

# Stratenotes

The University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning • Winter 2014 • Volume 23, Issue 3

## SIM Impact Award: Goodnight Middle School Simon Middle School Knox Wiley Middle School

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 three Raise<sup>up</sup> Texas schools—**Goodnight Middle School**, San Marcos, Texas; **Simon Middle School**, Kyle, Texas; and **Knox Wiley Middle School**, Leander, Texas—recipients of the 2014 **SIM Impact Award**. The award recognizes schools or school systems that have widely adopted many components of the Strategic Instruction Model<sup>™</sup> and that have carefully gathered data related to their efforts.

*Julie Tollefson*  
*KUCRL*

A few years ago, the e3 Alliance, under the direction of Susan Dawson, organized educators, business leaders, and community groups in central Texas to apply for a federal grant to support a school improvement project built on the Strategic Instruction Model<sup>™</sup> and Content Literacy Continuum<sup>™</sup>. Though their application was not successful, all of the main funders—including the Dell Foundation—believed SIM implementation was so important that they agreed to go forward and fund the Raise<sup>up</sup> Texas project without the federal money.

This year, three middle schools from Raise<sup>up</sup> Texas—Goodnight Middle School, Simon Middle School, and Knox Wiley Middle School—are recipients of the SIM Impact Award. All three schools have integrated SIM

and CLC into the culture of their schools and stand as examples of how to do so with exemplary fidelity.

### ABOUT THE PROJECT

Raise<sup>up</sup> Texas, which began the exploring and planning phase of the CLC in March 2011, chose to focus on middle school because increasing literacy skills of students of this age can significantly affect their success in high school and college. The project followed a deliberate, well-thought-out plan to full implementation that included student and teacher interviews and surveys, data analysis, and the formation and professional development of a Literacy Leadership Team (LLT) at each school.

“I learned it is absolutely critical to begin talking to teachers and administrators about their viewpoints around the issues of disciplinary literacy and whole-

school implementation,” says Mary Black, project director. “All of us on the SIM team learned a great deal about the culture and climate of each individual school. This knowledge was critical to helping us lead principals, coaches, and LLTs through the change process which has to occur with whole school implementation of the CLC and SIM.”

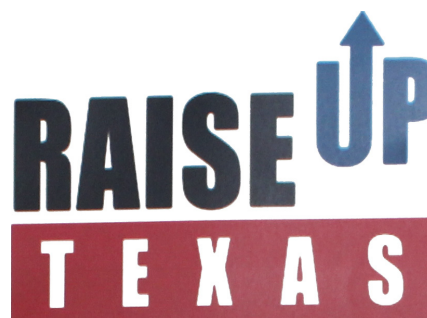
Overall, the Raise<sup>UP</sup> Texas project schools (eight middle schools in all) realized significant gains:

- In 2011, 29 percent of seventh-grade at-risk students met standards in reading. In 2012, that number rose to 45 percent.
- For at-risk eighth-graders, 30 percent met reading standards in 2011 and 51 percent met the standards in 2012.
- On modified assessments, 87 percent of at-risk seventh-graders met reading standards in 2011, and 83 percent met standards in 2012. For eighth-graders, those numbers were 55 percent in 2011 and 91 percent in 2012.
- On the State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR), Raise<sup>UP</sup> schools out-performed

matched comparison schools in sixth-, seventh-, and eighth-grade math, eighth-grade science, and seventh-grade writing.

“As a firm believer in the power of the SIM Learning Strategies to help struggling readers improve their reading comprehension, it was still unexpected to see the results from the Meadows Center’s external evaluation, which showed that our students in LS classes outperformed students across the nation—more than five times the national rate,” says Black.

But the best thing about the project for Black so far is the way all three



of the schools being honored this year have integrated SIM into their culture.

“SIM is not an event any more, just what teachers and students do every day,” she says.

## GOODNIGHT MIDDLE SCHOOL

SAN MARCOS, TEXAS

At Goodnight Middle School, classroom teachers know what is expected of them: Have a Course Organizer ready to hand out on Parents’ Night during the first week of school, have a Unit Organizer completed and ready to co-construct with students on the first day of a new unit, use every Content Enhancement Routine in their instructional toolbox at least once during a unit.

“The key to the success of the project was the support and guidance of our administration,” says Judy Uzzell, campus SIM instructional coach. “Our principal, Steve Dow, could see that this was good for kids, and he insisted that everyone in the building use it.”

Greer Del Rio, campus SIM instructional coach, agrees.

“Though it is hard to pinpoint just one thing, the initial key is support from campus and district administrators,” she says. “They have to be the driving force from the beginning, encouraging and supporting teachers.”

Del Rio also believes data played a starring role in the success of SIM at the school, especially in overcoming skepticism.

“Really show the research and data,” she says. “It will save time in the long run.”

Since the Raise<sup>UP</sup> Texas project began, the school’s STAAR scores have improved in all areas, and Goodnight outperformed the other middle school in the district.

“What surprised me was that the students were able to see how SIM helped them so quickly,” says Uzzell. “Students seem more confident in the content areas.”

## SIM EVENTS CALENDAR

**SUBMIT YOUR SIM  
EVENT\* DETAILS TO  
SIMP@KU.EDU**

\*Events must be open  
to public registration

## SIMON MIDDLE SCHOOL

KYLE, TEXAS

Among the biggest challenges in implementing SIM and CLC at Simon Middle School is one that recurs every year: Staff turnover.

"Most of our teachers are new-to-profession teachers who are coming into the school systems with a perception of teaching and learning the way they were taught when they attended public school," says Matt Pope, principal. "The other group has only been teaching a few years and have developed instructional habits that are not congruent to SIM and best practices."

Pope has developed a couple of strategies to combat these potential roadblocks: The school welcomes student teachers from a nearby university. Plus when recruiting new teachers, he seeks only those who have used SIM or are willing to learn, and staff use the Course Organizer to plan the school year and other SIM devices during staff development.

"I will never work in another school or school system that does not implement SIM," says Pope, who attended a Potential Professional Developer Institute this summer to become a SIM Professional Developer himself. "The biggest advantage of SIM is it gives all staff a common language

of instruction. It allows every teacher and leader on campus to be able to collaborate on instruction no matter the content."

Kristyna Brewer, SIM/literacy coach, says campus leadership's "no excuses" policy has been essential to the success of the project at Simon, and students are the biggest beneficiaries.

"We have seen tremendous growth in our students. Since the Raise<sup>UP</sup> Texas project has started, our students are quickly closing the academic achievement gap," she says.

In state test results, reading results for grades six through eight improved by 7 percentage points (64 percent in 2012 to 71 percent in 2013); math grades six through eight improved 7 percentage points (69 percent in 2012 to 76 percent in 2013); seventh-grade writing up 5 percentage points from 57 percent in 2012 to 62 percent in 2013; eighth-grade science up 13 points, from 65 percent to 78 percent; and eighth-grade social studies up 29 points, from 38 percent to 67 percent.

The biggest surprises, says Brewer, have to do with teacher buy-in and student confidence.

"Student confidence has been through the roof," she says.

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## KNOX WILEY MIDDLE SCHOOL

LEANDER, TEXAS

During the planning phase of the Raise<sup>UP</sup> Texas project, Knox Wiley Middle School staff identified four core values essential to their goals: 1) all students' literacy skills will improve, 2) all teachers have a role in improving students' literacy, 3) success builds self-esteem, and 4) a commitment to ongoing and intentional staff development, collaboration, and instructional coaching. Their vision included a commitment to develop a literacy-rich culture.

Kim Watts, APS language arts teacher and SIM coach, has been with the project from the beginning. In fact, she helped open Wiley Middle School in 2006 in one of the fastest growing school districts in Texas. She was not completely unfamiliar with SIM when the Raise<sup>UP</sup> Texas project began.

"I had heard a little about the program from teachers I had a great deal of respect for, so I knew this would be a good program to bring to our campus," she says.

In the beginning, though, she says, SIM seemed rigid.

"With time, teachers came to see that the SIM process is the anchor," she says. "From this structure, teachers developed unique and creative lesson designs. The caliber of thoughts that students pursue is at a significantly higher level."

The school created an intervention course for students reading below grade level, and pre/post test data indicated that students demonstrated significant gains in sentence writing skills as a result.

"By using SIM strategies in my classroom, I now not only push for mastery, I can expect mastery," says Watts. "Before, students were able to get by with a 70 percent. With this program, 70 percent is not mastery. I love that. My students earn A's—hard-earned, well-deserved A's."

### KEYS TO SUCCESS

For Watts at Wiley, the first key to success is "all hands on deck."

"It is imperative to find ways to help naysayers find their footing in the program," she says.

The second key is to have a SIM coach available to help teachers.

"Some teachers just need to talk out their concerns, some need examples, some need a person to plan with, or teach with, or observe," she says. "All of this is available by having a coach on campus."

Watts has this advice for teachers: "The first time you use a routine or go through a strategy, you are using training wheels. It gets easier, and it will become a natural part of your teaching tools that you rely on."

Uzzell at Goodnight Middle School offers this tip for schools that are adopting SIM and CLC: "My advice would be to commit to using SIM with fidelity."

She also recommends building slowly, becoming comfortable with the process, and making choices based on student needs.

Pope, at Simon Middle School, advises administrators that success comes from being fully committed to SIM and CLC.

"Any administrator in the process of wanting to implement needs to know that you have to go all in," he says. "There is no half-way."

## FOLLOW US!

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## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT REPORTING

Submit your SIM professional development session reports electronically. Visit the following link:

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/PostPDDataSubmissionSurvey>

We use the information we get from you for the *Stratenotes* newsletter, to help shape future offerings, and for other SIM-related projects. We look forward to hearing about all the great work you're doing in the field!

# 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 6.





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.: \_\_\_\_\_

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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.**

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## SIM PROGRAMS FOR PRESERVICE EDUCATORS

### CONTENT ENHANCEMENT ROUTINES FOR COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY CONTENT AND PRESERVICE EDUCATORS

May 27–29, 2015 • Lawrence, Kansas

\$975 early bird registration; \$1,000 after April 1, 2015

#### Would you like to organize and deliver your instruction in a way that...

- Surfaces the essential content and promotes critical/higher order thinking?
- Engages all learners in the content?
- Creates a learning partnership between you and your students?

#### Do you instruct future teacher educators who will need to...

- Teach in inclusive settings using evidence-based practices?
- Increase student learning and manipulation of essential subject matter content while improving comprehension?
- Increase students' long-term improvement of adolescent literacy skills?

Whether you seek ways to improve your own instruction or the instructional skills and practices of future educators you teach, this session is designed for you.

#### Materials

*Routines for Planning and Leading Learning*  
Course Organizer Routine  
Unit Organizer Routine

*Routines for Teaching Concepts*  
Concept Mastery Routine

*Routines for Exploring Text, Topics, and Details*  
Framing Routine  
Question Exploration Routine

This three-day, hands-on class will challenge you to think deeply about what your students need to know as you explore methods for teaching academically diverse groups of students. Using your own course materials, you will learn how to select critical content, identify underlying relationships, and construct instructional devices that will help all students master the essential content of a course.

### SIM LEARNING STRATEGIES FOR PRESERVICE EDUCATORS

May 27–29, 2015 • Lawrence, Kansas

\$975 early bird registration; \$1,000 after April 1, 2015

#### Are you looking for...

- Proven effective tools to share with your teacher education students?
- Tools to teach students how to learn and how to use what they have learned to solve problems and be successful?
- Tools to teach students how to write a variety of sentence types?
- Tools to teach students how to express themselves and engage with others more successfully?

This class will equip college/university educators in teacher education programs to share empirically validated Strategic Instruction Model™ (SIM) interventions with prospective teachers. SIM Learning Strategies, a comprehensive set of literacy tools designed to dramatically improve the learning and performance of adolescents, are used in more than 40,000 classrooms internationally. Completion of this session opens the door to SIM Learning Strategies for you, your teacher education students, and their future students struggling with literacy issues.

#### Materials

*Reading/Acquisition Strategies*  
Paraphrasing Strategy  
Word Identification Strategy  
Inference Strategy

*Expression Strategies*  
Proficiency in the Sentence Writing Strategy

*Community Building*  
Focusing Together

This class will focus on the SIM Learning Strategies Curriculum theory and application. You will learn about the more than 30 years of research behind the principles and components of SIM and the Learning Strategies Curriculum and will meet key researchers and authors. You also will receive sample syllabi, books, and teaching resources that can be used to modify existing courses or construct new courses.

**MORE DETAILS AND REGISTRATION INFORMATION ARE AVAILABLE  
IN THE SIM EVENTS SECTION OF THE SIM WEBSITE: <http://sim.kucrl.org>**

# SIM CALENDAR

**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  
Orlando, Florida

**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 College/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

For a complete list of SIM events, including those not coordinated by KUCRL: [HTTP://SIM.KUCRL.ORG/CLASSES](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](mailto:monatipton@ku.edu) and be included on the online SIM Events Calendar.

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

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