

CRISS BASICS IN THE CLASSROOM

We would like to devote this issue of our newsletter to reviewing some of the CRISS basics and showing how teachers in the Kalispell district have incorporated the concepts into their content classrooms.

BRING OUT STUDENTS BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE

Students' reading comprehension will improve, if they have opportunities to think about what they already know about the topic before they read. The following two strategies show what our teachers are doing:

- 1) Before introducing a reading selection, select two key concepts from the assignment that are important for students to understand. Then have students brainstorm everything they know about these concepts. The teacher records their responses on the board or overhead. This process should take no more than two or three minutes.

For example: Let's say students are ready for the third chapter in their world geography text. The word **landform** appears in bold print. Have students brainstorm and predict what this topic might be about. Record their answers and any questions they may have. Repeat this for any other **key** vocabulary words in the chapter.

- 2) As a further writing exercise, have the students brainstorm in their journals what they already know about the topic (landforms), then have them read their entries to a partner and write one question they would like answered from the selection.

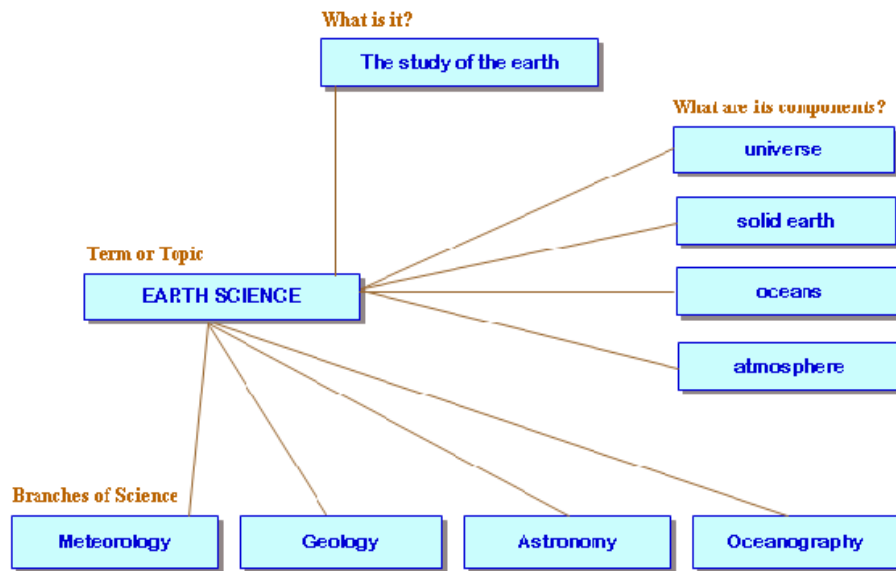
USING FRAMES AND MAPS WITH POORLY ORGANIZED MATERIALS

Students in content classes sometimes have difficulty reading their text material, because it is often poorly organized. They need to know what kind of system the author uses. A simple strategy to use is "framing." Framing is any visual aid the teacher uses to help simplify the chapter's organization, whether it be in charts or maps. The teacher reads the chapter, determines the method of presentation, and constructs a pattern for the students.

Lisa Schlange, biology teacher, set up the following frame on "The Molecules of Life" in the biology text dividing the material into four sections: Carbon molecule, Purpose, Structure and Vocabulary; Examples. She then showed the students how to go through the chapter, selecting the important material.

| Carbor Molecule | Purpose | Structure & Vocabulary | Examples |
|-----------------|-------------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|
| Carbohydrates | energy storage building | Monosaccharides- ring | starches sugars cellulose |
| Lipids | storage | carbon chains fatty acids acids + glycerol = fats | fat cholesterol plant waxes |
| Protein | | | |
| Nucleic Acid | | | |

Elmer Whitcraft, earth science teacher, used “mapping,” which is the graphic or pictorial organization of material. He constructed a semantic map (see example #2) to help students visualize the components of earth science: (1) What is it? (2) What are its branches? (3) What are its components?



STUDENTS READ, RESPOND, AND LEARN

It has been proven that students read better when they are given an opportunity to respond to their literature or reading assignment. This can be done in a variety of ways. Be creative and think of some of your own. Here are a couple to try that work.

- 1) Give the students a reading selection and some scratch paper, or they may use their journals. Brainstorm what they already know about the topic before assigning them to read. Then tell them to read and react to the selection in whatever way they wish and record their reactions on paper. Tell them to feel free to write what they think as they are reading. For example, they may write: “Do I understand what the author is saying here?” “This reminds me of” “I was surprised to find out”

In art, teachers Sue Arthur and Susan Letz read ghost stories to their students and had them freely respond to the literature through art in their sketch books.

- 2) Students have just read a selection and it has been discussed, but their attention is wavering. Give them some scratch paper or use their journals. Tell them to predict what will happen next or what will be discussed next. Tell the students you want to see who is the best guesser. Then have the students read the selection to see if their predictions are correct.

Linda Harschberger had her students read the story “Mars in Heaven.” When they were partially through the story, she had them predict what they thought might happen. Then they finished the story to see what really happened. Finally, she had them re-read the story to look for “clues” to the ending.

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