

COMMENTS From You

Julie L. Thompson is a CRISS District Trainer and the Mentoring Resource Teacher for Bay County School District in Panama City, Florida. She sent us the following participant reflection. Julie wrote us, "I wanted to share it with you because to me, it speaks volumes about the difference CRISS makes."

Participant Reflection

(Please note...the message refers to Miss Robbins who is the principal of the school where this teacher is assigned. Mr. Willis is the Executive Director of Curriculum Instructional Services for Bay District Schools.)

I half-heartedly arrived at the CRISS training, thinking my time would have been better served in my classroom with my students. After the introductions were over, we were asked to jot down some of our goals for the training. The first thought that came to mind were my two dear failing students. I had used every strategy I knew to help them connect to, organize, pull from, and retain dense expository text. After all, I am the ASPIRE [Academic Success through Prevention, Intervention, Remediation, and Enrichment plan] teacher; I should be able to move any student forward in any type of reading or subject. Yet, this had not appeared to have happened. Therefore, one of my goals was to help students organize, pull out, and retain important information in expository text. During the CRISS training, I started to silently and inwardly weep. Your team was modeling and providing practice for the very "tools" I needed to effectively teach my two boys. "Wow!" I thought, "How I could have used those tools to train specifically my two boys to be successful this year." As the training continued, I was left with this impression. Perhaps Mr. Willis and Miss Robbins will ensure that this training be available, if not mandated, for teachers during the summer in-service workshops.

For these two boys, this year, I will implement at least two CRISS strategies: Selective Highlighting and Picture Notes. Perhaps the boys will have two CRISS strategies to take with them into the new school year, whether they remain in fourth grade or continue on to fifth.

Prior to CRISS, my practice was to ponder and reflect on my objective, the students' background knowledge, the metacognitive opportunities given during my lessons, the active learning strategies I incorporate, and, last but not least, the data after assessment. Yet these practices needed something more. I needed something more. I needed CRISS and will need CRISS. I did not have enough tools to build with. Now I have the tools to build the bridges, or fill in the learning gaps of my students, and future students. You know, to think of it, I have always thought of myself as a "gap filler" or a "bridge builder." Now I have the training and tools to be one.

Thank you from the bottom of my heart for the opportunity to experience CRISS, and to prepare my students and myself with strategies for success. Thank you, too, for helping me become a more affective and effective teacher and for helping me reach the SUPPOSED "unreachable and unteachable kids."

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