



2017 SIM Leadership Award

JANICE CRENETI

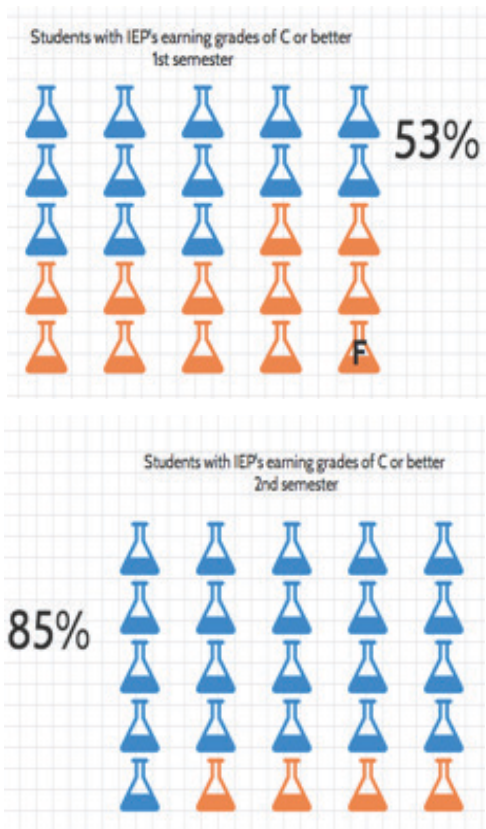
Janice Creneti is a science person. She taught high school science classes for 17 years – Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Environmental Technology and Animal Science. The vast majority of that experience was with students who struggled in school, and she was struck by how many students deemed “not capable” as learners excelled in hands-on learning settings. “They were clearly capable learners who could solve real-world problems many of my ‘expert’ students could not,” says Janice. “I knew there must be a disconnect between ways they were being taught and what they needed to learn. I began to try to find teaching practices that could bridge that disconnect.”

Janice was introduced to SIM during her first year as an instructional coach. “Sitting in my first SIM professional development session on the *Unit Organizer Routine* taught by Cindy Medici, I could immediately see the level of scaffolding in the routine would have made all the difference for my students. Since I was an instructional coach without students of my own, I borrowed classrooms to take the *Unit Organizer Routine* for a spin. In every classroom, students (high school students who don’t admit to liking anything) said it really helped them, why hadn’t we been doing it with them sooner, and would we please continue to do it for all future units. I got hooked and learned seven more routines from Cindy.”

When Florida was introducing the Biology End of Course (EOC) exam, Janice saw that many teachers were concerned with the volume of content that this new state-wide exam could address. She advocated for *Content Enhancement* as a vehicle for the teacher planning process to help identify what was truly critical in the science courses and standards; she knew *Content Enhancement* would make the exam more accessible to all students.

In the 2011-2012 school year Janice was the instructional coach for the science department at a Title 1 school in Pinellas County. Her primary focus was supporting implementation of *Content Enhancement* with fidelity. At the end of that year, the school moved from a 14th place ranking in the district for Biology EOC scores to a 7th place ranking. Furthermore, the school closed the gap on Biology assessments from a 4-point gap in 2014-2015 to a 1-point gap in 2015-2016 between students with IEPs in Title 1 schools and students with IEPs in non-Title 1 schools. A high school in Hardee County Florida where Janice provided professional development and coaching for science teachers over a two-year period increased the number of students with IEP’s earning a C or better in Biology from 24% to 57% and in Chemistry from 53% to 88%.

**Hardee High School Chemistry Department in Wauchula before and after implementation of the Unit Organizer**



Cindy Medici, Florida's State Personnel Development Grant (SPDG) Project Manager, knows Janice's skill level as a content specialist, coach, and SIM Professional Developer. "Janice is an amazing asset to have on our team," says Cindy. "She has a limitless energy and passion for SIM. She challenges our project to remain on the 'bleeding edge' of innovation by constantly seeking and trying new approaches while freely sharing what is learned and created with others for the benefit of all students. I am blessed to work with Janice, as I learn with and from her every day." Patty Graner, Director of Professional Development at KUCRL adds, "Janice shines in her role as a Content Enhancement Professional Developer in this project because of her unique knowledge of the subject matter. She quickly understands how to use these higher order reasoning devices and she brings that rare combination of content expertise, practitioner language and understanding, and coaching savvy to her work."

Together with Keith Lenz, the SPDG piloted a new approach to professional learning with high school math and science teachers in nine districts called *Course First!* *Course First!*, a redesign for *Content Enhancement* professional development, shifts planning focus to the course level to support creation of coherent units and lessons across a course. It also emphasizes the use of the explicit instructional sequence "Cue-Do-Review" across all classroom activities,

even those not involving *Content Enhancement*. Janice explains, "My initial introduction to CERs was the *Unit Organizer*. While I caught the fever, other instructional coaches who attended did not. When I explored why, it turned out they had not connected as powerfully with the *Unit Organizer* as I had. I have tried four different routines as the best one to start with, most often the *Unit Organizer*, and every time, some teachers would think that it is always the routine to begin with, and others would not connect until a later routine. When I heard Keith talk about why he advocates starting with *Course Organizer*, it made a lot of sense to me as a way to encourage a more strategic approach to the whole process, so I talked with Cindy about a piloting *Course First* with a group of science teachers in our district who had a good comfort level with their course standards and with SIM. Keith, Cindy and I spent a lot of time talking about what would need to be in place, and Keith helped us sketch out a plan and worked with our professional developers and coaches."

Said Lenz, "I can suggest a simple idea or direction and with thought and reflection, Janice is off and running to transform it into classroom transforming practice. She really gets it. She honors the best of our professional development, but she is not trapped by past practices that are grounded in a linear professional development model which I helped to create. I can give no higher praise

**Teachers from the year-long *Course First!* pilot had the following to say about the impact of routine use in their classrooms:\***

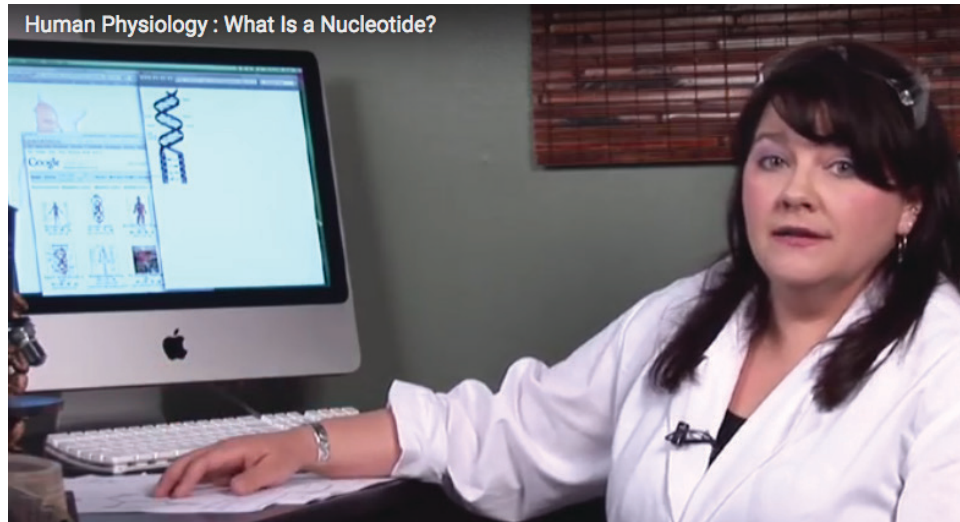
"It is something that they (students) actually ask for...I have also noticed that I have some of the highest engagement levels during the routines." --J. Shipe

"The routines provide a structured way to take notes, review content, develop vocabulary and reading skills, organize chunks of information and know exactly what is important to understand about the unit...My test results are much better, with averages at least one letter grade higher than in previous years." - P. Lussy

"I have found that by using CERs...student engagement has increased substantially...I have also seen scores improve on assessments and greater confidence on work being attempted. My referral numbers this year are the lowest they have ever been...and none for classroom management...all my students have been working as instructed and expected." - T. Trealout

The routine use of *Content Enhancement* has allowed my students to have a sense of comfort when faced with new material. They are more willing to accept challenging topics because they are presented in a manner that they are familiar and comfortable with." - S. Strickland

\*From *Leveraging the Strategic Instruction Model in Creating Optimal Learning Environments* by Janice Creneti



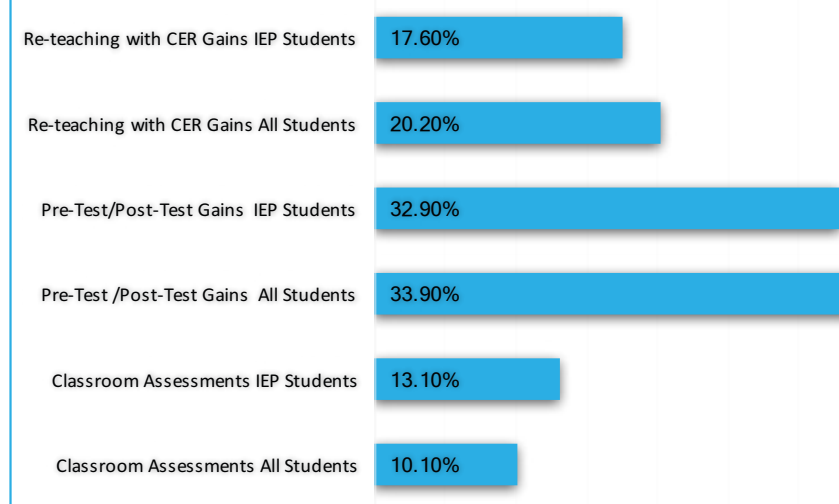
*A shot from one of Janice's instructional videos*

to a professional developer that challenges the status quo and proves we can do better. Janice and Cindy are rocking the system and making it better, and Janice on the front lines in classrooms is my hero!"

As a result of her SPDG efforts across those nine Florida district middle to high school feeder patterns, many science and math teachers have learned how to co-construct their course content with their students. Thus, students' matriculation to the next school or next class can be more seamless. For students who struggle or students with disabilities in those districts, this can mean a richer, more engaging and informed school experience with greater possibilities to graduate and be future ready.

Not only have Janice and Cindy's SPDG results been appreciated in their state, their results have been shared nationally through the SPDG network. Their experiences are shared with SPDG projects across the country which are also focused on improving academic outcomes for students who struggle. Other project officers at Office of Special Education Programs at the federal Department of Education have expressed interest in the work of the Florida SPDG. Cindy and Janice have been exceptional models and sharers of their most convincing outcomes.

### Florida SPDG Classroom Data Snapshot 2015-2016 School Year



*Janice spent 10 days tagging threatened species of sharks and rays like this Guitar Fish (which is technically a shark) in Monterey Bay California as part of a teacher scholarship program.*