

## CRISS® IS Differentiated Instruction

We want to thank Mieke Cameron, Principal of Ecole Sir John Franklin High School in Yellowknife, Northwest Territories, Canada, for sharing the following “Differentiated Instruction Principles” adapted from *Differentiation in Practice: A Resource Guide for Differentiating Curriculum, Grades 5-9*, by Carol Ann Tomlinson and Caroline Cunningham Eidson (ASCD, 2003). Mieke’s school in Yellowknife is successfully implementing both CRISS and the differentiated instruction principles.

The chart beginning here and continued on the next page matches **Differentiated Instruction Principles** to the **Project CRISS Principles and strategies**.

<b>Differentiated Instruction Principles</b>	<b>Project CRISS</b>
<p><b>Good curriculum comes first.</b> The teacher’s first job is always to ensure a coherent, important, inviting, and thoughtful curriculum.</p>	<p><b><i>Start with content.</i></b> Does it really merit study? Is the content significant? Ask yourself, am I stressing the big ideas—the central organizing ideas of a content domain rather than superficial information? Does the content relate to state and local curriculum guidelines? <i>(from Chapter 1, CRISS Principles and Philosophy, of the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition CRISS manual)</i></p>
<p><b>All tasks should respect each learner.</b> Every student deserves work that is focused on the essential knowledge, understanding, and skills targeted for the lesson. Every student should be required to think at a high level and should find his or her work interesting and powerful.</p>	<p><b><i>Set clear goals and objectives.</i></b> Are my goals understandable and reachable by all students? Do I have a variety of resources for the students to use that will enable them to reach the content and learning goals? Will students be able to use these goals to monitor their comprehension? How will they know that they have successfully reached these goals? <i>(from Chapter 1, Principles and Philosophy, of the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition CRISS manual)</i></p>
<p><b>When in doubt, teach up!</b> Good instruction stretches learners. The best tasks are those that students find a little too difficult to complete comfortably. Be sure there’s a support system in place to facilitate the student’s success at a level that he or she doubted was attainable.</p>	<p>With CRISS the <b><i>responsibility for learning falls on the student.</i></b> Rather than teachers <i>giving</i> information to students, CRISS teachers facilitate learning. Students must bring out their background knowledge, actively read, organize information in their own way, and practice and apply the information in order to learn it. The CRISS philosophy challenges ALL students.</p>

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Differentiated Instruction Principles</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Project CRISS</b></p>
<p><b>Use flexible grouping.</b> Find ways and time for the class to work as a whole, for students to demonstrate competence alone, and for students to work with varied groups of peers. Using only one or two types of groups causes students to see themselves and one another in more limited ways, keeps the teacher from “auditioning” students in varied contexts, and limits potentially rich exchanges in the classroom.</p>	<p>A powerful part of learning with Project CRISS is discussion. Throughout the Project CRISS training manual you will find examples of students working in pairs and small groups to facilitate <i>instructional conversations</i> and <i>active learning</i>. The flexible grouping suggested by Tomlinson and Eidson enhances CRISS instruction.</p>
<p><b>Become an assessment junkie.</b> Everything that a student says and does is a potential source of assessment data. Assessment should be an ongoing process, conducted in flexible but distinct stages, and it should maximize opportunities for each student to open the widest possible window on his or her learning.</p>	<p>The CRISS methodology encourages assessment throughout the CRISS Strategic Learning Plan. <i>Students should be assessed not only on final products, but on the processes used to attain their goals.</i> The <i>Winter 2004 COMMENTS from CRISS</i> featured using CRISS principles and strategies as part of ongoing assessment.</p>
<p><b>Grade to reflect growth.</b> The most we can ask of any person, and the least we ought to ask, is to be and become their best. The teacher’s job is to guide and support the learner in this endeavor. Grading should, in part, reflect a learner’s growth.</p>	<p>By using a <i>variety of assessments</i>, including both <i>objective</i> and <i>performance</i>, and by not only evaluating the end product, but also the <i>processes</i> leading up to that product, CRISS teachers assess not only the content learned, but also a student’s growth as an independent, strategic learner</p>

Research in the process of learning indicates that certain principles (those outlined in Chapter 1 Principles and Philosophy of the Project CRISS training manual, ) need to be in place for learning to occur. Regardless of whether students are gifted or disabled, they need to be metacognitive as they undertake a learning task. They need to make connections to their background knowledge, set purposes for learning, and actively engage in the “text” used for learning. Project CRISS teachers encourage their students to use the strategies that work for them and to adapt the strategies to meet their specific learning objectives. In this way, all students are challenged, motivated, and allowed to be creative. Project CRISS instruction *IS* differentiated instruction.

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