

New Genetics educational resource promotes active learning

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As upper level undergraduate genetics instructors plan their syllabi for the fall semester, the Genetics Society of America's *GENETICS* journal offers a new educational resource, articles called "Primers." These articles are designed to bring cutting-edge scientific research into the classroom by making scientific papers accessible to students.

The principal learning goal of the Primer is to "make research and genetics accessible to a much broader audience, not just researchers, their postdocs and [grad students](#), but also to undergraduates and their instructors," said Elizabeth A. De Stasio, Ph.D., a professor in the department of biology at Lawrence University in Appleton, Wisconsin, and editor of the Primer section in the *GENETICS* journal.

"With jargon and unfamiliar techniques, the primary research literature can be inaccessible to many students," Dr. De Stasio added. "The Primer article, tied to a research article published in the same issue of *GENETICS*, will provide guidelines for genetics instructors who want to expose their students to current research."

The August 2012 *GENETICS* Primer written by Dr. De Stasio is based on the article, "A Network of Genes Antagonistic to the LIN-35 [Retinoblastoma Protein](#) of *Caenorhabditis elegans*," by Stanley R. G. Polley and David S. Fay. The Primer introduces concepts of reverse genetics and [RNA interference](#) (RNAi), suppressor screens, synthetic [phenotypes](#) and phenocopy. Necessary background, explanations of concepts, as well as suggestions for using the article in the classroom and

questions for classroom discussion are included.

"The intent is for the [research article](#) and the Primer to be used together in the context of a genetics classroom. We will be highlighting articles that teach and reinforce [genetic](#) principles and approaches, while concentrating on current, rather than classic discoveries," Dr. De Stasio noted. "Focusing the Primers on contemporary scientific literature will engage students in the learning process and guide them toward the process of scientific discovery." Dr. De Stasio expects the Journal to publish six Primer articles each year, about one in every other issue of *GENETICS*.

"Providing valuable educational resources like this that enhance the quality of genetics education, teaching and learning is one of our missions." said Mark Johnston, Editor-in-Chief of *GENETICS*.

"Engaging students in the process of critically analyzing primary research is a vital part of research training."

More information: Elizabeth A. De Stasio. Suppressors, Screens, and Genes: An Educational Primer for Use with "A Network of Genes Antagonistic to the LIN-35 Retinoblastoma Protein of *Caenorhabditis elegans*" *Genetics* August 2012 Volume 191, Issue 4, 1031-1035

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