



# Project CRISS: Reading, Writing, and Studying Strategies for Literature and Content

## PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

An interdisciplinary program, CRISS stands for **C**reating Independence through **S**tudent-owned **S**trategies: Reading, Writing, and Studying Strategies for Literature and Content. Basically, it focuses on helping students in grades 4-12 read, understand, organize, and study material to facilitate their learning. Based on principles from cognitive psychology and reading, the program builds on the theoretical premises that students must integrate new information with prior knowledge and be actively involved in their own learning. The strategies were originally developed to enhance students' reading and writing skills but have application in all content areas. This makes Project CRISS an excellent program to use in the interdisciplinary framework of a middle school and to apply its learning strategies throughout a broad curriculum.

The program was developed in 1979 yet continues to be revised to incorporate new techniques and to reflect new research about learning processes. Project CRISS was approved as a National Diffusion Network program in 1981, 1985, and 1993.

### *Content*

- instructional strategies for integrating reading and learning skills
- interacting with text
- patterns and structures of text
- learning processes
- writing to learn

### *Context*

- varied schools and districts including urban, suburban, and rural
- varied student populations
- grade levels 4-12, all content areas

## PROGRAM CONTEXT

CRISS has been implemented in schools throughout the country with similar success. The program addresses the needs of diverse student populations including Title I, ESL, special education, gifted and talented, and regular education. The program has been implemented in a wide variety of schools.

## STAFF DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM



The CRISS12-18 hour staff development program prepares teachers to implement Project CRISS instructional strategies in their respective content areas. The workshop includes sessions for each of the seven components of the program: theoretical background; textbook analysis and teaching the author's craft; discussion strategies; active strategies for learning and organizing; writing strategies; vocabulary; and assessment.

Within the staff development program, teachers have opportunities to see models of the teaching strategies in action and learn how to apply those strategies in their own classrooms. Teachers learn to demonstrate how to interact with text, understand patterns and structures, have productive discussions, engage actively in the learning process, organize for learning, write to learn, write reports and essays, and learn new vocabulary. Teachers learn to use CRISS strategies to assess students' progress and to help students learn to assess their own work.

Participants in the Project CRISS training receive a teacher resource guide that assists them in implementing the strategies using their content-area textbooks. The staff development explains the learning strategies and suggests ways to apply the strategies in various content areas. In addition, teachers work with their own content materials throughout the training to apply the strategies and to create instructional tools to use in their classrooms.

Project developers advocate continuous follow-up. A follow-up meeting takes place three to six months after the initial training. In addition, a district facilitator supports teachers, helps collect data to evaluate the program's effectiveness, and serves as a liaison between the program staff and the local school or district.

### *Process*

- training
- modeling
- demonstration
- development of instructional materials
- follow-up support
- local facilitator

### *Intended Audience*

- entire school
- entire department or team

## SUMMARY OF RESULTS

Students at all three evaluation sites outperformed the non-treatment group at significant levels even when accounting for naturally occurring gains of students. At the middle school level, students in the treatment group recalled more than twice as much content-area knowledge as their comparison groups.



## EVIDENCE OF INCREASED STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT



Students who were taught Project CRISS strategies demonstrated significantly greater gains ( $p < .001$ ) in the retention of subject-specific information than comparable students who did not participate in the program. The evaluation of Project CRISS was conducted in 1991-92 with eight pre- and post-comparison groups at the development site and two replication sites (Montana, Florida, and Virginia) using intact classroom groups of students in grades 4, 6, 8, and 11. Teachers, rather than students, were randomly assigned to the treatment and comparison groups.

Information retention was assessed through a standardized free-recall approach using text appropriate to the reading level of the students. Both pre- and post-test data were collected using procedures that closely resembled actual classroom and learning situations. Measures to ensure reliability of the process were employed. Data were then analyzed using statistical processes to explore differing effects of the implementation of Project CRISS across both the pre- and post-tests. Students at all three sites outperformed the non-treatment group at significant levels even when accounting for naturally occurring gains of students. In subsequent studies in 1994-95, similar results occurred in two other sites (Colorado and Washington).



When students need help with reading in the content area, organizing information to improve learning, and strategies for studying and processing new information, CRISS will help. For teachers of all content areas this program has been beneficial. And, when teachers in interdisciplinary teams use similar learning strategies across content areas, students' application of the skills is reinforced and their learning increases.

## SAMPLE SITES



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## DOCUMENTATION

Project CRISS. (1996). *Educational Programs That Work: The Catalogue of the National Diffusion Network*, 21st edition. Longmont, CO: Sopris West.

Project CRISS: Creating Independence Through Student-owned Strategies. Kalispell, MT: Author.

