

Confessions of a Good Teacher



I have a confession to make. I do NOT write lesson plans. I write lectures. Granted, my lectures include readings with Bloom's Taxonomy questions, art history, relevant vocabulary, project guidelines, examples, and grading guidelines. But I guess I never could figure out how to fit all that in the little lesson plan boxes. However, my lectures never contain the Sunshine State Standards <<http://www.fldoe.org/bii/curriculum/sss/>> numbers.

This leads me to my second confession. I haven't looked at the Sunshine State Standards in a while. (I won't say how long.) When I did look at them, I decided they were pretty broad and my lessons covered most every one. Even then, I treated the "Applications to Life" section more as an afterthought.

Still, I believe I'm a good teacher and could continue what I'm doing, and it would be considered a good job. However, now I am reconsidering how I plan my lessons. **Why? . . .**

In 2006, I attended the Model School Conference in Orlando hosted by Dr. Willard R. Daggett's International Center for Leadership in Education <<http://www.leadered.com/>>. (I really wasn't thrilled about attending the conference, but wanted to hear what the latest and greatest "initiative" was all about.) I was surprised at the sheer size of the conference—8,000 educators from around the country. (I thought only people from Florida would be there.) The conference emphasized the use of the Rigor/Relevance Framework <<http://www.daggett.com/rigor.html>>. There were lots of great presenters—Harry Wong was amazing. Anyhow, I started to feel myself getting intrigued. Okay, you're still wondering why I might consider a change in my routine. Well . . .

This summer I attended my third CRISS training with Bonnie Valdes and completed her CRISS "Literacy and Art" follow-up session. All of a sudden, CRISS became something more than Venn Diagrams to me. I started to see connections—connections to me and my teaching and my learning, connections to the Rigor/Relevance Framework and, yes, connections to my lesson planning!

Dr. Daggett states that the FCAT represents minimum standards and in order for students to compete in the world, they need more than minimum understanding. His Rigor/Relevance Framework stresses the "real world" application of any subject students study. As I discovered, CRISS is more than graphic organizers. Project CRISS represents a learning theory where students play a more active role in their learning and build enduring understandings.

What I found is that not only do the Rigor/Relevance Framework and Project CRISS share some of the same strategies—more importantly—they share the same goal: Begin with the end in mind. What do we really want our students to remember from our classes and apply to the real world?

As all Florida art teachers know, our classes inherently exceed FCAT minimum standards. We naturally integrate higher order thinking skills—comparing and contrasting and applying by doing. But I began to ask myself last summer how can I stress the "Application to Life," the "relevant" factor? If someone came into my classroom and asked one of my students WHY they were working on a particular assignment, would they say something other than, "Because it's going to be on the test"?

So I'm studying the Rigor/Relevance Framework and the Project CRISS model and applying them to my lessons. I'm writing lesson plans (yes, those) that start with the Sunshine State Standards and the enduring understandings I want for my students. And despite the difficulties in this county, I'm going to plan field trips and schedule guest speakers. It will take time to fully integrate, but I'm starting this process because I want to be an even better teacher and find more ways for my students to become better learners with real life skills.

Having said all that, I want to share with you the 4-step plan I use to help me plan with the end in mind and prepare a lesson that encompasses the Key Elements of Learning:

- Activate background knowledge: students learn by relating new information to what they already know (they will have ownership).
- Purpose Setting: tell students right up front what they will learn (here are the enduring understandings).

- Active Learning: learning by doing **PLUS** discussion and writing. This goes beyond just making art, but includes strategies for them to reorganize the information—for example, Read-and-Say-Something, Venn Diagrams, K-W-L, or Anticipation Guides.
- Metacognition: Do the STUDENTS know if they are getting it? Have discussions with them and give them the tools (or the strategies) to monitor their own thinking.

So let's get started!



I created “Please Stand for a Moment of Silence” as a spread in a visual journal shared with a colleague. It represents the mantra I repeat to myself each morning in homeroom after the Pledge of Allegiance. “I know why I’m here. I’m good at what I do. I will be patient. I will give praise.” I was returning to the high school classroom after a one year leave of absence, during which I considered leaving teaching altogether. Instead, I became a student again, earned an Associate of Science in Graphic Design, realized I missed teaching and was truly good at it. I returned to the classroom with a clearer sense of purpose, an open heart, and my morning mantra.



About the Author: Dana Warner earned a bachelor degree in Fine Arts and a Master’s degree in Art Education from the University of South Florida in Tampa, Florida. She served as the Assistant Curator of Education at the Polk Museum of Art and the Curator of Education at the Gulf Coast Museum of Art (then the Florida Gulf Coast Art Center). Mrs. Warner has been an art teacher in Hillsborough County Schools for 10 years with 9 of those years in high school. She now teaches art at Wharton High School in Tampa.

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