

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.

In essence, SIM is about promoting effective teaching and learning of critical content in schools. SIM strives to help teachers make decisions about what is of greatest importance, what we can teach students to help them to learn, and how to teach them well.

We advocate trying to teach a little less content, but teaching it better.

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.

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 are directed at how teachers think about, adapt, and present their critical content in “learner-friendly” fashion. Content Enhancement Routines are sets of inclusive teaching practices that help teachers carefully organize and present critical information in such a way that students identify, organize, comprehend, and recall it.

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2. Student-focused interventions 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, strategies for organizing and memorizing information, strategies for solving math problems, and strategies for expressing information in writing (including on tests).

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 and recognition of the need for teamwork to achieve instructional goals.

SMARTER planning is a framework teachers can turn to when making decisions about content at the course, unit, or lesson level of planning.

Teamwork among teachers, administrators, parents, and others involved in students' lives can help provide a sustained, well-coordinated, and well-orchestrated balance of curriculum content, skills, and strategies.

RIGOROUS STANDARDS

The Strategic Instruction Model is based on research from a variety of fields and theoretical perspectives and is designed to serve as a guide or umbrella for secondary program development. All components of the model have been evaluated in light of rigorous standards we have set for ourselves.

First, an instructional procedure must be palatable for teachers. If it isn't, teachers won't adopt it for use in their classrooms.

Second, the instructional procedure must have value and be perceived to have value by high-achieving and average-achieving students.

Third, the procedure must be sufficiently powerful to have an effect on low-achieving students.

Fourth, the procedure must result in statistically significant gains for students.

Fifth, the procedure must result in socially significant gains for students. In other words, if a procedure results in an increase in a student's performance from 20 percent to 40 percent, although the result might be statistically significant, it is not socially significant because the student is still failing.

Finally, the degree to which students will maintain a skill or strategy they have been taught and generalize it for use in other settings is important in determining whether the instructional procedure is successful and has merit.

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.

