

ENHANCING ASSESSMENT LITERACY

By Susan Ferguson

WHY DO WE ASSESS OUR STUDENTS?

Results from assessments show us how well students have mastered knowledge and skills and help us plan our future instruction. The works of Richard Stiggins (*Student-Involved Classroom Assessment*) and Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe (*Understanding by Design*) have broadened the scope of our understanding of what it means to effectively assess students. Beyond merely *measuring* student learning, assessments should also *improve* student learning. Assessments help teachers distinguish between teaching and learning. Using CRISS strategies for assessment helps students understand the expected outcomes.

MY FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

I have seen significant improvement in writing when I incorporate the CRISS strategy of Framed Paragraphs into my assessment. It helps students focus on the essential knowledge and skills learned in a unit of study. It is not unusual to observe a panicky response from students when they are asked to write in a foreign language. They ask themselves, “*How and where do I start?*” “*How do I express what I want to say in a foreign language?*” In frustration, students often turn to the dictionary and translate their thoughts word for word or use a computer translation program. The written product is often difficult to read and evaluate. The Framed Paragraph has proven to be a powerful learning and assessment tool, while helping students develop increased writing confidence.

MY CRISS LEARNING PLAN

- *Topic:* Articles of clothing (in foreign language).
- *Purpose:* Students will learn new vocabulary for articles of clothing, adjectives that describe clothing, and ways to compliment people about their clothing. They will also learn to converse with each other using the newly acquired vocabulary.
- *Assessment:* A fashion show commentary.
- *Prepare before lesson:* The teacher will introduce the new vocabulary, model how to use it, and plan student activities to learn and practice the new vocabulary in contextual situations.
- *Be involved during lesson:* Students will complete Framed Paragraphs using the new vocabulary words to describe pictures projected on an overhead screen.
- *Organize/transform after lesson:*

In cooperative learning groups, students will complete a Graphic Organizer that focuses on the targeted clothing vocabulary and expressions. Students then write the fashion show commentary using their Graphic Organizers.

- *Apply the information learned:* Students will write and present fashion show commentaries using their Framed Paragraphs and Graphic Organizers.

THE RESULTS

The resulting CRISS Learning Plan products—the fashion shows students presented—were not only creative and well presented, but demonstrated mastery of the targeted outcomes. Having implemented this lesson many times, I find the Framed Paragraph strategy significantly helps students learn. The Framed Paragraph structure is only one of many CRISS strategies that improve assessment and student learning.

Susan Ferguson is
Department Chair of Foreign Language /CRISS District Trainer
Hinsdale Central High School, Hinsdale, Illinois

NOTE: This article first appeared in the Winter 2004 *Comments from CRISS*[®] newsletter. All material is copyrighted. Permission is granted to photocopy or print this article in its entirety, as long as all credits remain intact with the article and the Project CRISS copyright appears on the materials. This article may not be used in any other publication in any medium, without the express, written permission of Project CRISS.

©Project CRISS