

Asked & answered: Advice for developing strategies classes

KUCRL Staff

Ask SIMTRAINER-L email discussion list participants for advice, and you are sure to be overwhelmed by the amount of good information you receive.

Recently **Susanne James**, assistant professor at Southern Illinois University–Edwardsville, posted the following to SIMTRAINER-L:

A teacher from a district I am working with has gotten board approval to offer a strategies class for her high school students. As soon as she asked me for help to create this class, my mind started racing with all of the possibilities! I know other schools have offered similar classes. I am looking for any words of advice, syllabi, materials, etc. Thank you!

The responses and subsequent discussion provided a wealth of information and support for anyone considering developing a strategies class for high school students.

Carla Spyksma, instructional coach with the Riverbank Unified School District, described her district’s approach to offering strategies classes at the high school and middle school levels for several years.

“Mainly, we looked at what low-performing students needed and offered those strategies,” she wrote.

The district adjusted offerings as KUCRL released new strategies or student needs changed. Carla shared two Course Maps (figure 1 on page 2) showing how the course changed from the first year to the second.

Her advice for anyone creating a new strategies course:

- Ask your supervisor to allow for modifications to the class, if needed, each year.

- Select teachers who understand how to motivate struggling students and who will help create a safe learning environment where it is okay to make mistakes.

Ginna Fall, consultant/instructional coach in Ohio, shared a course description aligned to Common Core State Standards and a Course Organizer (both available in SIMville).

“I agree that administrators need to understand that the instructor will adjust the course to meet the specific needs of the students,” she said. “The more adept the teacher is, the more flexible the course becomes.”

She offered as an example a story of a teacher who introduced the SIM Star Writing program to her students, even though the program was not part of her plans at the beginning of the year.

“Sitting at the front of the class, right up with the Smartboard, was a student with autism,” Ginna wrote. “He was totally engaged/involved/learning. He was talking back to the astronaut and turning to his classmates so they all had voice on what to answer. It was incredible.”

Berna Levine, retired from Cobb County Schools in Marietta, Georgia, wrote of her experiences: “Years ago, our 16 high school special education departments all taught several sections of Study Skills. As a teacher, and later as a supervisor, I trained all of the Study Skills teachers in the Learning Strategies to use as curriculum in these classes.”

In her own classes, she said, she selected two or three strategies each semester. Her classes worked on strategies three days a week and other skills—reading or math remediation, current events, social skills—on the two other days.

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"It was valuable then, and it is more valuable now," she said.

Jean Schumaker, president of Edge Enterprises, reminded professional developers that it's often helpful to have computers in a strategies course classroom.

"Students can cycle through learning some strategies on the computers while other students are getting live instruction and feedback from the teacher. This enables a teacher to differentiate instruction at a high level," she said. "Students can be taught different strategies in the same class period, and students can receive individual or small-group instruction from the teacher when needed."

Computerized instruction is available now for *Test Taking*, *Self-Advocacy*, *Sentence* and *Paragraph Writing* (in the Star Writer Program), *Commas*, *Capitalization*, and *Punctuation*.

Kim Toebe, instructional data coach with the Special School District of St. Louis County, contributed course descriptions from two strategy courses: Targeted Reading Strategies and Targeted Writing Strategies. The descriptions are available in SIMville.

Paula Hamp, strategy specialist at West High in Sioux City, Iowa, has been teaching a high school strategies class since 1994. It began as a class for students with learning disabilities, then expanded at the request of athletic coaches to include student athletes, then expanded again to include college-bound students. Paula now teaches the class to all freshmen.

"Our test scores are improving. Core teachers support the class by reinforcing what is taught in my class," she said. "We were told today that our dropout rate has also declined. I'm not saying it is all because of the strategies class, but I'm

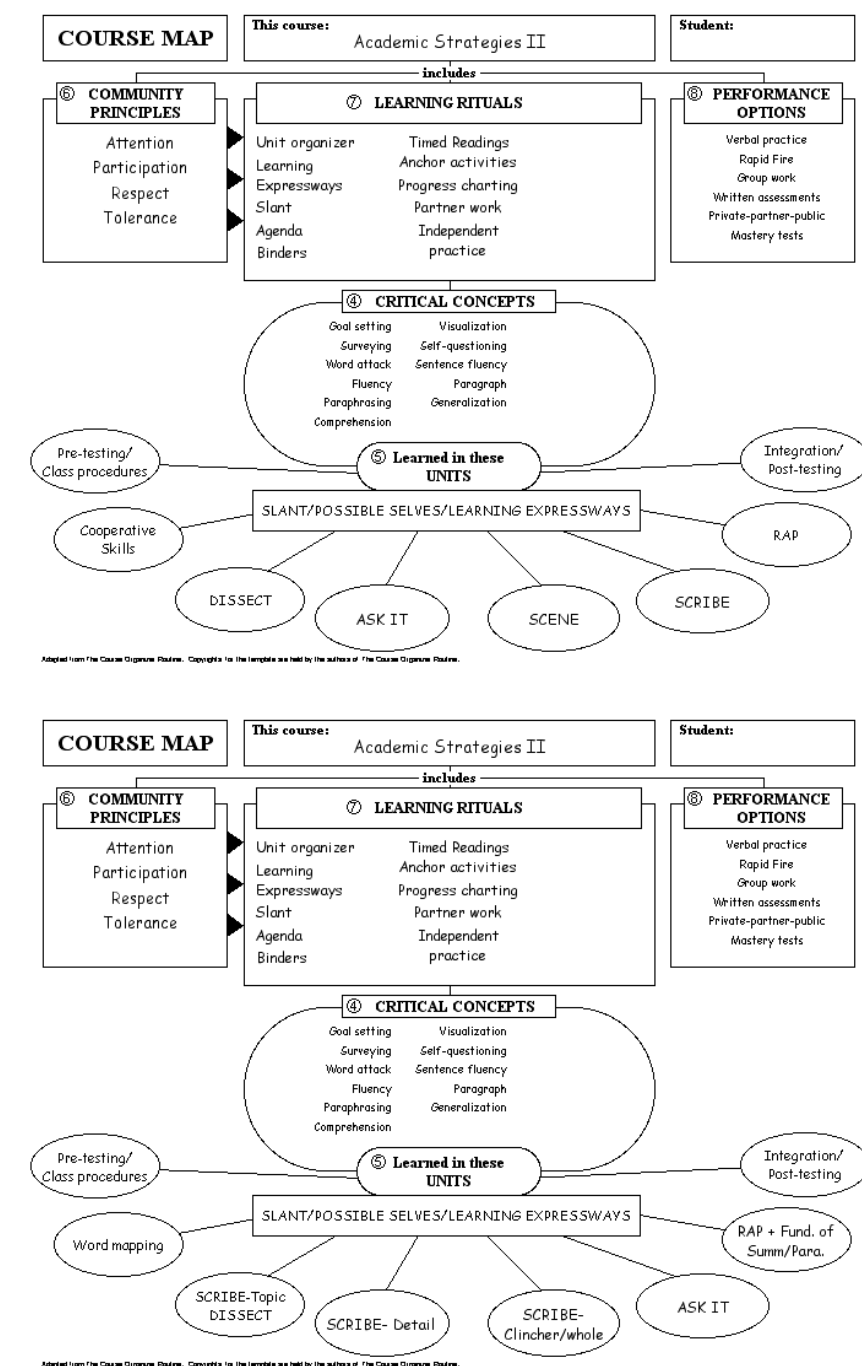


Figure 1—Academic Strategies Course Map year one (top) and year two (bottom).

sure it has had some influence on the students."

More details, advice, and course descriptions are available in the SIM General Information | High School Strategies Classes: Ideas and

Resources section of SIMville.

Be part of these discussions by subscribing to the SIMTRAINER-L email discussion list. Log in to your *Stratedirectory* profile and look for the SIMTRAINER email list sign up at the bottom of the left column.

2014 International SIM Conference

July 16–18, 2014 • Lawrence, Kan.

SHOW US YOUR DATA TOOLS

Give us your checklists, your observation tools, your data collection devices yearning to be set free.

The collection of data is so very important to our work, and we know many of you have developed tools to make data collection easier. During the 2014 conference, we

plan to display as many of these tools as you contribute. We'll also make them available as handouts, and create a place for them in SIMville once the conference is over.

On the bottom of each tool you send, include the name or names of the developers and contact informa-

tion. If you adapted a tool created by someone else, credit the original developer. Also include instructions or directions for using the tool.

BONUS: Each person who contributes a data tool for our display will receive an extra SIMsational Raffle ticket.

The 2014 conference will be July 16–18 in Lawrence, Kan., and plans are coming together. Mark your calendars and keep an eye on *Stratenotes*, where we'll announce conference details as we finalize them.

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

One detail that is final, and exciting, is that our keynote speaker will be Cynthia E. Coburn, professor at the School of Education and Social Policy, Northwestern University.

Given her research history, Coburn's keynote address is sure to offer insightful and relevant ideas that we can apply to the challenges we meet in working with and within schools.

RELATED READING

- Coburn, C.E. (2003). Rethinking scale: Moving beyond numbers

to deep and lasting change. *Educational Researcher*, 32(6), 3–12.

- Coburn, C.E., Penuel, W.R., & Geil, K.E. (2013). *Research-practice partnerships: A strategy for leveraging research for educational improvement in school districts*. William T. Grant Foundation, New York, NY.

TENTATIVE AGENDA

Registration begins at 7 a.m. on Wednesday, July 16, followed by a welcome at 8 a.m. and the keynote address at 8:30 a.m. Plans for the rest of the day include breakout sessions, lunch on your own, and the certificate ceremony before the day concludes with a social at 4:45 p.m.

Thursday's schedule includes a general session at 8:15 a.m. and breakout sessions throughout most of the rest of the day, ending with the poster session at 3:15 p.m.



Cynthia Coburn

Friday morning's schedule begins with the return of the popular kaleidoscope session, followed by a general session you won't want to miss, and wrapping up with a closing session from 11 a.m. to noon, featuring KUCRL's next director, Kathleen Lane.

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2014 International SIM Conference

SIM Professional Developer Registration Form

July 16–18, 2014 • Oread Hotel • Lawrence, Kan.

CONTACT INFORMATION

MAILING ADDRESS (SELECT ONE): ☐ HOME ☐ WORK

Name: _____

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We email **important conference information**. Please print clearly an **email address** that you check regularly: _____

Alternate email: _____

Emergency contact name and phone number: _____

REGISTRATION FEE

☐ **Certified SIM Professional Developer and Apprentice Registration Fee: \$300** \$ _____

For registrations postmarked after June 16, 2014, add \$25 late fee. \$ _____

☐ **Strateworks Renewal (optional): \$50** \$ _____

☐ I want to receive *Stratenotes* by email (pdf)

Total enclosed: \$ _____

PAYMENT INFORMATION

☐ **Check** (made payable to KUCRL)

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CONFERENCE INFORMATION

How many previous International SIM Conferences have you attended? _____

☐ This is my first as a professional developer

We may distribute or post a list of participant names and email addresses on paper or electronically. If you do not want to be included, check here: ☐

Video release

KUCRL will videotape this conference for use in future educational and publicity products. By attending, you consent to our use of any video in which you may appear.

EVENTS & MATERIALS

With your paid registration, you also receive professional development materials distributed during the conference, refreshments during breaks, and admission to the social.

HOTEL & TRANSPORTATION

Coming soon: Visit <http://sim.conference.kucrl.org> for more information about the conference, including hotel and transportation details.

CANCELLATION POLICY

If you cannot attend the conference, you must **notify KUCRL by July 2, 2014**, to receive a full refund of your registration fee. We will be unable to issue any refunds after July 2, 2014.

*Return completed registration to KUCRL, Joseph R. Pearson Hall, 1122 West Campus Rd, Rm. 517, Lawrence, KS 66045-3101
Fax: 785.864.5728 • Email: pmynsted@ku.edu
Your receipt will be available at the conference.*

NOT A SIM PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPER?

Individuals who are not certified SIM Professional Developers may attend the conference with a SIM Professional Developer sponsor. The registration fee is \$375 (\$25 late fee after June 16, 2013). **Space is limited. For registration forms and more information, contact Patty Graner (pgraner@ku.edu) or Mona Tipton (monatipton@ku.edu).**

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Kansas Coaching Project

<http://instructionalcoach.org>

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<http://pdri.kucrl.org>

Transition Coalition

<http://transitioncoalition.org>

SIM CALENDAR

April 21–May 12, 2014

Virtual Update for SIM Professional Developers

June 9–10, 2014

Iowa Update
Des Moines

June 9–13, 2014

SIM Content Enhancement
Potential Professional Developers
Institute
Austin, Texas

June 9–13, 2014

SIM Learning Strategies Potential
Professional Developers Institute
Austin, Texas

June 16–18, 2014

Meeting the Standards: SIM
Writing Strategies and the
Conventions
Lawrence, Kan.

June 16–20, 2014

SIM Learning Strategies Potential
Professional Developers Institute
Holland, Mich.

June 16–20, 2014

SIM Content Enhancement
Potential Professional Developers
Institute
Holland, Mich.

June 18–20, 2014

SIM Writing Strategies: Meeting
the Standards Including CCSS:
Paragraphs and Themes
Lawrence, Kan.

June 23–27, 2014

SIM Content Enhancement
Potential Professional Developers
Institute
Litchfield, Conn.

June 23–27, 2014

SIM Learning Strategies Potential
Professional Developers Institute
Pasadena, Calif.

June 23–27, 2014

SIM Content Enhancement
Potential Professional Developers
Institute
Pasadena, Calif.

July 16–18, 2014

International SIM Conference
Lawrence, Kan.

For a complete list of SIM events, including those not coordinated by KUCRL: **[HTTP://SIM.KURL.ORG/CLASSES](http://sim.kurl.org/classes)**

LIST YOUR OPEN SESSIONS ON THE SIM CALENDAR: We are contacted by hundreds of educators each year who have heard about SIM or CLC and are looking for opportunities to learn more. Email information about your open sessions to monatipton@ku.edu and be included on the online SIM Events Calendar.

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