

A tale of two projects

CRL launches SIM reading class studies

Julie Tollefson
KU-CRL

Two new reading programs based on Strategic Instruction Model successes are testing SIM instruction in novel ways.

Dubbed Fusion Reading and Xtreme Reading, the projects adapt SIM strategies for delivery to large groups of students, engage students in motivation and goal-setting activities, and build on a solid foundation of reading materials geared toward capturing students' interest.

"We are at a point in adolescent literacy where we need to identify what variables, what factors, are the best pressure points, the best leverage points, because we have so little time. Where do we best intervene to get the biggest bump? We don't know those things right now," says Don Deshler, CRL director.

Both Fusion Reading and Xtreme Reading seek to answer those questions.

Fusion Reading, headed by CRL associate director Mike Hock, is a two-year

intensive class offered during a student's freshman and sophomore years in high school. The program is in its second year in two Kansas City, Kan., high schools.

One of the goals of the Fusion Reading program is to develop new reading strategies specifically designed to be taught to larger groups of diverse learners. Although the newly developed strategies are clearly different in design from the traditional SIM reading strategies, they build upon the strong research base associated with SIM.

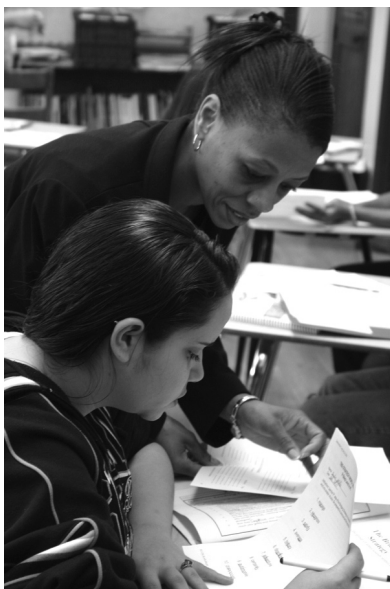
"There is little question that traditional SIM strategies are well-designed and effective with certain students and when taught under certain conditions," Hock says. "Fusion Reading strategies reflect a desire to continue that tradition of success and learn and grow."

Other members of the Fusion Reading team are Irma Brasseur, project coordinator, and research assistants Jean Stribling and



Xtreme Reading materials fill a conference room at the University of Kansas.





A student and teacher work together in CRL's Fusion Reading project.

Kadie Lintner.

Xtreme Reading is similar to Fusion Reading in that it is an intensive reading class, but instruction is compressed into half the time. Xtreme Reading is a year-long course aggressively teaching all of the current SIM reading strategies plus several Content Enhancement Routines and a motivation strategy.

The reading strategies taught in Xtreme Reading classes have been modified slightly. For example, students engage in partner practice and the strategies are taught in the context of highly engaging literature.

Jan Bulgren is project coordinator, and Susan Bulgren oversees the preparation of materials. Principal investigators are Deshler, Hock, and CRL associate director Jean Schumaker.

Student motivation is a key component of both Xtreme Reading and Fusion Reading.

"We're learning that if you

don't have the students engaged, if you don't have them in their seats in work attitude, you can have the greatest strategies in the world but nothing will happen," Deshler says.

The next priority is identifying engaging materials that will really capture student interest. The projects build instruction around a carefully selected variety of books and stories designed to meet this goal.

Large-group instruction

One of the challenges the Xtreme Reading and Fusion Reading projects face is adapting SIM interventions for large-group instruction. When SIM began to take shape 30 years ago, students with learning disabilities were pulled out of general education classes to receive individual or small-group instruction in a resource room. SIM strategies were designed to be taught in that setting and were intentionally separate from general education course content.

Today, many students with learning disabilities are served in the general education classroom, requiring CRL to adapt while remaining true to the instructional practices it has proven are effec-

tive. One of the biggest adaptations has been to integrate strategies and course content.

"We're trying to bring strategies and content back together," Deshler says.

Although tying SIM instruction to content sounds simple, it has been a gargantuan task, requiring CRL to re-think strategy instruction and redesign supporting materials. In addition, CRL strongly believes that it should provide all of the supports teachers need for these projects so they can focus their energy on teaching rather than developing material.

In the case of the Xtreme Reading project, the result has been mountains of materials and several conference rooms full of boxes of supplies. Xtreme Reading is being tested in 17 schools across



Students in the Fusion Reading program review an assignment together.

the country as part of a two-year national study examining the efficacy of adolescent literacy programs. To date, CRL has shipped 500 boxes packed with books, instructional materials, and teaching supplies to schools in the study.

“We’re providing all the materials for teachers, day-to-day lesson plans for teachers, program vocabulary words, the whole bit,” Deshler says. “Just to give you a sense on this study, we’re assembling 1,800 notebooks that we’re delivering to classrooms around the country.”

National implications

Both Xtreme Reading and Fusion Reading are significant in

today’s national literacy climate. Recent federal policy shifts, such as the just-funded Striving Readers Initiative, indicate increasing support for research into interventions and instructional methods especially designed for adolescents who are unable to read and understand printed material—seriously hampering their ability to succeed in high school. This is a change from the

past, when much literacy research focused almost exclusively on young children. CRL’s history of working to improve education for adolescents makes it uniquely qualified to provide leadership in this area.

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For more information about the Xtreme Reading project, visit www.xtremereading.org. A Fusion Reading web site will be coming soon.



Boxes fill CRL's front office as students and staff prepare to ship Xtreme Reading materials to participating schools.

Students use SIM in fight against mosquitoes

A group of Louisiana teachers and students has found a way to bite back against the state's notorious mosquito population, and SIM plays a key role.

A few years ago, **Melynda Rodrigue**, her fourth-grade inclusion partner **Val Waguespack**, and Val's daughter, sixth-grade teacher **Rachel Dugas**, participated in many Strategic Instruction Model workshops. That year, Melynda also was the 4-H leader at her school, Caldwell Middle School. Some of the 4-H parents approached her about doing a service learning activity involving non-pesticide methods of reducing mosquito populations.

The mosquito-reduction method they chose to pursue involved raising mosquito fish for release into ditches and ponds. The idea took hold and before long, practically the whole school became involved in the project. They raised the fish in aquariums placed in several classrooms. Some of the math classes tracked the number of offspring and how often they reproduced. Some of the English classes wrote research papers on mosquito fish. Some of the social studies classes researched encephalitis. Some of the science classes researched life cycles of mosquitoes and mosquito fish. The fourth-grade inclusion science class used the FRAME to write

The THINK Worksheet, p. 1

Step 1: The "T" Step
What is the problem? we have too many mosquitoes

Background facts: 4-H is trying to get rid of mosquitoes.

Solutions already tried: 4-H is trying to get rid of mosquitoes by giving guppies to the community.

Step 2: The "H" Step (New solutions)	P (positive)	A (acceptable)	S (feasible)	S (solve it)
1. spray mosquitoes	✓	✓		
2. donate guppies to schools	✓	✓	✓	✓
3. kill mosquitoes	✓	✓	✓	?
4. eat mosquitoes				
5.				
6.				

Possible combinations of solutions:
Spray mosquitoes with mosquito spray. Donate guppies to schools. Kill mosquitoes.

their information.

"We conducted mosquito fish releases at the

Handout: Overview of Mosquito Fish THINK Activity

The THINK Strategy Caldwell Middle School Bites Back

Caldwell Middle School's 4-H club is working on a mosquito control project. This project involves releasing mosquito fish into local waters such as bayous, ponds, and any stagnate water. The mosquito fish will then eat the mosquito eggs, larva, pupa, and adult mosquitoes in the community.

They are having a hard time getting the community involved. Several attempts to publicize this project have already been made. For example, a pamphlet was made and distributed to the local libraries. Two articles have already been placed in the local newspaper asking the public to attend a presentation. Unfortunately, very few people attended.

The 4-H club has asked your class to come up with ways to publicize this project and get the community involved.

school so people in the community could come and pick up bags of mosquito fish to put in their ditches and ponds. We even went on a field trip and released the fish into ponds across Terrebonne Parish,” Melynda says. “However, we felt like we needed more community involvement.”

That led Melynda and Val’s fourth-grade science class to pair up with Rachel’s sixth-grade science class and conduct a big THINK activity. The teachers enlisted the assistance of two student teachers, two paraprofessionals, a parent volunteer, and **Debbie Estevens**, the Region III Special Education Coordinator.

Both the fourth- and sixth-grade classes were well-versed in THINK, so conducting such a cross-grade activity was no problem. The THINK activity took place in the school cafeteria so students had enough space in which to work. The fourth-grade students already had cooperative group assignments and designated roles (recorder, materials keeper, reader, etc.). Two or three sixth-grade students were assigned to each of these existing groups. For this activity, sixth-graders took on the role of reader and helped with recording.

The activity kicked off with a videotaped overview of the project prepared by a 4-H leader who was unable to appear in person. Melynda elaborated on information in the video, when necessary, and then Rachel reviewed the SEE Steps, THINK Steps, and SCORE Skills.

“She is so cute when she does this!” Melynda says. “For the SEE Steps, she puts on large novelty

The THINK Worksheet, p. 1

Step 1: The “T” Step

What is the problem? The 4-H are using mosquito fish to decrease the population of mosquitoes.

Background facts: Having a hard time to get people involved.

Solutions already tried: Putting article in the newspaper.

Step 2: The “H” Step

(New solutions)	P (positive)	A (acceptable)	S (sensible)	S (solves it)
1. Send out letters	✓	✓	✓	?
2. Make fliers and posters	✓	✓	✓	?
3. Have a meeting	✓	✓	✓	✓
4. Put it in the school’s newspaper	✓	✓	✓	?
5. Put on local news	✓	✓	✓	✓
6. Encourage people to come to the meeting	✓	✓	✓	✓

Step 3: The “I” Step

Possible combinations of solutions:
Have a meeting.

glasses. She uses props such as putting on a THINKing cap (baseball cap), grabbing a football when talking about PASS, and holding up a small chalkboard with the word SCORE written on it.”

The teachers also prepared several handouts for the students—a project brochure, copies of newspaper articles, and a description of the activity (see page 4), which students used to complete Step 1 of the THINK activity. For even

more inspiration, a 4-H parent placed small fish bowls containing mosquito fish on the tables and poured in mosquito larvae so students could observe the fish in action.

The sample worksheets accompanying this article show some of the ideas students came up with during the THINK activity.

Among the ideas generated as the students worked together in this way was the possibility of

In the Classroom

airing a commercial on the local television station, HTV. The 4-H club thought this was a great idea, so they hosted a TV commercial contest. HTV agreed to judge the entries, air the winning entry, and provide copies of the commercial to the winning team. Rachel's sixth-grade entry won the contest.

The activity was so successful that when Rachel and Melynda present THINK now, they use the mosquito fish activity and show the video of the winning commercial to participants.

The mosquito fish project gained wider attention in the Spring 2004 issue of *Community*

Works Journal, a quarterly publication that showcases teachers and students working on community-based projects. Author David Sobel included a description of the project in his article, "Place-Based Education: Connecting Classroom and Community."

The project also appears in Sobel's book of the same name, part of The Orion Society's Nature Literacy Series. Melynda recommends the book and its examples of "awesome service-learning projects" for those interested in learning more.

Now several years later, Debbie Estevens has become a certified SIM Professional Developer

in Content Enhancement, with Melynda as her mentor. Rachel is a principal at a primary school in a neighboring parish and is a certified SIM PD in both Content Enhancement and Learning Strategies. Val has retired, but still helps Rachel and Melynda when they co-present SIM workshops. Melynda is an educational facilitator in the Terrebonne Parish Special Education Department and is also a dually certified SIM PD.

The THINK Worksheet, p. 2

The BEST solution (or combination of solutions) is:
Make a survey

Step 4: The "N" Step

Our plan to solve this problem is:

1. give guppies to community
2. have a meeting
3. buy more guppies for people
4. put guppies by a mosquito nest
5. make a commercial—have a contest
6. make a poster to put by office

Step 5: The "K" Step

Fill out your "Keep your SCORE Checklist" as you talk about how your team worked together to solve the problem. Think about whether or not everyone:

- ✓ participated and shared the work
- ✓ was satisfied with the way the team worked together
- ✓ used the SCORE Skills
- ✓ liked the solution that was chosen
- ✓ learned how to solve the problem

KUCRL.ORG

Check our web site for information about the Strategic Instruction Model, the Center for Research on Learning, our current projects, and more.

New on KUCRL.ORG:

SIM institutes scheduled for 2006:
http://www.kucrl.org/sim/prof_dev.html

Index for Strategram Volume 17 (2004-2005)

Issue 1

In the classroom: *SIM in Action: Classroom Tips & Ideas*. This issue brings together classroom ideas: re-usable Content Enhancement devices from Ben Tickle, SIM Professional Developer, Pulaski, Va.; combining *Paraphrasing Strategy* and *Framing Routine* to take notes while reading from Mabel C. Norton, SIM PD, Christchurch, Va.; rubrics for use with the *Paragraph Writing Strategy* from Gene Stevens, SIM teacher, Fairfax County, Va., and Cynthia Alexander, SIM PD Apprentice, Fairfax Station, Va.; and motivational quotes collected by Pat Parrott, Donna Schwab, and Barbara Scott, SIM PDs, Chesterfield, Va..

Index for Strategram Volume 16 (2003-2004)

Issue 2

In focus: *Content Enhancement: The Power of Integration* by Julie Tollefson, KU-CRL. KU-CRL's Jan Bulgren provides advice for integrating more than one Content Enhancement Routine in a seamless instructional package to meet the needs of all students. Includes example Unit Organizer, Comparison Table, Concept Diagram, and Question Exploration Guide.

The Content Enhancement Series. A list of routines published to date.

Tools to Master Key Concepts. SIM PD Jerri Neduchal recommends teachers develop an extensive array of Content Enhancement tools.

Issue 3

In focus: *ORDER Routine for Summarizing & Clarifying Learning*, by David Scanlon, Boston

College. The new *ORDER Routine* advises students to open their minds and think about the information they are learning as they take notes. Includes example *ORDER Routine* graphic devices and research results for *ORDER Routine* studies.

New Materials on KUCRL.ORG. A list of items available on KU-CRL's web site.

Issue 4

In focus: *SIM in Virginia: Project to Build Capacity in State*, by Julie Tollefson, KU-CRL. Describes KU-CRL's role in Virginia's State Improvement Grant. Includes brief description of levels of the Content Literacy Continuum.

Adolescent Literacy Resources. A list of reports and materials available online related to adolescent literacy.

In the classroom: *The Sentence Checklist*, from Tia McCauley, SIM PD and LD teacher, Marshall, Va. A checklist to help students remember more detailed information when identifying subjects and verbs.

Hot Off the Presses. New KU-CRL publications, A Rubric for Educating Adolescents with Disabilities and Strategic Instruction Model for Administrators Q&A.

Issue 5

In focus: *Deep Impact: Groups Honored for Widescale SIM Efforts*. Winners of the KU-CRL SIM Impact Award: Science Department at Turlock, Calif., Junior High School and Cobb Middle School in Tallahassee, Fla.

Focus on Adolescent Literacy: Intensive Classes, Integrating Strategies Address Needs of Struggling Readers. Research update from KU-CRL.

In the classroom: *If you build it...* Jean Piazza, SIM PD from Cody, Wyo., likens her school's improvement process to the movie "Field of Dreams."

In the classroom: *Active Reading*. Pam Leitzell, SIM PD from Holland, Mich., offers an activity to support *Paraphrasing Strategy* instruction.

KU-CRL Wins \$9.3 Million Grant to Build More Pathways to Success

Issue 6

In focus: *One School's Journey Toward Improved Literacy*, by Peggy Graving-Reyes, SIM Professional Developer and Lodi (Calif.) Unified Literacy Coach, and Kim Nottingham, Teacher, Delta Sierra Middle School, Stockton, Calif. How the 2003 winner of KU-CRL's SIM Innovation Award developed reading classes based on SIM interventions and the resulting growth they documented in students' reading skills.

Instructional Coaching workshop schedule and description of what instructional coaches do

Strategram

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