

Using the Unit Organizer for curriculum mapping

Julie Tollefson

Managing Editor, Center for Research on Learning

Peg Wolff, Special Education/Curriculum Director for the Minocqua, Hazelhurst, and Lake Tomahawk Joint School District in Wisconsin

Peg Wolff, a SIM Trainer from Wisconsin, has put a new spin on using the Unit Organizer Routine, crafting an effective tool for improving communication and instruction in her school district.

Peg's efforts were driven, in part, by a requirement that all districts in Wisconsin establish their own core academic standards or adopt the state's model by August 1, 1998.

"We have been working over the last two years to identify standards and benchmarks for math, science and health, communication arts, technology, and social studies, so we felt well on our way to meeting the state requirements," Peg said. "What became our greatest challenge was to establish a common format for recording and communicating exactly how our curriculum was being improved to meet the identified standards."

As she continued to ponder this challenge, Peg attended a Unit Organizer Routine session presented by Keith Lenz last summer and discovered she might have a solution ("my third time around and the light went on!").

"I realized the tremendous power of this graphic organizer to address our needs," Peg said.

Building on this realization, Peg presented an overview of the Strategic Instruction Model and Content Enhancement Routines to staff members of the Minocqua, Hazelhurst, and Lake Tomahawk Joint School District in the fall. She placed special emphasis on the Unit Organizer Routine, intending to use the Unit Organizer as a means for mapping specific units of instruction that reflect the district standards and benchmarks and higher-order thinking processes.

"With some slight format modifications, I presented this routine to our K-8 staff as the means by which we would work collaboratively to discuss, revise, refine, and communicate our curriculum, both within our professional network and to parents," she said.

Peg and district staff use the Unit Organizer to identify critical content and thinking processes that connect to the district's standards and benchmarks. The unit questions reflect the reasoning processes identified from the "Dimensions of Learning" (ASCD) ►

Calendar

July 9-11
National SIM Trainers'
Conference
Kansas City, MO

July 21-25, 1998
Strategic Instruction Model
(SIM) Workshop Level I
Lawrence, KS

July 21-25, 1998
Strategic Instruction Model
(SIM) Workshop Level II
Lawrence, KS

July 21-25, 1998
Strategic Instruction Model
(SIM) Workshop
Content Enhancement
Lawrence, KS

July 21-25, 1998
Workshop for Potential
SIM Content
Enhancement Trainers
Lawrence, KS

Aug. 3-7, 1998
Workshop for Potential
SIM Learning Strategy
Trainers
Lawrence, KS

Unit Organizer tips

- To reinforce the expectations for using Unit Organizers for curriculum development, staff are now required to submit their Unit Organizer with any requests for new curriculum materials. They must indicate how the materials are used in a unit of instruction to meet specific standards and benchmarks.
- Peg's district formatted the Unit Organizer using ClarisWorks to enable staff to modify the device using computers. She reports some staff became quite creative in color coding their maps.

'I discovered time and time again that this is not a process for the faint of heart. Developing sound curriculum and coordinating our efforts with colleagues requires a tremendous investment of time and will.'

curriculum framework model. Grade-level teams also are encouraged to continue mapping out content during weekly common plan times throughout the year.

After each training session, Peg asked staff whether they thought the Unit Organizer was a beneficial tool for planning instructional units. The grade-level teams, in particular, gave it a thumbs up, indicating they thought its greatest strength was in clarifying the content and thinking skills required for a unit.

"They realized that while they thought they all taught to the same standards, in fact, each had quite a different interpretation of core concepts within any particular unit," Peg said.

Many staff members initially expressed concerns about the Unit Organizer being a time-intensive technique. Initially, teams took more than an hour, with Peg's assistance, to create one unit of instruction. Now, after time and group practice, the quality of unit organizers has improved and the time to create each one has decreased. A group can now complete a Unit Organizer in 20 to 30 minutes if

members come to the planning session prepared.

"I discovered time and time again that this is not a process for the faint of heart," Peg said. "Developing sound curriculum and coordinating our efforts with colleagues requires a tremendous investment of time and will."

Peg said that even though Content Enhancement Routines are designed to help teachers identify and teach challenging content to diverse student populations, she has found them to be powerful administrative tools for communicating challenging reform efforts to diverse stakeholders.

"Use of these tools has certainly enhanced my credibility as an instructional leader with staff, board members, parents, and community members," she said. "To date, I have used the Concept Comparison Routine, Unit Organizer, and Concept Diagram to inform, persuade, and educate others about the middle school concept, standards-based reform efforts, curriculum, and staff development. I look forward to expanding our repertoire of strategic tools to improve instruction."

CRL

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Contributors: Donald D. Deshler
Jean B. Schumaker
B. Keith Lenz
Jim Knight
Janet B. Roth
Editor: Julie Tollefson

A tool to cut through jargon

Peg shared a Unit Organizer for her district's 1997-1998 staff development plan with the Board of Education, staff, and Parent-Teacher Organization (see sample on page 3).

"Since we spent the better part of the 96-97 school year completing our strategic plan, it was important to communicate specifics of the curriculum component to key groups of people in our school community in order to build confidence in our school improvement efforts," she said.

She used the Unit Organizer as a

tool to cut through the jargon and rhetoric in communicating one of her action plans. Instead of unit test questions, Peg identified challenge questions that she thought reflected a willingness to accept accountability for achieving stated goals.

The response was very positive.

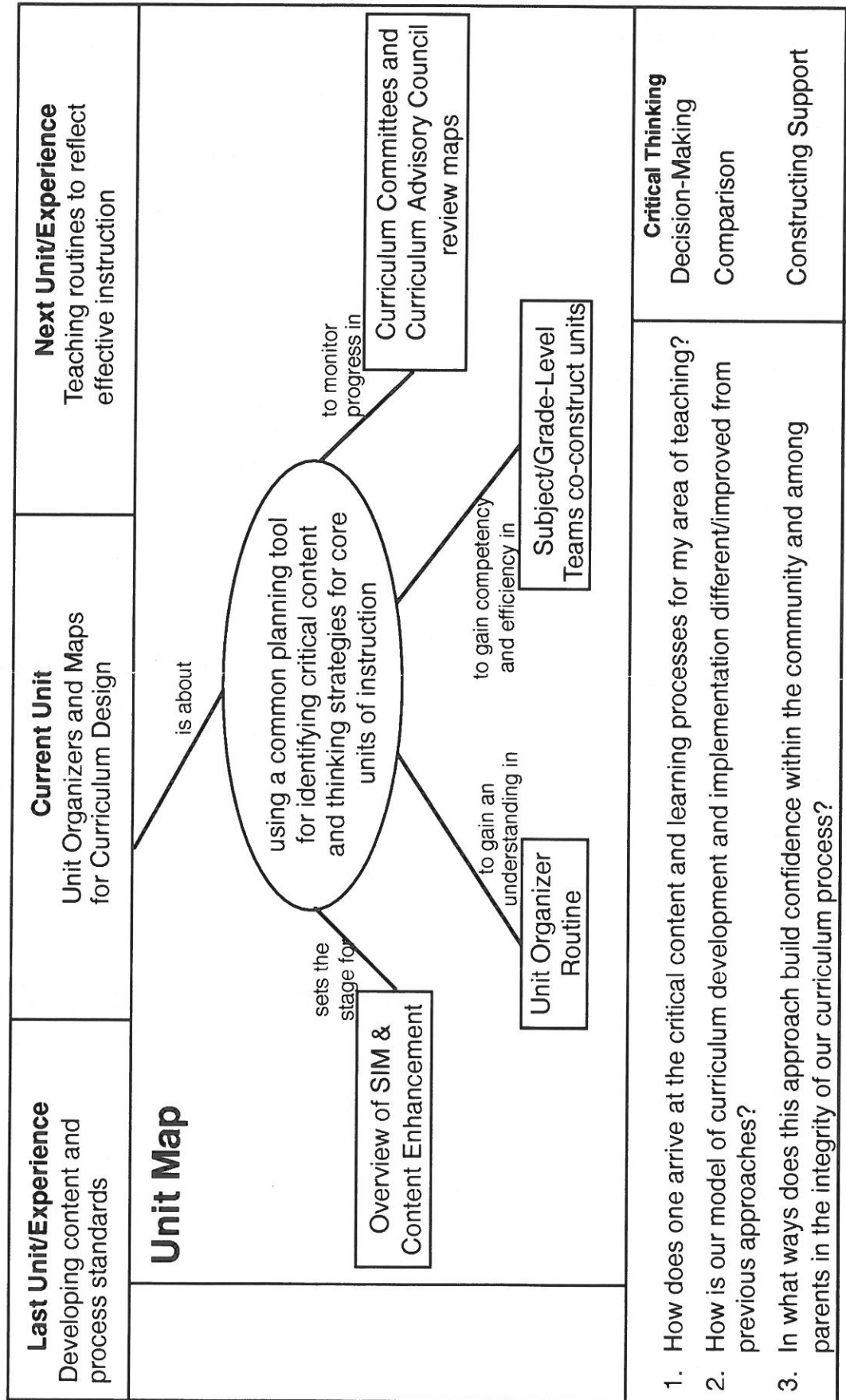
"Parents, especially, felt reassured that we had a 'road map' for improving the district's curriculum and expressed confidence that this was a step in the right direction," she said.

The Unit Organizer

1997-1998 Staff Development Action Plan for Curriculum Development

Standard(s): M-H-LT Mission: To provide a high quality education in a safe and nurturing environment that promotes the success of each individual.

Benchmark(s): To develop a coordinated and integrated K-8 curriculum.



Wisconsin district sees great gains

In addition to Peg Wolff's report of success in using the Unit Organizer to map curriculum content (see page 1), Peg also sent good news about her district's use of Sentence Writing and Paragraph Writing strategies in general education classes.

Peg recently received results from a state-mandated testing program, the Wisconsin Student Assessment System, for eighth-graders. Despite hearing at the latest state-level meeting of school administrators that districts around the state saw a drop in language scores due to higher proficiency standards enacted this year, Peg's district saw wonderful gains.

"I kept copies of all student writing samples from the test over the last two years and found very obvious differences in the quality, organization, and complexity of student writing since the strategies were taught," she said. "I attribute this gain directly to the strategy instruction students received last year in seventh grade. Marge Stein has done a fantastic job these last two years in teaching writing strategies to all seventh-grade students. She continues to find creative and challenging ways for students to demonstrate their skills."

SIM goes Caribbean!

Come join the Center for Research on Learning for a SIM Trainers' update meeting in the Virgin Islands.

We're planning four days in the most accommodating surrounding we could find, the beautiful Maho Bay Camps on the shore of Maho Bay in the Virgin Islands National Park on St. John.

The meeting will run from Wednesday, April 21, through Saturday, April 24, 1999. To take full advantage of this opportunity, participants may want to arrive on Saturday, April 17, and leave on Sunday, April 25.

The update meeting will pack everything you've come to expect from a SIM meeting into a grueling schedule of two-and-a-half-hour sessions each morning and two-hour sessions each evening, thus ensuring plenty of time for recreation and informal conferencing between sessions.

To receive registration information when it becomes available, contact the Center for Research on Learning at (785) 864-4780 or write to us at KU-CRL, 3061 Dole, Lawrence, KS 66045.

Note: Because the resort is spread out on a hillside, steps and stairs connect the cottages to the beach, restaurant, and conference area. Quite a bit of stair climbing is required.

Room prices

Spacious, one-room tent-cottages are available for a conference rate of \$70 per night for two occupants. The charge for additional occupants will be \$17 each per night, with a maximum of four people per tent-cottage. The tent-cottages do not include private baths. However, bathrooms are located in common areas throughout the camp area. Each cottage has cooking utensils and a grill on a deck.

The island also features a few studios with private baths and kitchens. The cost to stay in one of these is \$185 per night.

For more information, contact Maho Bay Camps at (800) 392-9004.

Food

The camp area features both a store and a restaurant, which serves breakfast and dinner at a cost of about \$23 per day.

Airfare

Airline reservations may be arranged directly through American Airlines by calling (800) 433-1790 and referring to the conference identification number: HBM 300 49 811 22. Conference participants will receive 10 percent off the lowest published rate at the time of booking.

SIM meets in the Southeast

"SIM in the Southeast" was in full force at the fourth annual conference of the Southeast region held March 5, 6, and 7, 1998, in Charleston, South Carolina.

Jerri Neduchal, with the help of Sheri Fiskum, coordinated three days of exciting exchange of Strategic Instruction Model ideas for 30 people. In addition to all of the southeastern states, participants attended from North Dakota, New York, and Texas.

Bouquets are given to all the presenters: Ed Ellis, University of Alabama; Barbara Carruthers and Bonita Cox, North Carolina; Eva

Mitchener, South Carolina; Susan Gurganus, College of Charleston; Joan Nejezchleb, Texas; and Don Deshler and Keith Lenz, Center for Research on Learning.

Topics for presentations included the Clarifying Routine, the Framing Routine, LINC'S: A Starter Strategy for Vocabulary Learning, the Quality Assignment Routine, Issues Related to Today's Schools, Using SIM in Today's Schools, Motivation, Preservice Issues, and Reading Instruction.

Thank you, Jerri and Sheri!

Tentative agenda for National SIM Trainers' Conference

July 9, 10, and 11, 1998
(Preconference July 8, 1998)
Crowne Plaza Hotel
Kansas City, Missouri



Wednesday, July 8

- 8:00-8:30 a.m. Registration for preconference sessions (foyer on second floor)
- 8:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Jim Knight: Partnership Learning Session
- 12:30-1:30 p.m. Lunch (included in registration fee)
- 1:30-5:30 p.m. Mike Hock: Learning from Students in SIM Workshops

Thursday, July 9

- 8:00-8:45 a.m. Registration (foyer on second floor)
- 8:45-10:00 a.m. Opening/Keynote Address by Richard Lavoie
- 10:15-11:15 a.m. Rick Lavoie: Workshop
Jean Schumaker: The Recall Enhancement Routine
Jim Knight: Re-thinking Staff Development: Two New Models for School Improvement
- 11:30 a.m.-1:00 p.m. Recognition Luncheon
- 1:15-2:15 p.m. Gwen Berry: Preliminary Data on a New Notetaking Strategy
Rosemary Tralli: Biology 101: Survival of the Fittest (Focus on ways to survive training extinction by keeping strategy instruction updated and relevant to current school initiatives)
Jan Bulgren: Practicing the Storage Strand Strategies
- 1:15-3:30 p.m. Jean Schumaker: The Theme Writing Strategy
Ed Ellis: The Framing Routine
- 2:30-3:30 p.m. Pat Gildroy: Describing Effective Instructional Modeling
Fran Clark: The Results of Elementary Students Taking the Kansas Writing Assessments after Learning the Sentence Writing Strategy
Don Deshler: The Multipass Strategy
- 3:45-4:45 p.m. General Session: Scenario Planning for the Future
- 5:00-6:30 p.m. Social

Important conference information

• Participant form

Trainers planning to attend the 1998 National SIM Trainers' Conference should have received a packet of information in the mail. This packet includes a very important **participant information form**. It is extremely important that you complete this form and return it to the Center for Research on Learning promptly. Among other things, this form allows you to select from three entrees that will be served during Friday night's 20th Anniversary Banquet. **Be warned: If you do not return your participant form, we will choose your entree for you.**

• Roommate requests

Some trainers have contacted us requesting help finding roommates for the conference. If you are interested in sharing a room, call Janet Roth at (785) 864-4780. We will pass your name along to those looking for roommates.

Registration

Conference

All three days: \$130

Two Days: \$110

One Day: \$85

Preconference

Full day: \$30

Half day: \$20

Both prices include buffet lunch.

Registration form

A registration form was included in the January issue of *Stratenotes*, or you may request one from the Center for Research on Learning by calling (785) 864-4780.

Friday, July 10

8:00-9:00 a.m.	General Session with Keynote Address: "Responsible Inclusion as I See It" by Floyd Hudson
9:15-10:15 a.m.	Floyd Hudson: Workshop: Class Within A Class - An Inclusion Model that Works!
9:15-11:30 a.m.	Keith Lenz: The Course Organizer Routine Ed Ellis: The Framing Routine
10:30-11:30 a.m.	Don Deshler: The Multipass Strategy Jean Schumaker: The Sentence Writing Strategy, Level 2
11:30 a.m.-1:00 p.m.	Lunch on your own
1:00-2:00 p.m.	Keith Lenz, Charlie Hughes, and Joyce Rademacher: The Linkage between Quality Assignment Routine and Assignment Completion Strategy Shari Schindele: Statewide SIM training in Minnesota Pat Gildroy, Barb Glaeser, Paula Lancaster: Strategy Training on-line: A Work in Progress
1:00-2:30 p.m.	Sheri Fiskum and Jerri Neduchal: A New SIM Attitude
1:00-3:15 p.m.	Jan Bulgren: The Recall Enhancement Routine
2:15-3:15 p.m.	Tony Van Reusen: The Self Advocacy Strategy Joe Fisher: Getting to Know You: Learning Expressways Helen Waldron: All Aboard: Gaining Faculty Commitment to SIM
3:30-4:30 p.m.	Paula Lancaster and Sean Lancaster: A CD-ROM Version of the Self-Advocacy Strategy Judy O'Malley: Making a P.R.O.M.I.S.E. to our Strategists (a successful plan to conduct follow-up to strategies training) Kate Axlund and Linda Corey: Test Taking Strategies: Are They Effective in a Fifth-Grade Inclusive Classroom?
3:30-5:45 p.m.	Joyce Rademacher: The Quality Assignment Routine Ed Ellis: The Clarifying Routine
4:45-5:45 p.m.	Jan Bulgren: Practicing the Storage Strand Strategies Debbie Cooke and Patty Graner: Remodeling Your Training Sessions (Workshop with tool kits provided and tools modeled)
6:30-7:00 p.m.	Social
7:00-10:00 p.m.	20th Anniversary Banquet Celebration

Saturday, July 11

7:30-9:00 a.m.	Wizards of SIM Poster and Kaleidoscope Session with Continental Breakfast
9:00-9:30 a.m.	General Session with Campaign Slogan Presentations
9:45-10:45 a.m.	Joyce Rademacher: The Quality Assignment Routine Vlacia Campbell: SIM and the Big Lights (ways to use videoclips from popular movies to enliven the presentation of critical components of SIM training)
9:45 a.m.-Noon	Jean Schumaker: The Theme Writing Strategy Keith Lenz: The Course Organizer Routine
11:00 a.m.-Noon	Barb Glaeser: Strategy Training for Younger Students Susan Woodruff and Mary Ann LaGuire: Using SIM for North Central Association Outcomes Accreditation at Muskegon High School (Michigan)
Noon-1:15 p.m.	Lunch on your own
1:15-2:15 p.m.	Don Deshler: SIM in Today's Classrooms Jim Knight: Teaching Strategies in General Education: Lessons Learned from the Strategic Advantage Grant Keith Lenz: Using the Learning Expressways Folders
2:30-3:00 p.m.	Closing Session

Mercer named distinguished professor

We are pleased to report that a member of our International SIM Trainer's Network, Dr. Cecil D. Mercer, has just been named a Distinguished Professor at the University of Florida. This is a great honor and one that is given to only a very small minority of faculty at major universities.

Cecil is the author, along with Susan Miller, of the Strategic Math Series.

Please join us in congratulating Cecil on this honor.

Plan to join the Wizards of SIM Kaleidoscope and Poster Session invitation

Make plans *now* to join us for the Wizards of SIM Kaleidoscope and Poster Session during the 1998 National SIM Trainers' Conference. The session will be 7:30 to 9 a.m. Saturday, July 11, and will feature two distinct ways of sharing information with other SIM Trainers.

From 7:30 to 8:00 a.m., we will enjoy a continental breakfast and browse the poster stations. So far, five presenters have committed to sharing information during the poster session. Topics range from information about using PowerPoint to create Strategic Instruction Model overheads to information about Connecticut's successful Strategies Instructional Program.

If you would like to add your name to the list of poster presenters, contact Gwen Berry by phone at (785) 864-0625 or by email at

gwen@eagle.cc.ukans.edu.

A new addition to this year's conference will be the Kaleidoscope Session, during which trainers will share three-minute training tips and trade ideas, and successes. We have 11 confirmed presenters with such varied topics as "Comparing the Concept Routines," "Games for Rapid Fire Verbal Rehearsal," "Training Tips," "Using CPR in Content Enhancement Training," and "The Way to a Teenager's Heart: Training Tips for the Sentence Writing Strategy." The Kaleidoscope session will run from 8:00 to 8:40 a.m.

At the conclusion of the Kaleidoscope session, participants will have additional time to browse the traditional poster presentations and to network with others.

We invite you to attend this exciting and innovative session.

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Institute for Research in Learning Disabilities
3061 Dole Center
Lawrence, Kansas 66045