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Crafting an online course with Content Enhancement

The SIM *Content Enhancement Routines* were a vital part of my classroom for many years. Using them reenergized my teaching, helped me to refocus my students, and made collaboration with my co-teacher true synergy. When I took a job as an online teacher, I knew I no longer had the possibility to co-construct routines with my students.

Initially, as I planned my courses, I began to ask myself questions: How am I going to give up *SIM Content Enhancement* in my teaching repertoire? How am I going to ensure my students are still understanding the essential questions and grasping the critical concepts? Will they be ready for an assessment without the self-test questions of the *Unit Organizer*? Will they see the big picture without the *Course Organizer* being reviewed every unit?

When I set out to build new or revamp courses online, I use many of the steps of the *Course Organizer* and the *Unit Organizer* to identify what information is needed for students to grasp the bigger picture. I found beauty in returning to *Content Enhancement* because it actually lays the groundwork for being an effective online teacher and course developer. While I don't use the actual devices, all the parts are embedded into the course and units I create. The *Content Enhancement* planning and teaching routines had prepared me to create effective, fluid classes that prompted student growth of understanding in the online environment.

To plan an online course, I identify the units for the course. I then identify the critical concepts and decide which lessons they need to be infused into based on the skills and content in the Virginia standards. Next, I focus on what online skills and content-related tools I want to make routine for my students over a lesson, semester or course. The basic concepts of the *Course Organizer* align with Learning Management System (LMS) tools like discussion boards, journals, assignments, wikis, and reading modules. Even as LMS tools change and/or are updated, the *Content Enhancement* tools are universal, so my courses can withstand the constant change of the online environment.



When it is time to build modules with content, the organization of the *Unit Organizer* really helps me to form the layout and presentation of information. On the first slide I present students with a table of contents, on the second slide an overview statement of the module's content, and the third slide lists focus questions. By structuring the module beginning much like the *Unit Organizer*, students learn which information to focus on during the module and see how it fits together.

A third *Content Enhancement Routine* I revamped for the online environment is the *Framing Routine*. For me, the most powerful part of the FRAME is the "So What" statement. For my online courses, all critical content activities have a "Your Opinion" paragraph similar to the purpose of the FRAME's "So What" statement. I use the *Framing Routine* to teach students how to summarize what they learned and take a stand with historical evidence from the activity to support their opinion in a "Your Opinion" paragraph. Without *SIM Content Enhancement Routines*, engaging students in higher level thinking about critical content might not have been my goal for each assignment.

The bottom line is that *SIM Content Enhancement Routine* planning lays critical groundwork for anyone building content/courses whether online or in the classroom. As education expands to the online environment, it is important for more and more content developers to learn how to use the *SIM Content Enhancement Routines*.

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