

# SIM



## Strategic Instruction Model®

Since 1978, we have conducted research designed to develop ways to help students meet the demands of life, not just in school but after they leave school as well. Our overriding goal has been to develop an integrated model to address many of the needs of diverse learners. Out of this effort, the Strategic Instruction Model®, or SIM, has evolved.

SIM is a comprehensive approach to adolescent literacy that addresses the need of students to be able to read and understand large volumes of complex materials as well as their need to be able to express themselves effectively in writing.

Our work is especially relevant today:

- Eight million adolescents have failed to master the reading skills they need to succeed in school or compete for jobs.
- Schools are under increasing pressures from numerous forces to meet ever-higher goals for student performance.

Closing the gap between what these students are expected to do and what they are able to do is a daunting task.

The challenge will not be addressed through

token efforts. The solution requires significant changes, investments, and leadership.

For more than 30 years, we have worked directly with classroom teachers to develop materials that improve the learning experience for students and the teaching experience for teachers. As a result, we have the research, the success stories, and the proven track record to help schools succeed in meeting the needs of their students.

### WHAT IS SIM®?

In essence, SIM is about promoting effective teaching and learning of critical content in schools. We advocate teaching a little less content but teaching it better.

To learn more about SIM®,  
contact the University of Kansas  
Center for Research on Learning  
Joseph R. Pearson Hall  
1122 West Campus Road, Room 517  
Lawrence, KS 66045-3101  
785.864.4780 • 785.864.5728 (fax)  
crl@ku.edu • <http://kucrl.org>



<http://kucrl.org/sim>

April 2009



Underlying our research and all components of SIM, we adhere to four philosophical principles:

1. Most low-achieving adolescents can learn to function independently in general education settings.
2. The role of the support-class teacher is to teach low-achieving adolescents strategies that will enable them to be independent learners and performers.
3. The role of the content teacher is to promote strategic behavior and to deliver subject-matter information in a manner that can be understood and remembered by low-achieving adolescents.
4. Adolescents should have a major voice in decisions about what strategies they are to learn and how fast they are to learn these strategies.

### COMPONENTS OF SIM

Building on these principles, we have developed two kinds of interventions to address the performance gap, the gap between what students are expected to do and what students are able to do.

1. Teacher-focused interventions—**CONTENT ENHANCEMENT ROUTINES**—are directed at how teachers think about, adapt, and present their critical content in “learner-friendly” fashion. Content Enhancement Routines are sets of in-

clusive teaching practices that help teachers organize and present critical information in such a way that students identify, organize, comprehend, and recall it.

2. Student-focused interventions—**LEARNING STRATEGIES**—are designed to provide the skills and strategies students need to learn the content. The Learning Strategies Curriculum encompasses strategies for acquiring information from the printed word, for organizing and memorizing information, for solving math problems, and for expressing information in writing .

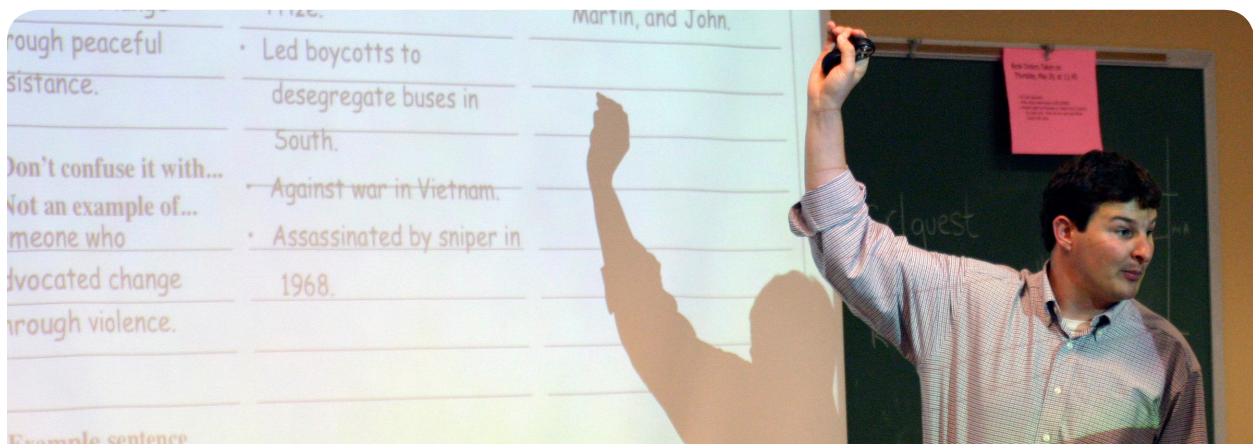
In addition to these two types of interventions, SIM addresses the realities teachers face in today’s classrooms through the use of a planning technique called **SMARTER** (a framework for making decisions about content at the course, unit, and lesson levels of planning) and recognition of the need for **TEAMWORK** to achieve instructional goals.

Recognizing that academic interventions alone are not sufficient for student success, SIM also includes components that help students create and participate in productive learning communities, develop strong and appropriate social skills, advocate for themselves and their needs in education conferences, envision positive futures for themselves, and plan how to reach their goals.

## FROM HOPELESSNESS TO INDEPENDENT LEARNER

Frank, a repeating ninth-grader, was becoming very discouraged in school. He failed almost everything in his first ninth-grade year and was disengaged from school and felt a sense of hopelessness at the beginning of his second attempt. He read at the third-grade level. Then, Frank enrolled in a SIM-based reading course. During small-group instruction, he learned specific steps of a new strategy for attack-

ing the many unknown words he encountered in his school assignments. Frank became very involved and worked hard, not missing a single class period. By the time he returned to his sophomore English class, Frank was reading at grade level. Weeks later, his reading teacher found him in the library, where he was reading a book and proud of himself and his accomplishments as a learner.



## QUALITY TEACHING MATERIALS

Our research confirms that appropriate and supportive teaching materials greatly enhance teachers' ability to provide quality instruction in their classrooms. At a minimum, these materials consist of well-designed teacher manuals, student learning sheets and practice activities, scoring rubrics that enable teachers to provide high-quality feedback, and the necessary technology supports (such as DVDs and computers).

Our long-standing commitment to and investment in developing these instructional supports underscores the importance we place on this aspect of our work.

## QUALITY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

We are committed to placing our research findings into the hands of practitioners, students, and other researchers in the field.

An extensive network of dedicated professionals who share our values and goals takes the primary responsibility for promoting our products and teaching methods. This network—the SIM International Professional Development Network—consists of more than 1,000 individuals who offer workshops, inservice training, and support for state initiatives across the country and around the world.

These individuals work directly with teachers and districts, providing opportunities for teachers to learn to use the SIM instructional practices and then supporting their efforts in the classroom. To build school district capacity in supporting continuing SIM implementation, many districts support members of their staffs who pursue certifica-

tion as SIM Professional Developers.

Through our Professional Development Research Institute, we coordinate the SIM Network, ensuring that members adopt our high standards for quality of both instructional materials and professional development experiences.

We organize international and regional conferences as learning opportunities for SIM Professional Developers. Other resources include newsletters, e-mail discussion forums, videos, CDs, DVDs, and web sites, all designed to aid members in their work or provide updates on our latest thinking.

## QUALITY RESEARCH

We believe we obtain our best results when we work directly with the individuals affected by the problems we seek to solve. Consequently, we have partnered with teachers in hundreds of classrooms to develop and refine SIM instructional materials to meet rigorous standards we have set for ourselves.

Every instructional procedure we develop must be palatable for teachers. If it's not, they won't adopt it for classroom use. Procedures must be powerful enough to make a difference for low-achieving students and must be perceived as valuable by high-achieving and average-achieving students. In addition, the degree to which students are able to use SIM skills and strategies in a variety of settings and situations is important in determining whether an instructional procedure has merit.

Our procedures also must result in socially significant gains for students. In other words, a procedure that results in an increase in performance from 20 percent to 40 percent might be *statistically* significant, but it is not *socially* significant because the student is still failing.



## PROVEN PRACTICES

SIM's components—Content Enhancement Routines, Learning Strategies Curriculum, and supporting materials—give teachers access to a breadth and depth of instructional procedures to address many of the challenges they face in the classroom. As a result, more students who are at risk now can realize success in school.

The key to making strategic instruction a reality is to realize that it takes time—months or years even—and a strong administrative and instructional commitment.

By holding firm to our high standards, we have built a solid base of work upon which schools can rely as they develop programs to meet today's extensive demands. Not only are schools required to show student gains, they also have to prove that they use teaching methods grounded in research. Evidence-based practices are key features in current education legislation, including the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 and the 2004 Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act.

Our extensive research—which has been reviewed by scientific panels at the U.S. Department of Education and other public agencies and which has been documented in leading academic publications—demonstrates that use of SIM interventions can improve student performance.

## ABOUT KU-CRL

From our beginning in 1978 as the Institute for Research in Learning Disabilities, we have grown to encompass six research institutes and multiple lines of research.

### **ADVANCED LEARNING TECHNOLOGIES IN EDUCATION CONSORTIUM (ALTEC)**

<http://altec.org>

### **DIVISION OF ADULT STUDIES (DAS)**

<http://das.kucrl.org>

### **E-LEARNING DESIGN LABORATORY**

<http://elearndesign.org>

### **INSTITUTE FOR RESEARCH ON ADOLESCENT LEARNING**

<http://iral.kucrl.org>

### **KANSAS COACHING PROJECT**

<http://instructionalcoach.org>

### **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH INSTITUTE**

<http://pdri.kucrl.org>

