

COMMENTS *From You*

Project CRISS plays a large role in our professional development effort with teachers. When you have a large school population (2700) of varying abilities combined with a teaching staff (about 200) where at least 150 are non-tenured, well, you can see the need for strong and articulated support systems. Project CRISS, an integral part of our State of Illinois School Improvement Plan, has helped us achieve our goals of raising student expectations of their academic performance, as well as helping us raise the level of critical thinking in our classrooms.

A visit to our campus would show teachers engaging students in CRISS strategies on all levels, from Special Education to Advanced Placement. (Our AP enrollment, by the way, has doubled over the past three years and mirrors our demographic population as well.) We are very proud of this. Our Superintendent Dr. Laura Murray and our Principal Dr. Von Mansfield have spoken at state and national conferences regarding our AP success—while our enrollment has increased, our test scores have stayed consistently high and our achievement gaps have begun to narrow. Also, ACT will be using HF [Homewood-Flossmoor] as a case study for increasing test scores in our school. While it is hard to put a quantitative number on CRISS and our success, I am confident that qualitatively, we can say CRISS has a part in our students' success in these areas as well as throughout the school.

More importantly, thanks to Carol Santa's visit, we are moving beyond a CRISS as "strategies in isolation" type of teaching and more toward a CRISS metacognitive mode of teaching and learning. You can see evidence of this in the large amount of journaling students do in their classes.

Because we have two certified CRISS District Trainers (Chimille Perkins/Science Department Chair and Sahar Kayyal/English Teacher), we are able to create an ongoing cycle of training—we will have completed our third in-house training by the end of this summer. Thanks to Carol's report **Project CRISS Evidence of Effectiveness**, we will be doing a more quantitative study of teacher and student implementation of CRISS. As we work at the 9-12 grade level, our next logical step is to include our K-8 partners—the elementary districts that feed into our high school. When we look at the research surrounding closing achievement gaps and developing self-regulated learners, it is hard to argue with the limitless possibilities CRISS brings into the lives of our teachers as well as our students.

About the Author: Dean M. Auriemma is Director of Curriculum, Instruction, and Professional Development, Homewood-Flossmoor High School, Flossmoor, Illinois

NOTE: This article first appeared in the Spring 2004 *Comments from CRISS*[®] newsletter. All material is copyrighted. Permission is granted to photocopy or print this article in its entirety, as long as all credits remain intact with the article and the Project CRISS copyright appears on the materials. This article may not be used in any other publication in any medium, without the express, written permission of Project CRISS.

©Project CRISS