STRATENOTES

A Preview of the New Unit Organizer Routine

The newest addition to the Content Enhancement Series, is the Unit Organizer Routine. This guidebook should be available to order this fall. The Unit Organizer Routine focuses on how teachers can "frame" a unit for students in order to promote learning. A unit is any "chunk" of content that a teacher selects to organize information into lessons and that ends in some type of test or closure activity. Typically, each subject-area course (e.g., science, health, social studies, math, English) is divided into several such units. By framing a unit, the teacher helps students see and understand the "big picture" of the unit.

The Unit Organizer Routine can be a powerful teaching tool when used by itself, but it can be especially powerful when it is used systematically and in combination with other routines. Specifically, the effectiveness of the Unit Organizer Routine can be enhanced if it is used in conjunction with the Course Organizer Routine (a routine for introducing a course that is currently being developed) and the Lesson Organizer Routine (a routine for highlighting key information and relationships among information within lessons).

An example of a completed Unit Organizer is presented in Figure 1.

This Unit Organizer was created for a unit on the causes of the Civil War in a high school U.S. history class. The unit focuses on helping students understand "sectionalism" in the United States as a cause of the Civil War. The idea of "sectionalism" is explained by helping students see the differences between three sections of the nation: the North, the South, and the West. The teacher planned to present information during the unit about the geographic sections of the United States, the political, social, and economic differences between these sections, the events that pulled these sections apart, and the leaders that influenced the events in each of these sections. (Notice that the first letter in each part of the unit can be reorganized to spell the word LEAD. Therefore, we can help students remember the big ideas of this unit by posing the question, "How did sectionalism LEAD the U.S. into civil war?"

The Unit Organizer is not dependent on any textbook and can be used to tie information in a unit together for which there is no textbook or pull multiple textbook sections, chapters, or sources together to create the unit. It can reflect how the teacher thinks about the information in the unit, or it can reflect how the students might need to think about the content of the unit in order for them to make sense of the information and get the "big picture" that ties all the information in the unit together.

The Sections of the Unit Organizer

Each area of the Unit Organizer is designed to contain a specific type of information related to the unit. The type of information and its purpose are listed below for each area. (The section numbers below correspond to the numbers on Figure 1.)

SECTION 1
Current Unit
This section contains the title of the new unit. This may be the name of the section of a textbook on which a unit may be based or the name given to the unit by the teacher. In Figure 1, the name of the current unit is "Causes of the Civil War."

SECTION 2
Last Unit/Experience
The information is this space is the name of the last unit that was covered or the last experience the students have had that relates to the current unit. In Figure 1, the name of the Last Unit was "Growth of the Nation."

SECTION 3
Next Unit/Experience
The information in this space is the name of the unit or experience that will follow the Current Unit. In Figure 1, the name of the Next Unit is "The Civil War."

SECTION 4
Bigger Picture
The information in this section is the name of the idea or theme that holds several units together. The vertical dotted lines in this section can be made solid to indicate that "The Bigger Picture" may not include the previous or upcoming unit. In general, the name of "The Bigger Picture" helps students to understand what multiple units have in common. In Figure 1, the theme that holds the three depicted units together is "The roots and consequences of civil unrest."

SECTION 5
Unit Map
The Unit Map includes two types of information. The first, the Unit Paraphrase, is written in the oval at the top of the section. It is a translation of the main idea of the Current Unit into words the students can easily understand or into a word or words that reveal the central meaning of the unit title. In Figure 1, the Unit Paraphrase translates the central idea behind the words, "Causes of the Civil War" into "Sectionalism."

The second type of information in the Unit Map is a graphic depiction of how the unit content is organized. To create the map, key words are written within geometric shapes to indicate the parts of the unit to be taught and page numbers of the text related to each part. A horizontal dotted line can be used in each geometric shape to separate the numbers of pages in the text where relevant information can be found from the name of the section. As a general rule, the Unit Map should have seven or fewer parts. In Figure 1, the parts of the Unit Map which correspond to the four parts of the unit to be covered include: "Geographic Regions," "Sectional Differences," "Series of Events," and "National Personalities."

Within the Unit Map, lines are drawn between the geometric shapes, and word labels are provided for each line to indicate the relationships between the sections and the main idea of the unit. The words labels are written such that students can read the words in one geometric shape, the line label, and the words in the connected geometric shape to create a complete sentence. As such, the lines and line labels are critical elements that help students understand how the parts of the unit are connected. Research has shown that students who are given Unit Maps that include lines and line labels remember substantially more about a unit than students who are given Unit Maps without them.

SECTION 6
Unit Relationships
In this section are written the names of the relationships that might be important to look for as unit information is processed. In Figure 1, for example, the sections of the nation must be compared and contrasted in order to understand how their differences led to the Civil War within a cause and effect relationship.

SECTION 7
Unit Self-test Questions
In this section are written questions that students should be able to answer when the unit is complete. Students can ask themselves these questions to review the content of the unit. One of the questions that students should be able to answer at the end of the unit depicted in Figure 1 is, "What was sectionalism as it existed in the U.S. of 1960?"

SECTION 8
Unit Schedule
The information in this section summarizes the schedule of required tasks, activities, or assignments associated with learning the information in the unit. As shown in Figure 1, dates are written to the left in the square boxes, and associated tasks, activities, and assignments are written in the rectangular boxes.

SECTION 9
Expanded Unit Map
After the unit is initially launched or introduced, the second page (or back side) of the Unit Organizer is used throughout and at the end of the unit to expand the Unit Map through the addition of critical subtopics and key vocabulary that are identified as lessons or parts of the unit are completed. The Expanded Unit Map for the unit on the Causes of the Civil War depicted in Figure 2.

SECTION 10
New Unit Self-test Questions
This space below the Expanded Unit Map is used to write additional questions that the teacher and students identify as the unit is explored. In the Expanded Unit Map.

Implementing the Unit Organizer Routine
Linking Steps are used by the teacher to present the content of the unit in an interactive way to students. The Linking Steps guide how the Unit Organizer is used during three phases of unit instruction: (a) Launching the Unit (i.e., introducing the unit), (b) Floating Unit Ideas (i.e., maintaining unit ideas and themes as unit content is taught, and (c) Tying Up the Unit (i.e., gaining closure on unit content by helping students see how unit ideas hold all the information together). The Linking Steps are as follows.

STEP 1
Create a Context
In the first step, the Unit Organizer is used to help students see how information in the current unit is connected to previous and future learning. Sections 1-4 of the Unit Organizer are filled in or mentioned to create a context for learning or for review.

STEP 2
Recognize Content Structures
In this step, information is presented to help students see how the information in the unit can be structured or restructured. Here, the Unit Map is either originally drawn in Section 5, is expanded in Section 9 of the Unit Organizer, or is reviewed.

STEP 3
Acknowledge Unit Relationships
After students see how unit information can be structured, students are asked in this step to look for and identify possible relationships that might be important in understanding the information. The relationships are written in Section 6 of the Unit Organizer or are reviewed.

STEP 4
Frame Unit Questions
In this step, the teacher leads students to generate and discuss the types of questions that might be posed about important relationships within the unit and the types of information that might be used to answer these questions. The teacher also elicits questions that the students would like to be able to answer at the end of the unit. Generated questions are written in Section 7 of the Unit Organizer on the day that the Unit is launched and in Section 10 on subsequent days.

STEP 5
Tie Content to Tasks

In the final step, the Unit Schedule is created or mentioned to help students see how tasks are related to helping them answer Unit Self-test Questions and understanding relationships depicted in the Unit Map. The Unit Schedule is reviewed regularly to help students become aware of work completed, upcoming work, and progress in learning the content of the unit.

Variations will be required in the way the Linking Steps are used, depending on whether the Unit Organizer is being used to (a) launch a unit, (b) keep unit ideas afloat as the unit progresses, or (c) tie up the unit at the end of the voyage. Variations associated with the use of Linking Steps to accomplish these three phases of instruction within a unit are discussed in detail in the Unit Organizer Guidebook. However, Figure 3 shows a brief summary of how implementation of the Linking Steps shift as the Unit Organizer is used throughout the unit.

Content Enhancement Training Update

With the publication of the Unit Organizer Routine and the Concept Anchoring Routine, we now have four routines to ground our work with regular classroom teachers. Several more Routines are on the way for next summer. Currently, we are recommending a two to three hour block of time for training in each routine. Too much? Definitely not. Beginning this fall, Content Enhancement Guidebooks will only be sold for training when an order has the approval of a SIM trainer in good standing with the CRL. We are finding that this is the only way to get the job done right. Any comments?

Lesson Organizer Revisions

A revised version of the Lesson Organizer Routine will be available in September. The examples in the appendix have been matched with the Unit Organizer Routine examples. The Challenge Question on the Lesson Organizer is highlighted on the form and is explained in more detail in the text. In addition, we have worked on a cleaner formatting and brighter cover. Take a look at it!

Prepare for the Self-Questioning Strategy

With the publication of the Visual Imagery Strategy last year, we began to expand our training options in promoting reading comprehension beyond the Paraphrasing Strategy. The publication of the Self-Questioning Strategy this fall completes the trio set. This is what we have been waiting for! Now, we can begin to realize our original vision of strategy selection and use. Students should be taught all three comprehension strategies and then be taught how to choose which strategy is appropriate for which type of reading task. Are we talking metacognitive training here or what? You bet!

THE SWEET SIXTEEN NATIONAL SIM TRAINERS' CONFERENCE

Our 1994 National SIM Trainers' Conference in Lawrence, attracted 114 trainers from 24 states. Iowa, Kansas, Nebraska, and Minnesota were the states with the greatest representation. Highlights from the conference were the thought-provoking and informative address and workshop given by Dr. Doug Carnine from the University of Oregon, the instructive and inspirational luncheon address by Gail Cheever of Bakersfield, CA, the presentations of the Gordon Alley Partnership Awards and the SIM Leadership Awards for trainers, the excellent presentations in the breakout sessions by trainers from across the nation, and the wonderful line dancers who performed on Thursday evening.

The Gordon Alley Partnership Awards were presented to Robert Taylor, Assistant Superintendent of Lawrence Public Schools; Conn Thomas, West Texas A & M, Canyon, TX; Ann Hoffman, Colorado Springs, CO, and Gary Clark, University of Kansas Department of Special Education. Winners of the SIM Leadership awards were Fran Clark, Wichita State University, Connie Gentle, Orlando, FL, and Jerri Neduchal, Orlando, FL. Also recognized as having been nominated for this new award were Anne Millea and JoAnn Graham, Omaha, NE, Vicky Day, Hartford, CT, and Rosemary Tralli, Glastonbury, CT.

A special thanks goes to the following persons who presented sessions for their peers: Gail Cheever, Fran Clark, Deborah Fennlley-Beaty, Barbara Glaeser, Alice Henley, Joan M. Hofmann, Frank Kline, Sandra Ludwig, Beverly Mommsen, Jerri Neduchal, Joyce Rademacher, Margaret Scarrozzo, Kim Short, Philip Tetreault, Tony Van Reusen, and Mary Whitaker. Persons from the CRL staff who deserve recognition for their sessions are Dan Boudah, Janis Bulgren, Don Deshler, Joe Fisher, Mike Hock, Jim Knight, Keith Lenz, David Scanlon, Jean Schumaker, and Sue Vernon.

The staff received several notes of appreciation from participants. Perhaps the note from Linda Estes and Alberta Roth, who are newly certified trainers from Texas, sums up the experience for others. In their note of thanks they wrote, "As new trainers we found the trainer sessions most valuable and especially rewarding. We feel attendance at the seminar should be a must for brand new trainers. We learned so much from the presentations and from speaking with other trainers." BRAVO! This makes all the effort worthwhile.   — Janet Roth

Figure 1

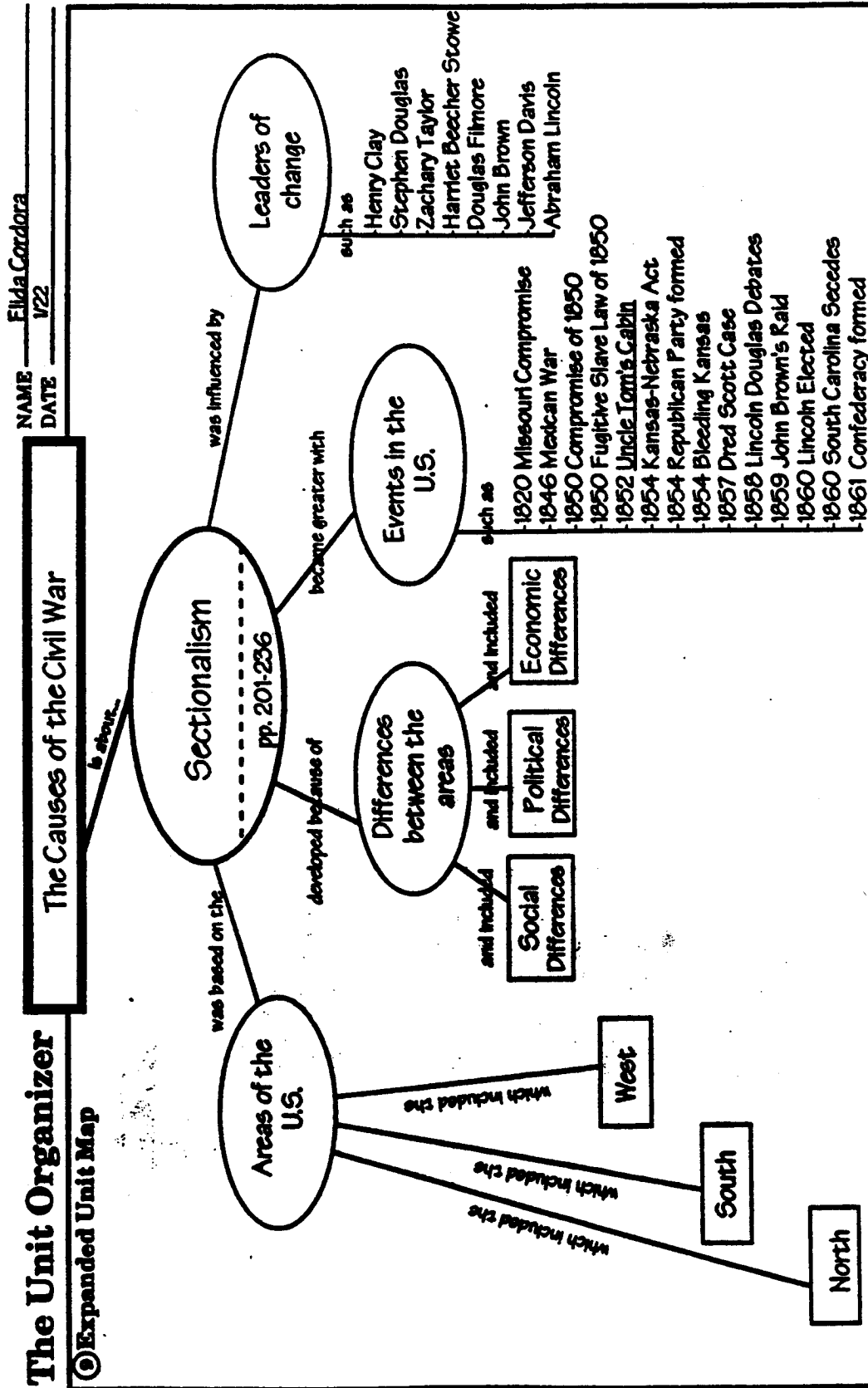## The Unit Organizer

NAME _Elda Cordova_
DATE _1/22_

④ BIGGER PICTURE

→ The roots and consequences of civil unrest. ←

② LAST UNIT/Experience	① CURRENT UNIT	③ NEXT UNIT/Experience
Growth of the Nation	The Causes of the Civil War	The Civil War

⑤ UNIT MAP

is about...

Sectionalism
pp. 201-236

was based on

was influenced by

became greater with

emerged because of

- **Leaders across the U.S.**
- **Events in the U.S.**
- **Areas of the U.S.**
- **Differences between the areas**

⑥ UNIT SCHEDULE

Date	Activity
1/22	Cooperative groups - over pp. 201-210
1/25	Quiz
1/29	Cooperative groups - over pp. 210-225
	"Influential Personalities" project due
1/30	Quiz
2/2	Cooperative groups - over pp. 225-234
2/6	Review for test
2/7	Review for test
2/8	Test

⑦ UNIT SELF-TEST QUESTIONS

What was sectionalism as it existed in the U. S. of 1860?

How did the differences in the sections of the U.S. in 1860 contribute to the start of the Civil War?

What examples of sectionalism exist in the world today?

⑧ UNIT RELATIONSHIPS

descriptive
compare/contrast
cause/effect

Figure 2

The Unit Organizer

① **Expanded Unit Map**

The Causes of the Civil War

Sectionalism
pp. 201-236

is about

was influenced by

Leaders of change

such as
- Henry Clay
- Stephen Douglas
- Zachary Taylor
- Harriet Beecher Stowe
- Douglas Filmore
- John Brown
- Jefferson Davis
- Abraham Lincoln

became greater with

Events in the U.S.

such as
- 1820 Missouri Compromise
- 1846 Mexican War
- 1850 Compromise of 1850
- 1850 Fugitive Slave Law of 1850
- 1852 Uncle Tom's Cabin
- 1854 Kansas-Nebraska Act
- 1854 Republican Party formed
- 1854 Bleeding Kansas
- 1857 Dred Scott Case
- 1858 Lincoln Douglas Debates
- 1859 John Brown's Raid
- 1860 Lincoln Elected
- 1860 South Carolina Secedes
- 1861 Confederacy formed

developed because of

Differences between the areas

- *and included* Economic Differences
- *and included* Political Differences
- *and included* Social Differences

was based on the

Areas of the U.S.

- *which included the* West
- *which included the* South
- *which included the* North

How did national events and leaders pull the different sections of the U.S. apart?

Figure 3

Implementing the Unit Organizer Routine

	Launching the Unit	Floating the Unit	Tying Up the Unit
GOAL	The new unit is introduced to students using the Unit Organizer Routine.	Attention is drawn to unit ideas as each unit part is completed or introduced.	The Unit Organizer is used to review unit content and promote student confidence.
C	The CURRENT UNIT is related to the LAST UNIT, the NEXT UNIT, and to a BIGGER IDEA in the course.	Each unit part is reviewed in conjunction with the UNIT MAP.	The UNIT MAP, the EXPANDED UNIT MAP, and relationships to other units and ideas are reviewed.
R	The UNIT MAP is revealed through a Unit Paraphrase and a Content Map.	Key information is added to the EXPANDED UNIT MAP as a part of a section review or introduction.	Students construct personal unit maps without looking at the Unit Organizer and then check accuracy.
A	The UNIT MAP is explored, and UNIT RELATIONSHIPS are identified.	UNIT RELATIONSHIPS are confirmed and highlighted on the EXPANDED UNIT MAP.	Students explain relationships in personal content maps to others and then edit and revise.
F	UNIT SELF-QUESTIONS reflecting central ideas of the unit are constructed.	NEW UNIT SELF-TEST QUESTIONS are added and ; answers to previous questions are improved.	Students answer the UNIT QUESTIONS and generate new self-test questions.
T	The UNIT SCHEDULE is constructed and explained.	Status of task progress, completion, and student satisfaction with learning is checked.	Class discusses how unit tasks promoted learning and how learning could have been improved.

Unit Organizer Routine, Lenz, 1994