



STRATENOTES



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We're Now the "Center for Research on Learning"

You've heard of parents creating a new child, but what about a child creating a new parent? That's what the Institute has done -- created a new parent organization. It is called the **Center for Research on Learning**. By serving as a parent organization, the Center for Research on Learning (KU-CRL) is capable of having several institutes and/or projects operate under its umbrella. Thus, the KU-IRLD will be an organizational entity within the Center for Research on Learning. In the future, we may include additional entities within the Center if we take on new research projects or emphases.

Does the Institute still exist? Absolutely, our long-standing commitment to improving the academic success and life adjustment of individuals who have learning disabilities has not been lessened, in the least, by this change. Any research, product development, or training activities that deal primarily with learning disabled populations will be conducted under the auspices of the Institute. For example, we just submitted a large grant proposal to the National Institute of Health to conduct intervention research on populations that are very carefully defined as having learning disabilities. This project, if funded, would become part of other ongoing Institute activities that focus specifically on learning disabilities. In short, by more clearly specifying the focus of the Institute's workscope, we will be able to give the concentrated attention to the overwhelming challenges that continue to face these individuals and those who serve them in schools.

Why the change? There are three major reasons behind the construction of a new parent organization and the choice of our new name. First, as you know, in recent years there have been marked changes within fields that provide support services to individuals with LD. The major thrust of all of these changes has been to provide services within the mainstream of society (be that the regular classroom or the

community). In large measure, our research has reflected these changes (e.g. all of our work on Content Enhancement Procedures).

Consequently, the majority of our work is now conducted in regular classrooms and less in settings that are exclusively considered special education environments. In those settings, we have expanded the focus of our research populations from just individuals with learning disabilities to students who are at-risk for failure for a variety of reasons. In fact, much of our current work focuses on improving instruction for all students.

Second, because we spend the majority of our time working in regular classrooms with a broad array of students, we have often encountered resistance to our name (i.e., IRLD) and what we are *perceived* to represent. We have often been denied admission to schools to conduct research, excluded from classrooms to provide instruction to students with validated instructional procedures, discouraged by federal funding agencies in regular education from submitting applications for external funds, and ignored in press releases because of our current name and its perceived association with special education and all that it represents. Once outsiders become familiar with the actual work that we do and our approach to and success in solving educational problems, most of the initial reservations disappear; however, in many instances, we are being denied the opportunity to demonstrate our competence because of the initial impression given by our name.

Third, and most importantly, many of you have told us of the resistance that you have sometimes encountered by regular educators and administrators in the process of planning and delivering training. You report being challenged about the appropriateness of the SIM interventions for students other than those who are formally classified as having an LD. You have also told us that you see our work as being not only appropriate for students with LD but for the majority of students. Accordingly, many of you have repeatedly told us that our name should reflect this reality.



What are the benefits of this change?

This restructuring of our research organization is going to allow us to access and effectively work with a broader segment of the educational community. It will not only allow our research to have a broader impact on the enormous problems of at-risk students in our nation, but also it should give us access to additional funding sources to us. Additionally, by maintaining the Institute for Research with Learning Disabilities within the overall organizational structure, we will still be able to continue to pursue funding and conduct research activities that are specifically related to special education and learning disabilities. We will also be able to maintain an identity that is extremely well known nationally and internationally.

What are the practical ramifications of this change?

- The field will now be seeing our work associated with two organizations. Depending on the source of our support funds, our target audience, etc., some of our work may appear under the rubric of the Center for Research on Learning. On other occasions, it will appear in conjunction with the Institute. We can also envision situations in which both the Center and Institute will be acknowledged because each will be involved in the effort in some capacity.
- Our address and phone number remain the same. However, our phone will now be answered with the greeting, "Center for Research on Learning."
- You can now start using the name of the "Center for Research on Learning" if you feel that it best meets your purposes, or you can continue using the Institute's name as appropriate.
- Most importantly, our mission has not changed. Nor have the people who are involved in the work we are doing!

In summary, we are very excited with this change in our organizational structure. We feel that it will greatly enhance our ability to be more responsive to the enormous set of challenges that await those who work with students who are struggling in school, for whatever the reason!

Update Meeting in San Francisco

A regional update session for SIM trainers will be held in conjunction with the International Learning Disabilities Conference in San Francisco on February 27, 1993 from 1:00 p. m. to 5:00 p. m. The meeting will be held in the San Francisco Hilton Hotel (333 O'Farrell Street). It is tentatively scheduled to be held in Parlor 1. Among the topics to be covered will be: • "Inclusion and SIM," • "The Visual Imagery Strategy," • "Math Strategies and Meaning," and much more. Among the presenters at this meeting will be Cecil Mercer, Jean Schumaker, and Don Deshler.

SIM Impacts At-risk Student-athletes

Five years ago, the Institute was given the assignment by the executive vice-chancellor to turn around the academic performance of at-risk student-athletes. Mike Hock, Jean Schumaker, and Don Deshler have overseen the development and implementation of the program. The results have been extremely successful. The grades of the student-athletes have risen steadily, the number of students who have been declared academically ineligible has been reduced to nearly zero, and in 1991 the GPA received by the KU athletes was the highest recorded in the Big 8 Conference. The entire program is based on SIM. In addition, the concept of the "Strategic Learner Apprenticeship" (see Strategram, Volume 5, Number 2) has been developed. Under this concept, students are provided with an ongoing apprenticeship in "learning how to learn." The goal is to quickly put students into a position to be independent learners and performers in a university setting. The grades from the Fall Semester, 1992 showed that the lowest grade received by any of the students in freshman English, one of the toughest courses for beginning students, was a C!!

