

# ART TEACHERS CREATIVE WITH CRISS®

The delivery of art instruction has dramatically changed in the past several years. Once considered a product-oriented activity, students created “projects” to take home for the family to enjoy. Today, the teaching philosophy in art instruction, as in all content areas, emphasizes the development of critical thinking skills.

Research has documented the beneficial results of arts involvement to academics, self esteem, and community participation. For example, a longitudinal study conducted by Dr. James Catteral (University of California at Los Angeles) of 25,000 middle and high school students determined that, regardless of socio-economic status, student arts involvement leads to greater school success (Zemelman et al., 1997).<sup>1</sup> Students in the study who were intensively involved in the arts during their adolescent years exceeded their classmates with:

- Significantly better school grades.
- Higher standardized test scores in reading, writing, and mathematics.
- Higher levels of persistence in school.
- Less boredom in school.
- More involvement in community service work.
- Greater self-esteem and confidence.
- Less TV watching, using more time for artistic and community interests.

Similar student gains are being achieved in our Hillsborough County Public School District (Tampa, Florida) by involving our visual arts teachers and students in CRISS learning strategies. In accordance with the district’s first priority, “reading as a foundation for academic achievement,” **Lynn Dougherty-Underwood**, our

Reading Supervisor, has worked with **Bonnie Valdes**, CRISS Master Trainer, to offer CRISS cross-curricular Level I trainings, CRISS trainings for administrators, and, recently, a CRISS follow-up training which focused on applications for secondary art.

One of our art teachers, **Dianne Hess Zink**, received her initial CRISS Level I workshop from **Rebecca McBride**, a reading teacher and high school colleague. Dianne describes the experience,

*“When I first heard about CRISS and, with the rest of the faculty, was strongly urged to participate in the training, I was less than enthusiastic. Our reading teacher offered the training at our facility. Knowing that she would make the training as painless as possible and highly respecting her work and her personally, I signed up. I saw much value in the CRISS strategies . . . but . . . most of the examples demonstrated were geared toward the core subjects of English, math, social studies, and science.”*

Dianne shared with me that, following her CRISS Level I workshop, she had some ideas for her art classroom, but felt “left hanging” to develop specific art applications. As a content area department supervisor, I had also observed inconsistencies in CRISS application and instruction in my art classroom walkthroughs.

During spring term (2003), I attended my second CRISS workshop – “CRISS for Secondary Supervisors” by Bonnie Valdes. The training inspired the idea for content specific CRISS follow-up workshops. Bonnie and I developed the specifics of a CRISS follow-up for middle and secondary art teachers and gained support from district administrators, **Jackie Heard**, Middle School General Director, **Charles Fleming**, Secondary School General Director, and **Dr. Earl Lennard**, Superintendent. Bonnie presented the training this past summer.

After participating in this follow-up workshop, Dianne described her second CRISS training experience,

*“I jumped at the chance to participate. . . . Phyllis Alexandroff said . . . the trainer was fabulous and the workshop would be extremely beneficial. She was*

*right. . . . The art teachers that participated in this workshop were totally involved with all activities and very motivated to incorporate CRISS strategies into their lessons."*

As a combined result of over three years of CRISS training in our district, excellent art teachers, and supportive administration, our middle and secondary art teachers have several successful lessons to share in this newsletter. Teachers sharing lessons include:

- **Dianne Hess Zink**, Durant High School.
- **Terry Normand**, Durant High School.
- **Karen Olsen**, Liberty Middle School.

As the following teacher lessons and student examples will illustrate (pages 4-8 of this document), the arts prepare students for future decision-making. The arts, especially when combined with CRISS learning strategies, engage and develop student skills in critical thinking, problem solving, and independent study.

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<sup>1</sup>Steve Zemelman, Harvey Daniels, and Arthur Hyde.

*Best Practice, New Standards for Teaching and Learning in America's Schools*, 2nd ed. Heinemann Publishing. 1997.

*Author: Phyllis Duggar Alexandroff, Supervisor, Middle/Secondary Art and Humanities, Hillsborough County Public Schools, Tampa, Florida*

**DIANNE HESS ZINK, ART TEACHER  
DURANT HIGH SCHOOL**

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**HUMAN RIGHTS CERAMICS PROJECT**

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Since this summer's CRISS<sup>SM</sup> Art Teachers' Workshop, I revised my "Human Rights Project" learning plan for my Advanced Ceramics class. The new plan incorporates additional CRISS<sup>SM</sup> strategies and principles to improve my students' ability to organize research information and gain metacognition.

**CRISS<sup>SM</sup> Learning Plan:**

- *Topic:* Human rights atrocities
- *Purpose:* Students will study and reflect upon past human rights atrocities in order to  
1) create awareness of the warning signs of hatred, 2) educate others to those dangers, and 3) initiate positive changes for the future.
- *Assessment:* Research journals and a clay memorial in memory of victims of past genocide or human rights atrocities.
- *Prepare before reading:* Students talk about what they already know of human rights violations in the past.
- *Be involved during reading:* Students conduct independent research of a historical human rights



Dianne Hess Zink teaching Power Thinking.

atrocities, such as the Holocaust, U.S. government treatment of indigenous North Americans, Cambodian genocide, and Rwandan genocide.

- *Organize/transform after reading:* Students organize their research information in journals in the form of Power Notes, Concept Maps, and visual images.
- *Apply the information learned:* Finally, students design and create ceramic memorials based on the research information in their journals and their personal reflections.



**STUDENT EXAMPLE**

*" . . . My project represents the way the Nez Perce Indians overcame the treatment of the United States government and rebuilt their culture. The broken pots symbolize the destruction of their simple life. Their culture and their existence were shattered and broken when the American settlers took their land and forced them to leave. The broken pots sit upon the rich soil that was their home. . . ."*

*Excerpt from "A Broken Culture" by Emily Cardens,*

**DIANNE HESS ZINK, ART TEACHER  
DURANT HIGH SCHOOL**

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**INTERNATIONAL BOOK SHARE PROJECT**

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For the past three years, I have been involved with the "International Book Share Project," a program that connects American and Israeli high school students. Durant High School student participation in this project is voluntary. With this program, I can help my students incorporate CRISS<sup>SM</sup> reading and discussion strategies with their learning in visual arts.

**CRISS<sup>SM</sup> Learning Plan:**

- *Topic:* The Holocaust
- *Purpose:* Students will learn about the Holocaust through reading and communicating with Israeli students who are descendants of survivors. They will understand causes of the Holocaust, recognize the signs of hatred, and encourage acceptance and communication among diverse individuals.
- *Assessment:* E-mail messages to partner students in Israel and an art project representing their feelings and learned

information about the Holocaust.

- *Prepare before reading:* Using Think-Pair-Share, students talk about what they already know about the Holocaust.
- *Be involved during reading:* Students read a book about the Holocaust and discuss their feelings and ideas about the book's events using the CRISS<sup>SM</sup> strategies of Think-Pair-Share, Sticky-note Discussions, and Seed Discussions.
- *Organize/transform after reading:* Using Internet dialogue, students continue their discussion with Israeli high school students who have read the same book. In their Internet discussion, the American and Israeli students reflect on the events in the book, as well as their reactions to current world events.
- *Applying the information learned:* Students design and create an art project representing what they have learned about the Holocaust and mail it to their counterparts in Israel. (Last year's quilt was displayed at the Ghetto Fighters Museum this past summer.)



**STUDENT EXAMPLE**

*"The big envelope arrived safely . . . . We always know that . . . we are going to see something original, full of thought, and aesthetic – something we are going to learn from. Thank you so much for enriching our experience again!"*

*Excerpt from letter by Tzippi Tal, Israeli Co-coordinator of the International Book Share Project*



Designing the quilt art project to be sent to Israel (left to right): Toby Sturges, Rachel Kimler, Ms. Dianne Hess Zink, and Amaris Urby.

**TERRY NORMAND, ART TEACHER  
DURANT HIGH SCHOOL**

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**AFRICAN MASK PROJECT**

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As a result of attending CRISS<sup>SM</sup> workshops, I have realized the importance of eliciting students' background knowledge as a starting point for the African Mask Project in my art classroom. When my students share their personal encounters with masks, they make an initial connection between their lives and African tribal life. By finding these commonalities, the students' learning gains relevance.

**CRISS<sup>SM</sup> Learning Plan:**

- *Topic:* African Masks
- *Purpose:* Students will make connections between their lives and African tribal life.
- *Assessment:* Two-page research paper on one mask type, corrected Prediction Chart, African mask art project, critique, and summary sticky note.
- *Prepare before reading:* Students begin with a Think-Pair-Share to activate their background knowledge on masks. The topic is: "What do you know about masks – the purposes and materials of masks?" Each pair shares their results at the board and class discussion follows.

The teacher presents an introduction on African masks using slides that illustrate the main types of masks (ritual, concealment, adornment) and various construction materials.

Students evaluate handouts on masks from eight African tribes. They use small group discussion and a Prediction Chart to predict the mask type and mask materials. Student groups, sitting

**STUDENT  
EXAMPLE**

Student  
created  
African  
mask  
held by  
Ms. Terry  
Norman,  
high school  
art teacher.



together by tables, select one mask type to research at the school media center.

- *Be involved during reading:* Students work in their groups on the following research questions while reading on-line research information:
  - ⇒ *Where in Africa is this tribe located?*
  - ⇒ *What are the land and climate like?*
  - ⇒ *How did these people subsist?*
  - ⇒ *What was important to them?*
  - ⇒ *What did they fear?*
  - ⇒ *What do their masks look like?*
  - ⇒ *What materials are used for their masks?*
  - ⇒ *What was the purpose of the mask?*
  - ⇒ *Are there any myths attached to the mask?*
- *Organize/transform after reading:* The student groups summarize their research in a two-page paper.
- *Apply the information learned:* Based on the research results, students, individually, write a design description for a mask they plan to construct. Each description includes mask style, materials, and any necessary material substitutions.

## STUDENT EXAMPLE



Once their designs are approved, the students create original African masks appropriate to their selected tribe.

The completed masks are displayed and the student groups present their research reports to the class.

Students correct their Prediction Charts and critique their masks according to the tribes and mask materials.

Students summarize a lesson learned in the assignment on a sticky note before exiting the critique.



“When my daughter was about seven years old, she asked me one day what I did at work. I told her I worked at the college - that my job was to teach people how to draw. She stared back at me, incredulous, and said, ‘You mean they forget?’ ” Howard Ikemoto



**KAREN OLSEN, ART TEACHER  
LIBERTY MIDDLE SCHOOL**

### READING TO CREATE YOUR CULTURAL HERITAGE

Liberty Middle School strives to promote reading and writing throughout our curriculum. Consequently, this lesson’s goals are for students to read with a specific purpose related to visual arts and to read outside of their reading and language arts classes.

The assignment is to design and create a ceramic pitcher and plate based on the student’s cultural heritage. Students explore their heritage through reading and discussion, create an art piece, and critique the piece and their process in a “Reflections Essay.” As a result, this art project gives students an authentic reading and writing application to reinforce becoming independent learners.

#### **CRISS<sup>SM</sup> Learning Plan:**

- *Topic:* Student’s cultural heritage

- *Purpose:* Students will design and create ceramic pitchers and plates based on the students’ cultural heritage and will have an opportunity to become independent learners through authentic reading and writing.
- *Assessment:* K-W-L Chart, Two-column Notes, four-paragraph essay, and art project - ceramic pitcher and plate.
- *Prepare before reading:* The students begin by researching their ancestry through conversations with family members. Next, they complete the “Know” (K) and “Want to Know” (W) parts of their K-W-L Charts and gather reference books on their ancestral countries.

The teacher explains the author’s craft (chapters, subheadings, and essential information) to the entire class using one primary text source.


- *Be involved during reading:* The students read their reference books recording “Learned” (L) information in their K-W-L Charts.

- *Organize/transform after reading:* The students organize the L information in Two-column Notes.
- *Apply the information learned:* The students then design and construct ceramic pitchers and plates based on their reading notes about their cultural heritage.
- *Additional application - Reflection & evaluation:* The teacher models the process of writing a reflections essay using an art piece and a four-paragraph or four-topic format: describe, analyze, interpret, and judge.

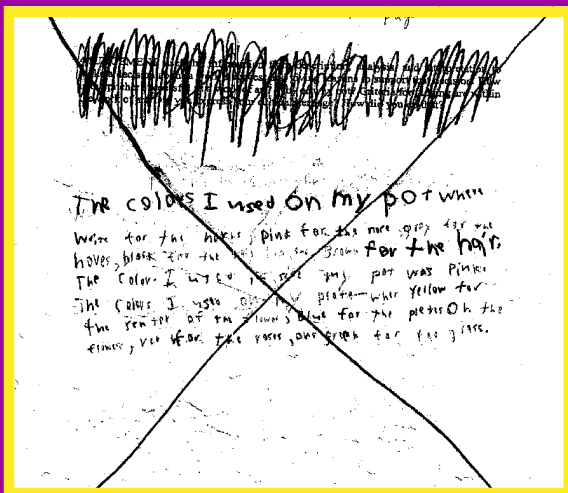
Then, using the four-paragraph format and suggested topics, the students write their own reflection essays evaluating their ceramic pitchers and plates. The essays include thoughtful reflections on their learning process.

This project produced several exciting outcomes. I am particularly excited about the high quality of the thought-demanding reflections piece and the results I received from one Severely Learning Disabled (SLD) student.

The student is a seventh grader. When asked to write an essay, he became frustrated, "X'ed" out his first writing attempt, violently scribbled out the question, and then wadded up the paper. However, this same student became engaged and comprehended the assignment when he was encouraged to use Two-column Notes to organize his ancestry research. From these notes, he successfully designed and created a clay bull pitcher and plate representing his Spanish ancestry.

Such beneficial results, as these, have inspired me to study the effect of combining reading, CRISS<sup>SM</sup> strategies, and art instruction for my Master's degree thesis. 

### STUDENT EXAMPLE



*Unsuccessful writing attempt by a 7th grade SLD student.*



*Successful bull design by the same SLD student.*

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