

# Super SHARING STRATEGIES

This Sharing Super Strategy relates to CRISS principles (discussion and writing), rather than strategies.

## Thinking Circles

By Alexander Terego

*“Education is the kindling of a flame, not the filling of a vessel.” - Socrates*

I believe the goals of education are to increase knowledge; to improve reasoning, critical thinking, and social skills; and to help students discover themselves.

There are two methods by which teachers and students together can achieve these goals. The first is the prevalent *didactic* method, which is teacher-led and content-driven. The second, less frequently employed method is the *maieutic* (Socratic inquiry) technique with its student-led discussion format (the CRISS instructional conversation) and its focus on inquiry and emphasis on opinion.

These two methods serve very different needs, but combined become a holistic, learning experience. They fill the vessel *and* light the lamp.

The *didactic* or lecture format puts a premium on the transmission of facts or truths and their retention by the students. Measurement of results is objective. The skills needed—and honed—are understanding and memory.

The *maieutic* method, however, puts a premium on the investigation of one’s taste or preference (the opposites of truth). The skills needed—and sharpened—are reason, problem solving, and teamwork. Measurement is subjective and in an essay format.

In combination, these two methods give the students not just the information they need, but the skills to do something with that information; such as using it to form an opinion (organize the information in a Conclusion-Support format)

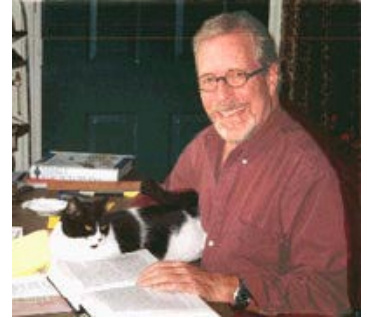
and to express that opinion in writing, for example, an essay.

Education does not end with high school or even college; it should be life long. However, if the student possesses only facts, then the pursuit of personal wisdom will remain elusive.

If, as Benjamin Disraeli said, “*The best way to become acquainted with a subject is to write about it*” and, if it is also a fact that the true subject of an essay is its author, then the best way to self-discovery *must* be writing.

But discovering what to write about is the key to an authentic voice. This is where *Thinking Circles* (Co-operative Learning) and *Thinking Around the Box™* (my method for discovering a point of view) come in.

Humanity’s mastery of fire and the discovery of tools were almost certainly group endeavors. Two minds are better than one. Businesses know that because of the network effect, two minds are three times better than one; and seven or eight minds are actually 56 or 72 times better. Put that together with another human quality—our capacity to entertain a point of view that is not our own, without necessarily adopting it—and high order thinking and teamwork will develop along with wisdom. Just what today’s employers and our democracy are looking for.



**About the Author:** Alexander Terego recently published a book called *Essay Writing for High School Students: Thinking Around the Box™* and an accompanying Teacher’s Guide. After developing his materials, Alex tested them in several classrooms in Florida. One of the experimental teachers was a devoted user of CRISS, and she convinced him that CRISS was a perfect match for his process, *Thinking Circles*. For more information about Alex and his materials, please visit [www.parentsaseducators.com](http://www.parentsaseducators.com).

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