

ASSESSMENT

What about assessment? How can I use CRISS strategies as a link between what I teach and what I test? How can I help my students to show what they know? These questions continually arise in our teachers' lounges and in CRISS workshops throughout the country. How, then, are CRISS teachers incorporating strategies into practical approaches for student assessment?

Let's look at some examples. Several teachers from the Kalispell (Montana) School District shared with us assessment ideas that have worked well for them and their students.

POWER NOTES & PICTURE MAPS

Francy McAllister used a six square frame or chart to test her students' knowledge at the end of a world history unit. She gave her ninth graders six main topics from the unit, and they labeled each of the boxes with one of the topics. They used pictures and power notes (pp. 106-107 and 38-41, CRISS manual) to show their understanding of each concept. Using their class notes, they spent five to six minutes on each idea. Next, they met in groups and added to the information in their charts. Francy explained that they would do the exact same thing for their test. There were no surprises in this class. Everyone deserved a chance to succeed. The



next day, she gave her students the same blank frame as a test. This time they filled it in independently and without using their notes. Using the same format for studying and testing not only insures a direct link between learning strategies and testing, but builds self-confidence. Moreover, when students transform information into a frame they "know if they know". Francy also found she was able to grade "framed" tests quickly.

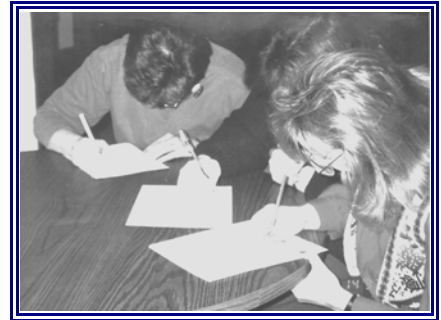
PROBLEM-SOLUTION

Using the CRISS strategy of problem-solution (pp. 130-136, CRISS manual), Maureen Danner's ninth grade English class demonstrated their understanding of a short story they had just finished by taking notes using a modified problem-solution format containing the following questions:

- 1) What *problem* does the main character face?
- 2) What are the *causes* of the problem?
- 3) What are the *effects* of the problem?
- 4) How is the problem *resolved*?

Then, students used their notes from the frame to write a four paragraph essay.

Maureen found that preparing students for essay questions by



first having them take brief notes within a frame led to well-formed essays. Students had to think through their answers by taking organized notes before they began to write. Maureen first used this note-taking and assessment strategy with the short story, "The Most Dangerous Game," by Richard E. Connell. Practically every student succeeded! An added benefit was quality! Reading well-developed essays was less tedious to evaluate than reading those typically written by ninth grade students.

STORY PLANS

Aliene Overly, a ninth grade English teacher, had similar success using a framed story plan (pp. 147-152, CRISS manual). For an assessment, she asked her students to do an in depth *analysis of a character*. After selecting a main character from a novel, her students took notes using the following modified frame:

- ▶ Character
- ▶ Character’s appearance
- ▶ Character’s comments and conversations
- ▶ Character’s thoughts
- ▶ Character’s activities
- ▶ What others say about the character

Then, they used their “framed” information to write a character analysis paper which also became an assessment. Because students first organized their ideas in the frame, their essays were well structured and rich with detail.

Aliene also used a modified frame to help students *analyze story conflict*. Using the frame, students listed the main conflicts in the novels they were reading and recorded the time and setting of each conflict. Finally, they analyzed why the time and setting worked for a particular conflict. Aliene’s organizing frame included the following questions:

- ▶ What is the *conflict*?
- ▶ What is the *setting*?
- ▶ What does the author do to make the setting realistic?
- ▶ Why do this time and this setting work for the conflict?

Once students had taken notes on each of these questions, they used their notes for writing essays which analyzed the conflicts and settings in their novels. These activities launched students into higher level thinking and led to well developed essays.

OPINION-PROOF

Aliene developed a *listening* assessment using the opinion-proof format (see Two-Column Notes, pp. 118-141, CRISS manual). Before reading a story to her eighth graders, she explained that they would be taking opinion-proof notes about several important events in the story. As they listened, students wrote their opinions of the events on the left side of their *o-p* notes and jotted down the support they heard in the right-hand column. As part of this process, Aliene led her students through the concepts of *actual* and *interpretative*

Opinion	Support for Opinion
	Using power 3 ideas, explain why these details are supportive.
1.	2.
	3.
	2.
	3.
	2.
	3.
1.	2.
	3.
	2.
	3.
	2.
	3.

information. She assisted their understanding of these concepts by asking some leading questions: “Was this information really in the story or did it come from your own interpretations?” “Are your own interpretations based on actual events in the story?” Next, they

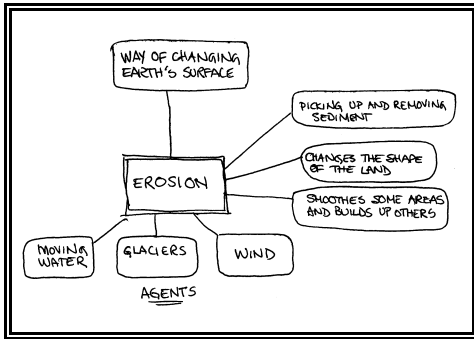
analyzed the information in their opinion-proof notes according to actual vs. interpretative information. Taking opinion-proof notes not only sharpened their listening skills, but it provided guidance for critical thinking and discussion.

POWER NOTES

Sue Allen, a ninth grade social studies teacher, used power notes (pp. 38-42, CRISS manual) as an assessment. Before the test, Sue facilitated a discussion where the students brainstormed everything they had learned in the unit. By grouping and categorizing this information, the students determined the main topics. They recorded these central ideas as Power 1s on a blank piece of paper, then supported the Power 1s with the appropriate Powers 2s and 3s. Sue was pleased to see that after using this strategy several times, the students easily determined the topics they needed to study. The next day for their assessment, each student had to list the Power 1s and then complete the test by filling in the Powers 2s and 3s for support. Like the other teachers, Sue tied her test to the content and strategies she taught. Her students faced no surprises. Also, she found she could grade power notes quickly and easily.

VOCABULARY MAPPING

One of the best assessment strategies is vocabulary mapping (pp. 204-209, CRISS manual). Elmer Whitcraft, ninth grade earth science teacher, found that many of his units of study were packed with difficult concepts and



vocabulary. To help his students understand and remember these ideas, Elmer had them review about five concepts a day using vocabulary maps. For a week preceding his final assessment, he wrote five words on the board and assigned a pair of students to each one. The pairs could use pictures, descriptions, synonyms, antonyms, etc. to create their map. The pairs then reviewed their word for the whole class. For the final test, Elmer selected only five of the words reviewed during the week. He listed the words on the board. The students did the test individually, developing a vocabulary map for each word. The students had responsibility for learning all of the words, because they didn't know which five Elmer would choose for the test. The daily review using the mapping prepared each child for success. Also, using the same format for the review and for the test built student confidence. Everyone could succeed. Using a limited number of words for the assessment also saved valuable teacher time. Rather than grading endless numbers of maps, Elmer had to evaluate only five words for each student.

With CRISS, we don't separate testing from teaching. There are no secrets in our classrooms, no underground curriculum, no guess-what-is-in-my-head games. Students have power over their own learning and their own evaluations. Even better, as students become more responsible for their learning, we find we have more time for our own learning and growing—we don't have to stay up all night creating classroom activities and grading papers.

(And, we get to PLAY more, too!)



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