jan Bulgren*

☐ **STRAND: Learning Strategies and Writing**—*Jean Schumaker, Mary Black, Beverly Colombo*

☐ **STRAND: Strengthen your SIM Core**—*Patty Graner*

☐ **Strategic Math Series: Addition with Regrouping and Subtraction with Regrouping**—*Bradley Kaffar*

☐ **The Virginia Project: A Six-Year Journey to Implement the CLC**—*Diane Gillam, Kendall Hunt, Jeff Crook, Ian Shenk, Cathy Guillena, Frances Warnick, Donald Latham, Julie Dauksys, Jamie Talbott, Dana McCaleb, Tim McClung, Joni Poff, John Busher*

☐ **Using Content Enhancement to Support Writing and Reading**—*Jan Bulgren*

☐ **COMPLETE SET of 2011 CONFERENCE DVDs for \$288, a 20% discount.**

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Lawrence, KS 66045-3101





## IRMA BRASSEUR-HOCK

2011 SIM Leadership Award

When Irma Brasseur-Hock enters a room, her vivacious style and passion for her work are unmistakable. Her personality invites teachers, administrators, and other professional developers to join her on an educational adventure. Her knowledge of the Strategic Instruction Model ensures that their journey is fruitful.

"She is a transformer, sharing her deep knowledge about SIM and literacy," says Patty Graner, director of professional development for the Center for Research on Learning. "Her energy and passion to improve outcomes for students who struggle are contagious."

Brasseur-Hock's first SIM trans-

formation was personal: In her first year out of college, she was assigned to teach a self-contained behavior disorder class of high school students just four years her junior. The real world of teaching was vastly different from expectations built on college coursework.

"I had no idea how to teach," she says. "SIM is what shaped me as a teacher and truly taught me what it means to earn the badge of 'teacher.'"

Now after nearly two decades as a SIM Professional Developer—and several years as a SIM teacher before that—Brasseur-Hock has influenced the work of hundreds of other teachers and countless students across the

country.

Her leadership style brings people together in a way that optimizes chances for the success of new projects. In just one illustration of her leadership skills, Brasseur-Hock met with Michigan teachers, representatives from SRI International last fall to introduce Fusion Reading as part of the Michigan Striving Readers Project. Months later, participants were still talking about her skill as a listener and supporter.

"Irma's style and grace pulled everyone in," says SIM Professional Developer Sue Woodruff, who has known Brasseur-Hock for 15 years

*The SIM Leadership Award recognizes individuals who have shown exceptional leadership and excellent service to the Strategic Instruction Model by helping educators become strategic teachers and, as a result, students become strategic learners. Recipients are standout leaders in the SIM International Professional Development Network, sharing their energy and knowledge and inspiring their colleagues to greater achievements. We recognize their achievements, their courage despite adversity, and their unwavering belief in the power of individuals to join together to make a difference in the lives of students.*



and works with her on the Striving Readers project. “She made a deep impression on those present.”

Brasseur-Hock has a knack for recognizing and capitalizing on the strengths of her colleagues as they work in partnership to achieve outstanding results for students, teachers, and schools.

“Leaders bring out the best in those around them,” Woodruff says. “Irma doesn’t try to take center stage. She is collaborative and giving.”

As a research associate at the Center, Brasseur-Hock shines in the management and leadership of projects focused on systems change, instructional delivery, professional development, and adolescent literacy. Many of these projects allow her to work directly with teachers in schools, a role she says keeps her “real” when it comes to understanding school culture and needs.

That quality—“realness”—is one

of the characteristics that make Brasseur-Hock so valuable to the Center.

“Irma represents the best of practice and the best of science,” says Don Deshler, director of the Center.

Not only can Brasseur-Hock bring a teacher’s perspective to the Center as it designs solutions for issues of implementation and instructional materials, but her grounding in research allows her to see challenges in education through a scientist’s eyes as well.

“She thinks in terms of questions that we need to be asking to

push the envelope and to shed light on the problems that we’re encountering,” Deshler says.

Brasseur-Hock helped develop some of the Center’s early online learning modules, contributed to the Content Literacy Continuum work, and was co-author of the Rubric for Educating Adolescents with Disabilities (READ). She now focuses on providing professional development and coaching for the Fusion Reading program she co-developed.

At the same time, she is a dynamic ambassador for SIM. Brasseur-Hock has influenced the work of hundreds of teachers in Michigan, Florida, Virginia, Arkansas, and beyond, and she’s mentored new SIM Professional Developers, both formally and informally.

“Irma taught me confidence in my abilities to become a stronger, more positive professional developer,” says Linda Watt, a SIM Professional

Developer from Arkansas who works closely with Irma. “I value her friendship, dedication, leadership, and partnership.”

For several years, Brasseur-Hock and Watt have traveled together to numerous rural school districts in Arkansas as part of the Arkansas Adolescent Literacy Intervention Initiative. Brasseur-Hock’s poise under pressure eased the pair through some difficult times with the project. They braved floods, tornadoes, Hurricane Katrina’s aftermath, snow, hail the size of golf balls, sleet, and ice storms to work with teachers and students. When they weren’t busy with the worst Mother Nature could throw at them, they faced challenges of an educational nature. Once, Brasseur-Hock brought all of her understanding of SIM and the educational needs of adolescents, and all her communication skills, to bear in convincing a reluctant new principal to allow SIM Learning Strategies to continue to meet the needs of students and teachers in her building.

“Irma is my ideal professional developer and my heroine, teacher, and mentor as well as an outstanding SIM professional role model,” Watt says. “She has an understanding and passion for SIM that is awesome. She willingly shares her knowledge with those she meets.”

Brasseur-Hock, who long ago earned her badge as “teacher” and “leader,” gives much of the credit for her success to SIM.

“The SIM Network and KUCRL have given me the platform to dream, create, partner, learn, develop, and test out SIM interventions,” she says. “Truly, I have been living my dream and am so honored to be a part of the wonderful SIM family.”



# KIMBERLY TOEBE

2011 SIM Leadership Award

Behind her cool, quiet exterior, Kimberly Toebe is a powerhouse of SIM leadership.

For more than 20 years, she has been a vocal proponent of the Strategic Instruction Model, facilitating countless discussions about using research-validated strategies, the importance of critical teaching behaviors, the benefits of SIM, and ensuring high-quality professional development. She has worked with special and general education teachers, administrators, curriculum coordinators, directors, and assistant superintendents.

"Kim is able to help staff, schools, and districts make connections and blend SIM into the many initiatives that are part of the complex work of classrooms, schools, and districts," says Mary Ellen O'Hare, who has known Toebe since they attended college together in the late 1970s and has worked with her in the Special School District of St. Louis County,

Mo., for nearly 15 years.

O'Hare says Toebe's collaborative, team-based leadership style and her attention to detail allow her to lead groups in a productive manner and guide them to successfully use new instructional methods for the benefit of the 24,000 students with disabilities who receive services from the Special School District of St. Louis County. About 97 percent of those students attend schools in one of the 22 other public school districts in the county. The design is unique and leads to unique challenges for the educators employed by the Special School District. Toebe is more than equal to the challenge.

"She's really done a thorough job of advocating for best practices in teaching and professional development in that district," says Patty Graner, director of professional development for the Center for Research on Learning. "When she moved to St. Louis, I think she was

just what they needed."

Though Toebe's professional skills contribute to her well-deserved reputation as an outstanding leader, her personal qualities are just as essential to her ability to inspire others. Don Deshler, director of the Center, recalls an occasion a few years ago when another professional developer faced a personal crisis and Toebe stepped up in support.

"In a situation like that, when you're acting on instinct, one's true colors really come through," he says. "Her goodness and her compassion came through, as did her ability to really be cool under fire."

For the past two years, Toebe has worked primarily with just one of the 22 general education districts in St. Louis County. Two impressive, ambitious goals guide her work with the 18 elementary, five middle, and four high schools in that district. The first is to develop a comprehensive scope and sequence of research-based



interventions to replace the uncoordinated assortment of interventions in use by special education teachers assigned to the district.

"What intervention the student received was based more on what program the teacher had been trained in or had on the shelf," Toebe says.

Toebe and Gail Wulff, another SIM Professional Developer and an administrator in the district, have begun to rectify the situation, focusing initially on reading and writing strategies. As a first step, administrators from all of the schools in the district agreed to adopt six data-based reading interventions, one being the SIM reading strategies.

Toebe's second big goal for the district is to create one districtwide pyramid of interventions for all students, a goal shared by the Special School District and the general education district. A joint committee consisting of representatives from both districts has convened to work toward this goal.

"Communication between key players from both districts is on a level that we have not had in the past," says Toebe. Alluding to the four SIM Professional Developers serving on the committee, she adds, "We are determined to lead the district to the Content Literacy Continuum. We are just starting on this goal, but all have high hopes for success."

Toebe has every reason to be optimistic. Even before she moved to St. Louis, SIM enjoyed a solid footing in St. Louis County, thanks to work conducted by O'Hare, Rosemary Tralli, and others. Among other achievements, they had embedded Learning Strategies professional development in the district's program for new teachers.

"With Kim's leadership and collaboration skills, we were able to expand the reach of SIM and add Content Enhancement to this work," says O'Hare.



Expanding the district's SIM capacity is at the heart of Toebe's third professional goal. The district employs six active SIM Professional Developers and contracts with two retired professional developers for additional work.

"We need more SIM Professional Developers to meet the needs of the 22 partner districts we serve," Toebe says.

For two years, she has proposed establishing a study group to help some of the Special School District's many excellent SIM teachers meet the requirements to become potential professional developers. To date, limited time and resources have stood in the way of administration approval for the study group, but Toebe is determined to try again next year.

Even without the green light to launch the study group, Toebe has nurtured the growth of the SIM Network in noteworthy ways. Along with colleagues O'Hare and Bev Colombo, Toebe has mentored 24 participants in Potential Professional Developer Institutes since 2004. In 2006, she helped Graner conduct a Potential Professional Developers Institute in Learning Strategies.

"She had a solid, deep understanding of SIM. She had hours of practice

under her belt," Graner says. "She brought all of that together beautifully in a package for participants."

In her work as a SIM Professional Developer, Toebe estimates she's worked with 500 teachers, who in turn have used SIM with, conservatively, 2,500 students. Add in the work she's done with other professional developers and the growth of SIM in St. Louis County, and Toebe has had tremendous reach and tremendous results in her work. Toebe's favorite success stories illustrate the extent of the influence she's had:

- The fourth-grade student who made a two-year gain in reading during one semester after learning the *Word Identification* and *Paraphrasing* strategies.
- The teacher who saw standardized test scores for her students rise from 7.2 percent of students nearing proficiency to 52.9 percent nearing proficiency after two years of instruction in the *Sentence Writing* and *Paragraph Writing* strategies.
- The veteran teacher, initially resistant to using SIM writing strategies, reporting back during a coaching visit: "This stuff really works."

And the list goes on.



# KUCRL CALENDAR 2011-2012

**Sept. 12-13, 2011**

Alaska SIM Learning Strategies  
Potential Professional Developers  
Institute  
Palmer, Alaska

**Oct. 3-5, 2011**

Instructional Coaching Level 1:  
Progress through Partnership  
Lawrence, Kan.

**Oct. 3-7, 2011**

Improving Adolescent Literacy:  
Fusion Reading for Middle and  
High School Classroom Teachers  
Part 1  
Lawrence, Kan.

**Oct. 6-8, 2011**

Instructional Coaching Level 2:  
Instruction that Makes an Impact  
Lawrence, Kan.

**Oct. 10-12, 2011**

Instructional Coaching  
Conference  
Lawrence, Kan.

**Oct. 13-14, 2011**

Creating an Impact School: An  
Overview  
Lawrence, Kan.

**Oct. 14-15, 2011**

Arkansas SIM Professional  
Developers Update Conference  
Conway, Ark.

**Oct. 14-15, 2011**

CAL-SIM: Navigating Strategic  
Instruction to Support Reading,  
Writing, and More  
San Francisco, Calif.

**Nov. 1, 2011**

CRL Learns Guest Speaker:  
Charles M. Payne, Frank P. Hixon  
Distinguished Professor at the  
University of Chicago  
Lawrence, Kan.

**Nov. 4-5, 2011**

Northeast Regional Update for SIM  
Professional Developers  
Newburgh, N.Y.

**Dec. 5-9, 2011**

Improving Adolescent Literacy:  
Fusion Reading for Middle and  
High School Classroom Teachers  
Part 1  
Lawrence, Kan.

**Feb. 27-28, 2012**

Southeast Update for SIM  
Professional Developers  
Charleston, S.C.

**June 19-21, 2012**

Fusion Reading Performance  
Academy 1  
Lawrence, Kan.

**July 10-12, 2012**

2012 International SIM  
Conference  
•NEW SCHEDULE: TUESDAY-  
WEDNESDAY-THURSDAY•  
Lawrence, Kan.

**More information and a complete calendar  
of coming events at <http://kucrl.org>**

## It's time to renew *Strateworks* for 2011-2012!

Remember, you must maintain a current *Strateworks* membership to be considered an active member of the International Professional Development Network. Your membership also gives you access to Stratedirectory Online (<http://directory.kucrl.org>), *Stratenotes*, SIMville, and Stratepubs. Membership forms are available online:

**<http://kucrl.org/sim/forms/strateworks>**

## CRL & SIM on Twitter

**@kucrl**

Center for Research on Learning

**@StrateTweets**

Strategic Instruction Model

**@Stratepedia**

Stratepedia Technology Group

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## No more waiting! Get e-Stratenotes

SIM Professional Developers now can choose between the traditional, paper-based *Stratenotes* received by mail and *e-Stratenotes*, delivered to your email inbox as a pdf file. If you are interested, email [simpd@ku.edu](mailto:simpd@ku.edu) to sign up, and *e-Stratenotes* will be sent to your email address at the same time as we send it to the printer. You'll get your SIM news first and in full color—no more waiting on the printing and mailing process. (Please make sure your email address is correct in *Stratedirectory Online*, <http://directory.kucrl.org>).



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