

BUILDING CAPACITY IN TEACHERS AND STUDENTS THROUGH FOLLOW-UP

by Evelyn M. Maycumber

CRISS trainers notice right away that teachers are engaged with the strategies during the workshop, and many teachers find connections to their own content. Teacher enthusiasm and response was a major reason I determined to become involved with Project CRISS. I observed teachers' "aha's" as they made connections to their content and immediately voiced, "I can use this strategy tomorrow in my own classroom." The experience was exhilarating! I was really helping teachers help students become independent learners. What a disappointment later to find that teachers used the strategies a few times and then put that great research-based workshop manual on their shelves! Now, years later, I know that the workshop is only the beginning of a learning curve that must really never end (Voices from the Middle, 2002). To build teacher capacity and enable students as independent learners is a long term process.

In order to examine this topic with you, I have constructed three scenarios based on my own experience in making CRISS happen in schools and on the related adult learning research. (Killion, 2002, Cambourne, 1995, NSDC Standards, 2001).

THE FOLLOWING THREE SCENARIOS PROVIDE A CONTEXT FOR HOW TO USE FOLLOW-UP FOR BUILDING CAPACITY IN TEACHERS AND STUDENTS.

GREENTREE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

CONTEXT: Ten teachers from grades 2 and 4 attended a Level I CRISS Workshop. There is a full time Curriculum Resource Teacher who also attended. The stated goal of this school is to have students in all grades use CRISS strategies.

DEVELOP A SCHOOL CRISS PLAN:

If possible, the teachers, along with the Principal and the Curriculum Resource Teacher, should work with the CRISS trainer to brainstorm how the implementation of CRISS can be accomplished at Greentree. Here are some ideas to guide this discussion.

- List the learning goals for the students that are not being met.
- Compare these with the research-based

CRISS principles and philosophy.

- Discuss how to support all grade levels (initially grades 2 and 4) as the teachers continue to learn about CRISS through classroom use of the strategies. To initiate a new instructional model, teachers need time and a structure to interact with each other and express their concerns. Rarely will they have time to do this without a specific plan and leadership.
- Clarify the goals, establish benchmarks, and develop time lines to reach the goals set by Greentree.

For Teachers Already Trained in CRISS

- Establish a CRISS cadre of trained teachers, a "CRISS Club." Not that this will be an exclusive "club," but there will be support in place for each teacher trying to learn how to integrate these strategies into instruction. The

CRISS Club will be a place where teachers talk about what is working and what is not working. A place where they can get support and help to try new strategies and find specific ways to turn the ownership of learning over to the students. Several questions might guide their time together.

- 3 What is working for my students? Why is this working?
- 3 What is not working? What insights do I have about what happened?
- 3 Where do my students still need help?
- 3 Am I modeling enough? Am I sharing my thinking and insights regarding how to use the strategy with my students (metacognition)?
- 3 Can my students articulate what is working for them and why?
- Share the CRISS teachers' strategy applications, along with student work, with the rest of the staff—both CRISS trained and untrained.
- Keep a school learning log of how the strategies are being used. Include student examples, teacher and student reflections, and grades. Share the log at staff meetings. Have it available in the library. Encourage teachers to observe each other teaching strategies. Make sure the demonstration teacher specifies to the observer(s) his or her specific content and strategy instruction goals, "I'm teaching the parts of a flower including their function. By unit end, I want my students to know and be able to do...."

For Other Staff Not Yet Trained in CRISS

- Use teachers who are CRISS trained to demonstrate and model strategies at grade level and faculty meetings. This works well in pairs or triads.
- Let the Curriculum Resource Teacher

model strategies for these teachers in their classrooms.

- Talk about the principles of CRISS teaching in discussion groups and grade level meetings.
- Have CRISS students describe and model the strategies they are using.

For Students

- Display student "CRISS" work throughout the school.
- Publish student success stories for the whole school to acknowledge and celebrate.
- Have students model for others, as noted earlier.
- Keep a CRISS notebook/portfolio in which students record "what works for me."
- Encourage students to e-mail the strategy adaptations they have used to each other, to the principal, to their teacher, and/or to the CRISS trainer.
- Create a student/teacher CRISS Club where strategies are used within a specific context.

NEXT STEPS:

- Stress the CRISS principles as well as the strategies.
- Train additional teachers in CRISS.
- Encourage an enthusiastic, respected CRISS teacher, administrator, or support person to become a school-based CRISS trainer.
- Reflect on achievements and set new goals, higher, more specific.
- Look at student end-of-year data to know if CRISS is making a difference.

BLUEFIELD MIDDLE SCHOOL

CONTEXT: There are 15 faculty members in Bluefield Middle School and seven of them attended the CRISS training. The school is organized using the middle school concept model where four teachers (math,

science, social studies, and language arts) team to teach the same students and have common planning time. Teachers who attended CRISS Level I training are from several content areas and from multiple teams. The assistant principal wants to encourage more teachers to learn about the strategies and wishes to support the teachers once they are trained. This scenario often happens in school districts where teachers ask to go to a training and the principal chooses one or two from each grade level or content area. There are, however, ways to capitalize on those who have been trained and to begin building capacity among other faculty members.

DEVELOP A SCHOOL CRISS PLAN:

The assistant principal and trained teachers should work with the CRISS trainer to develop a plan for implementing the CRISS principles and strategies across all content areas and in all teams.

For Teachers Already Trained in CRISS

- Form a cadre of those teachers trained in CRISS. The cadre members can share how the strategies work for them; they can help each other when a strategy does not work; and they can encourage each other to try new strategies.
- Encourage these teachers to plan how the rest of the faculty will be made aware of how CRISS strategies work and involve them in scheduling upcoming trainings.
- Have these teachers share with their team members the specific strategies they plan to use with their students.
- Have the CRISS-trained teachers take the lead within their teams. First, they use a strategy, then they share with their team how the strategy worked and how it might be adapted for use in other content areas.
- Create a schedule, for each team,

listing which teacher will teach which strategies. Then, the other content teachers can assume that their students have had modeling and guided practice in the specified strategies. In one middle school, for example, the members of the science department wanted their students to effectively use two- and three-column notes, so they taught these strategies in depth. Other departments could then use these strategies and know that their students had received in-depth teaching. Also, departments can make variations on strategies in order to meet the needs of their content. Once students understand how to use a Venn diagram for comparison, a variation of this is not difficult to teach. Finally, remember that the goal of CRISS training is for students to own the strategies and use them to help understand content and to monitor their own learning.

For Teachers Not Yet Trained in CRISS

- Share student data with these teachers. Since teachers work in teams, it is important to record exactly how student learning is being strengthened by the use of CRISS principles and strategies. Have the CRISS teachers keep track of grades, attendance, and quality of student work and compare that information to previous years' data.
- Expose these teachers to CRISS. Once they have used a strategy or two, they are more likely to come to a CRISS training with a positive attitude, especially if they have seen student improvement and buy-in. Using this principle, follow-up actually occurs before teachers have had the training. A real plus would be a follow up visit from the CRISS trainer along the way.

For Students

- Encourage the CRISS students to adapt or modify strategies to add their own personal flavor. This is a true sign of ownership. I find middle school students are a delight, because they can see multiple connections and are very open to changing a format to meet their needs. One example: In a middle school, when I was modeling opinion-proof for a class, the students wanted to include a third column that would hold the page and paragraph number where the text-based support was found. I felt this was powerful, as it provided explicit help for those students struggling with the concept.
- Prepare the CRISS students to work with other students, so that strategies may be shared across all content areas and in all teams.
- Create a student notebook, or learning log, of strategy use and application (that travels with the student). This is an effective way to get students into the habit of using the same strategy in multiple content areas.
- Share student work which, for middle school students, is often complex and imaginative. This is an excellent way for others (teachers and students) to see how strategies are being used in a specific content area. In one middle school where I worked, students became so confident of how they used a strategy, they produced flyers and placed them in teachers' boxes with the following note, "We will come to your class and teach your students how to organize their learning using two- and three-column notes." This illustrates the highest form of learning-teaching others. What a great goal and opportunity for middle school students.

NEXT STEPS:

- Continue the cycle of assessing the

needs of students based on achievement measures.

- Determine the role of CRISS principles and strategies in targeting these needs and meeting district and school goals.
- Evaluate the teachers' levels of use of the strategies and how they have turned the ownership of learning over to the students following the CRISS procedure of modeling and guided practice.

MAROON VALLEY HIGH SCHOOL

CONTEXT: At Maroon Valley High, about half of the faculty (25 teachers) attended a CRISS Level I workshop. The teachers came from various disciplines, and they were interested by varying degrees in the strategies they received in the workshop. The principles and philosophy were important to them, and they determined to try the strategies with their students. Their students' low annual performance test results were the impetus for the CRISS training. The principal attended the training and wants the students to become independent learners just like it says in the CRISS acronym.

The Level I trainer works in a nearby district and can be available on a limited basis to assist Maroon Valley with the planning.

DEVELOP A SCHOOL CRISS

PLAN: The trainer and principal get together to design an initial plan for Maroon Valley. They realize the principal's goal of getting all students to be independent can work only if the majority of the teachers receive CRISS training and support.

For Teachers Already Trained in CRISS

- Form a Strategy Club, which meets weekly, for teachers of multiple content areas to share their teaching ideas and

strategy applications. This can be initiated and planned for by the principal. In one school where I worked, teachers gave the major portion of one planning period a week to meet together in random groups to share their use of strategies, review other strategies, and study ways to adapt the strategies more effectively to the content they teach. (Note: If this is not scheduled as a part of the teacher's normal schedule, it often doesn't happen.)

- Encourage teachers of the same content to meet and discuss how they use the strategies, as well as the principles and philosophy. Teachers find it beneficial to talk about issues of learning, such as, how to insure that metacognition is addressed in each lesson, when is it appropriate to model, and how can I assure that students have ownership of the strategies.
- Link into the school's professional development system for CRISS follow-up. This is especially helpful for secondary teachers. It gives real credence to the importance of CRISS, when the documentation of how teachers plan for the use and integration of strategy instruction into their lessons counts toward re-certification. In Florida, for example, most districts give additional in-service credit toward re-certification for the time spent planning the implementation of content learned in a workshop.
- Base follow-up sessions on student response. The principal meets with key CRISS teachers to get feedback on how students are responding to the strategies and whether students are using the strategies independently. Better still, ask the students themselves (in a survey or interview) and report the results to teachers.

For Teachers Not Yet Trained in CRISS

- Arrange for CRISS-trained teachers to model, for a colleague, strategies they are effectively using. This modeling can take place in either the CRISS teacher's or the colleague's classroom.
- Invite these teachers to the Strategy Club meetings. Talk in terms of specific ways the principles and philosophy can be used throughout the curriculum.
- Use department chairs to "get the word out" about what happens when your class is "CRISS Informed."
- Talk about the process of strategy instruction at staff or department meetings.
- Share student work—e-mail each other. Include samples from unlikely students. Ask students to talk about their work and pass this along by e-mail.

For Students

- Go straight for the goal: give students ownership as soon as possible and help them build a CRISS toolbox of principles and strategies for learning.
- Try to get CRISS "buy-in" from key students. Give them a role in modeling for others and teaching the strategies and principles to their peers.
- Have CRISS students tutor new students in their classes on the strategies to "bring them up to speed."
- Create opportunities for students to talk and write about what is working and what is not working. Give the students lots of encouragement and strategic feedback.
- Engage students in a quest for "the perfect strategy," whenever they encounter problematic text. Have them share the results with other students and teachers.
- Stress that learning strategies and the principles of learning is not magic, it

requires practice. Students should not give up if their first time is not totally successful. (Note: This is also true for teachers!)

NEXT STEPS:

- Plan for more teachers to be trained in CRISS.
- Select an enthusiastic CRISS teacher, administrator, or support person to become the on-site CRISS trainer.
- Document student progress and share with all the faculty.
- Plan for a CRISS school-wide showcase to share student work with families, other schools, and the community. Invite the local newspaper.
- Focus on creating student “experts” in strategies and principles of CRISS.
- Become a CRISS demonstration site.

In actuality, all of these ideas can be utilized at most grade levels. The scenarios merely serve as a kind of framework through which one can view the capacity building that might occur. Please know that success breeds success. Celebrating what teachers are doing in implementing CRISS principles and strategies is a powerful way to validate and encourage best practices at all grade levels.

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