Stratenotes

SIM Leadership Award:
Mary Black

The 2014 International SIM Conference honored outstanding individuals who work with us at the University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning to improve education and learning experiences for students with learning disabilities. Here, we profile **Mary Black**, recipient of the **SIM Leadership Award**, which 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. Next month, we'll introduce the recipients of the SIM Impact Award.

Julie Tollefson
KUCRL

Three years ago, Mary Black stepped into the lead role for the Raise^up Texas CLC project in Austin, Texas. The job required a person with significant knowledge of the Strategic Instruction Model™ and Content Literacy Continuum™ as well as an understanding of and experience in leading school faculty.

Raise^up Texas couldn't have picked a more perfect person for the job.

"She has demonstrated leadership and knowledge of school change and the challenges that are inherent in such reform," says Patty Graner, director of professional development at the University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning. "Significant leadership is required to ensure that schools carry out such implementation with fidelity."

Because of her leadership and commitment to SIM for more than a decade, Black is the 2014 recipient of the SIM Leadership Award.

Her road to becoming a strong SIM advocate began in California, when she was associate principal at Riverbank High School.

"As a longtime English teacher, I believed I knew a

SIM
Strategic Instruction Model®

great deal about literacy and reading," she says.

But then in her first semester at Riverbank, she and the school's reading teachers analyzed student data from a Learning Strategies class. Students who had failed every class for years increased their reading level three to five years. With schoolwide implementation of Content Enhancement Routines, the same students earned A's and B's in their classes.

"Watching teachers and students grow and feel powerful convinced me SIM was the answer to a great deal of our problems with student learners," she says.

Black left Riverbank, but she did not leave SIM. She continued to promote SIM as principal of Merced (California) Union High School and principal of Cloverdale (California) High School before she became project director for Raise[up] Texas.

"Mary is one of the smartest and most capable administrators that I have had the pleasure of working with," says Ken Geisick, SIM Professional Developer and former principal at Riverbank High School. "She's a 'teacher's teacher.'"

Geisick, now chief educational services officer at THINK Together, a California-based non-profit provider of extended learning time programs, praises Black as a skilled and masterful public school administrator.

"She is a powerful driver of change within secondary schools with veteran teachers who are often deeply tied to their traditional approaches to instruction," he says. "She has the ability to inspire teachers and administrators to rethink how they organize their instructional program, and she has the sophistication to coach experienced teachers and administrators to adopt SIM and implement the strategies and routines with fidelity."

In Her Own Words
Three Projects, Three Stories by Mary Black

Riverbank High School

During my four years at Riverbank High School, I learned and refined my leadership skills under the guidance of Dr. Ken Geisick, who along with Peggy Graving introduced me to the CLC and SIM. As part of my administrative assignment, I worked with Carla Spyksma and Cris Romero to design a reading intervention class with SIM Learning Strategies as a foundation. They were special education teachers who initially resisted the idea of including *all* students reading below grade level in their Academic Strategies class. Together, we three worked through the challenges, taught side by side, and had a moment of sheer triumph when in January of the first year, every single one of "our" students had mastered two Learning Strategies—80 percent mastery of material at their enrolled grade level. Watching them learn and love to learn kept us going, and even now, after all these years, I see their faces in Teachscape videos and feel proud I was part of such a monumental effort.

Merced High School

In the fall of 2007, when I began the MHS implementation, it had been designated a Strategic Academic Intervention Team (SAIT) school in California, which basically means the school's standardized test scores have fallen for more than three years, and a state team of educational experts "guided" you in creating school structures to increase student achievement. The leader of the state team had to be convinced that CLC and SIM would meet their requirements, but he soon became an advocate for our implementation. By the end of that year, we anxiously waited for results of our spring 2008 California Standards Test. If we improved our achievement results a minimum of a five-point growth in our Academic Performance Index (API), we were no longer "in need of improvement." Our API grew 27 points! We met all of our AYP goals for all subgroups and improved our graduation rate.

All of Black's California and Texas projects exhibited notable successes. Merced's Academic Performance Index, for example, grew 83 points during her tenure, nearly four times the state expectation of 21 points. Seven outstanding SIM teachers earned SIM certification during her time as an educational leader at Riverbank and Merced.

"Since I believed you should never ask teachers to do anything you weren't willing to do yourself,

Raise^{up} Texas

Raise^up Texas

I am deeply involved in the Raise^up Texas Project, which is implementing the CLC framework and SIM in seven middle schools in six districts in the region. The results from our external evaluators at Meadows Center indicate we are indeed improving the learning of our students in our schools. As I walk through each of the schools, I watch students and teachers actively engaged in SIM instruction and learning. I work as a partner with the principals to set expectations for SIM implementation and to understand their role as leaders. As a regional SIM coach for some of the schools (not as the project director), I even model lessons, co-teach, and support teachers to improve their instructional practices. It was exciting watching a school be successful with SIM as a principal, but it is an incredible experience to watch seven schools implement SIM as a direct result of my work as a project leader and the shared work of all of us on the Region 13 SIM team.

I co-taught Learning Strategies in reading classes and Content Enhancement Routines in general education classes, and I earned my certification as a SIM Professional Developer with them," Black says.

In addition to leading SIM projects, Black freely shares her knowledge with schools, districts, instructional coaches, teachers, and others involved in SIM work through presentations and as an administrative mentor for principals in a Newton, Iowa, project. She predicts she will always be active in SIM.

"It is the core of who I am as an instructional leader and an educator who wants to ensure that all students learn and reach their highest potential," she says.

The only way to accomplish this goal, she says, is through SIM and CLC.

REGISTER NOW:
2014–2015 SIM VIRTUAL CONFERENCE

Registration is open for the 2014–2015 SIM virtual conference. We have scheduled two opportunities for you to participate. Choose from one of the following dates:

- Winter Virtual Update: **Jan. 12– Feb. 8, 2015,** with a mandatory concluding webinar at 3 p.m. (Central) Feb. 11 or 10 a.m. (Central) Feb. 12. Registration deadline is Jan. 5, 2015.
- Spring Virtual Update: **April 13–May 10, 2014**, with a mandatory concluding webinar at 3 p.m. (Central) May 13 or 10 a.m. (Central) May 14. Registration deadline is April 6, 2015.

The webinars last about one hour. Attendance at one of the webinars is mandatory to receive update credit, so **please do not sign up for a virtual update if you are not able to attend one of the webinars**.

WHAT IS THE SIM VIRTUAL CONFERENCE?

The virtual conference is a way for you to receive credit for attending a SIM update without traveling to the international conference in Lawrence or one of the regional update conferences planned around the country. It does not replace face-to-face conferences, however. You may attend one virtual conference every four years, and you must attend at least one face-to-face conference between virtual conferences.

WHO MAY ATTEND A SIM VIRTUAL CONFERENCE?

The virtual conference is open only to SIM Professional Developers who have attended at least one face-to-face conference in the past. In addition, if you last attended a virtual conference, you must attend another face-to-face conference before registering for another virtual conference.

HOW WILL THE SIM VIRTUAL CONFERENCE WORK?

The content of the SIM Virtual Conference will be available as online streaming videos of sessions presented during the 2014 International SIM Conference in July. The conference featured keynote speaker **Cynthia Coburn**, professor in the School of Education and Social Policy at Northwestern University.

When the virtual conference begins, we will send you instructions for viewing the online videos as well as links to additional content, including handouts from the 2014 International SIM Conference, and instructions for completing the virtual conference. If you are unable to stream online videos, DVDs are available for an additional charge. If you choose the DVD option, we will send you additional information about your DVD choices.

You will be expected to watch videos of the keynote, five breakout sessions, and two general sessions (eight videos total), complete activities associated with each, and reflect on how you can use the information in your work. You must complete online evaluations and attend one of the mandatory concluding webinars before you receive credit for attending an update.

DOES THIS FULFILL THE REQUIREMENT TO ATTEND AN UPDATE EVERY TWO YEARS TO REMAIN AN ACTIVE MEMBER OF THE INTERNATIONAL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT NETWORK?

Yes, the SIM virtual conference fulfills your update requirement. Remember, to be considered active in the SIM Network, you must attend an update every two years *and* maintain a current *Strateworks* membership.

CAN I STOP ATTENDING FACE-TO-FACE CONFERENCES AND JUST COMPLETE MY UPDATES VIRTUALLY?

No. You may attend a virtual conference in lieu of a face-to-face conference every four years. In the interim, you must attend at least one face-to-face conference to maintain your active status within the network. In addition, you must have attended at least one face-to-face conference in the past before you can register for your first virtual conference.

HOW MUCH DOES THE VIRTUAL CONFERENCE COST?

The cost is $400 for the streaming video option or $425 if you opt to receive DVDs of the sessions. You will not have the travel and lodging costs associated with attending a face-to-face conference. See the registration form on page 5.

SIM PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPERS
2014–2015 SIM VIRTUAL CONFERENCE
Registration Form

Name: _____

School/District/Workplace _____

Work Address: _____ Fax: _____

City:_____ State/Province_____ ZIP:_____

Home Address: _____ Mailing Address: ❑Home Address ❑Work Address

City:_____ State/Province: _____ ZIP: _____

Phone (home) _____ (work)_____

Email address to be used for communication about this conference: _____

Choose your virtual conference session:
❑ **Winter:** Jan. 12–Feb. 8, 2015; webinar dates Feb. 11 and Feb. 12   **REGISTRATION DEADLINE: Jan. 5, 2015**
❑ **Spring:** April 13–May 10, 2015; webinar dates May 13 and May 14   **REGISTRATION DEADLINE: April 6, 2015**

AMOUNT ENCLOSED:

❑ **Registration: Streaming video option** $400 (U.S. funds) $ _____

❑ **Registration: DVD option** $425 (U.S. funds) $ _____

❑ **Strateworks membership renewal (optional)** $50 $ _____
   ❑ *Check here to receive your* Stratenotes *newsletter by email (e-Stratenotes)*

                                Total $ _____

PAYMENT INFORMATION

❑ **Check** (made payable to KUCRL)

❑ **Credit card** (Visa or MasterCard) # _____
   Expiration date: _____ 3-digit security code (req.) _____
   ❑ Personal card OR ❑ Name of institution:_____
   Billing address (req.): _____
   Authorization signature: _____ Phone:_____
   Email for paid credit card receipt: _____
❑ **P.O. #** _____ Name of institution issuing P.O.: _____

Mail or fax completed form and your payment to
KUCRL, Joseph R. Pearson Hall, 1122 West Campus Rd, Rm. 517,
Lawrence, KS 66045-3101
Fax: 785.864.5728 • Email: pmynsted@ku.edu

Refund Policy: If you cannot participate in this conference, you must notify KUCRL by the following deadlines to receive a refund of your registration fee. **There will be a cancellation fee of $25 for all cancellations.** We will be unable to issue refunds for cancellations received **after Jan. 5, 2015, for the virtual conference beginning Jan. 12, 2015, or after April 6, 2015, for the virtual conference beginning April 13, 2015.**

Please make a copy of this information for your records.

SIM CALENDAR

November 13–14, 2014
Northeast Region Update Conference for SIM Professional Developers
The College of Saint Rose, Lally School of Education
Albany, New York

January 12–February 8, 2015
Winter Virtual Update Conference for SIM Professional Developers
Mandatory one-hour webinar February 11 or February 12

January 27–29, 2015
Florida Update Conference for SIM Professional Developers

February 5–6, 2015
West Region Update Conference for SIM Professional Developers
Las Vegas

March 10–11, 2015
Southeast Update Conference for SIM Professional Developers
Charleston, South Carolina

April 13–May 10, 2015
Spring Virtual Update Conference for SIM Professional Developers
Mandatory one-hour webinar May 13 or May 14

May 27–29, 2015
SIM Learning Strategies for Preservice Educators
Lawrence, Kansas

May 27–29, 2015
SIM Content Enhancement Routines for University Content and Preservice Educators
Lawrence, Kansas

June 25–26, 2015
Maryland Update for SIM Professional Developers
Elkton, Maryland

July 15–17, 2015
International SIM Conference
Lawrence, Kansas

RENEW NOW!
It's time to renew your Strateworks membership for 2014–2015. Download your Strateworks renewal form at http://www.kucrl.org/sim/forms/strateworks/strateworks.pdf

For a complete list of SIM events, including those not coordinated by KUCRL: **HTTP://SIM.KUCRL.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.

CENTER FOR RESEARCH ON
KU LEARNING
The University of Kansas