# 2026 Fall Virtual SIMposium

## Opening Session

The 2026 Fall Virtual SIMposium kicked off with an Opening Session designed to bring the SIM community together and launch the conference experience. The session served as the starting point for a multi-day program of professional learning, collaboration, and exploration of SIM resources. It included awards and recognitions for members of our SIM Network.

**Congratulations to our 2026 KUCRL Award honorees!** We're delighted to recognize Renee Calhoon and Whitney Miller, this year's award recipients, and celebrate their accomplishments.

✨ Meet the 2026 Honorees and View the Award Book ✨







## More Highlights from the 2026 Fall Virtual SIMposium

Throughout the virtual SIMposium, participants chose from breakout sessions highlighting new SIM resources, instructional innovation, writing and mathematics, inclusive education, technology, and emerging applications of AI. Read more for a brief overview of the sessions.

### Introducing the New Fundamentals of Paragraph Writing Strategy

*Jean Schumaker, Whitney Miller, and Sue Meyer*

This session introduced *Fundamentals of Paragraph Writing*, a new program for teaching paragraph writing to students in grades 2–6. Participants explored the program's instructional materials and digital resources and reviewed findings from its field test.

**Introducing the New SMARTER360 Guidebook**

*Keith Lenz and Janis Bulgren*

Participants explored *SMARTER360: A Cycle of Instruction*, a new guidebook that expands SMARTER into a seven-step cycle connecting course, unit, and lesson planning. Using a U.S. history example, the session demonstrated how Content Enhancement Routines and Higher Order Thinking and Reasoning Routines can help teachers identify critical content and make student reasoning visible and teachable.

**AI: Amplifying Instruction: Using AI to Build Content Enhancement Routines, Lessons, and Resources**

*Sarah Davidson*

This session offered practical examples of using AI to develop Content Enhancement Routines, lessons, and other instructional supports. The focus was on thoughtfully guiding AI to create useful resources that support content mastery and deeper exploration of questions.

**All It Takes Is One: Driving Deep Student Thinking and Lasting Instructional Change**

*Dawn Schlick*

Using a sixth-grade social studies unit as an example, this session demonstrated how SIM Content Enhancement Routines can be intentionally connected across a unit rather than taught as isolated tools. Participants considered how the *Unit Organizer Routine* can serve as a blueprint for identifying and building the thinking students need for deeper understanding.

**The Hopeful Learner: The Psychology Embedded in SIM Strategies and Routines**

*Cathleen Beachboard*

This session examined the psychology already embedded in familiar SIM practices, including goal setting, agency, progress monitoring, feedback, and student independence. Participants explored practical ways to strengthen students' hope, motivation, and ability to recognize their own growth while maintaining fidelity to SIM Strategies and Routines.

**Project iSTAR: Integrated Strategic Technology-Based Adaptive Writing**

*Jocelyn Washburn, Suzy Myers, and Bonnie Palasak*

Participants explored the iSTAR Project, a web-based writing program that combines teacher-led instruction with AI-supported learning. The program incorporates adaptive learning, automated scoring, feedback, and student-interest-driven practice with three evidence-based frameworks: *Proficiency in the Sentence Writing Strategy*, *The Paragraph Writing Strategy*, and *The Writing with Purpose Routine*.

**SMARTER Professional Learning for Different Users**

*Keith Lenz and Janis Bulgren*

Building on the SMARTER360 introduction, this hands-on session helped SIM Professional Developers consider how to launch SMARTER360 professional learning with school leaders, coaches, PLCs, and whole-school teams. Participants designed their own opening professional learning experiences and explored adaptable coaching tools, handouts, and presentation resources.

**Strategic Math: Introducing the New FACTOR Strategy**

*Alexcia Thompson and Margaret Flores*

Participants got a first look at *FACTOR Strategy: Solving Binomials*, an upcoming addition to the Strategic Math Series, designed to make complex algebraic skills more accessible to students with disabilities. The session demonstrated how concrete and visual representations, graphic organizers, explicit instruction, and mnemonic strategies can support binomial multiplication and quadratic factoring.

**Teaching Essay Writing with Technology to College Students in an Inclusive Postsecondary Education Program**

*Suzanne Woods-Groves*

This session shared findings from *ANSWER+,* a hybrid virtual essay-writing intervention based on the SIM *Essay Test-Taking Strategy* and implemented with four college students with developmental disabilities. All four students engaged in the writing process, with three achieving mastery, offering insights into adapting instruction and technology to meet learners' needs.

**Transcending Childhood Trauma with Somatic Therapy**

*Jean Schumaker*

Jean shared findings from a 30-year project involving children and adults who had experienced traumatic events. Drawing from the cases presented in her book, *Transcending Childhood Trauma with Somatic Therapy*, the session considered conclusions from this work in relation to educating students.

**Using AI to Support SIM Learning Strategy Instruction**

*Mandy Walker, Bonnie Palasak, and Jocelyn Washburn*

Participants explored ways AI can support multiple stages of SIM Learning Strategy instruction, including generating inference passages for strategic reading practice and personalized sentence-writing and paragraph-writing activities based on student interests. The session also invited participants to consider additional AI applications that could support generalization and transfer across the Stages of Instruction.

**The Writing with Purpose Routine and PBS NewsHour Classroom's Journalism in Action Project**

*Suzy Myers, Jocelyn Washburn,* and *Luke Gerwe*

This session demonstrated how purposeful writing and primary-source exploration can deepen students' understanding of history, media, and civic issues. Participants explored how the newly available Writing with Purpose Routine can be paired with *PBS NewsHour Classroom's Journalism in Action* case studies and Library of Congress materials to strengthen analysis, reasoning, and communication.

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## Beyond the Breakout Sessions

- **SIM Online Assets Webquest** - Participants were invited to complete the SIM Online Assets Webquest, providing another opportunity to explore and engage with SIM resources beyond the live sessions.
- **Sneak Peek at TeacherVille** - Participants also received an early look at TeacherVille, a new online repository of SIM teaching resources, and had an opportunity to provide feedback. TeacherVille is being designed to give educators direct access to teaching resources associated with SIM materials and be a supporting resource for SIM Professional Developers.

## Closing Session

The SIMposium wrapped up with an October 22 Closing Session, bringing the SIM community back together. The session included breakout discussions around different topics and a look at what's ahead. From new SIM Strategies and Routines to research, technology, writing, mathematics, and AI, the 2026 Fall Virtual SIMposium showcased the many ways the SIM community continues to learn, innovate, and support educators and students. Thank you so much to all of our presenters and participants for a fantastic conference!