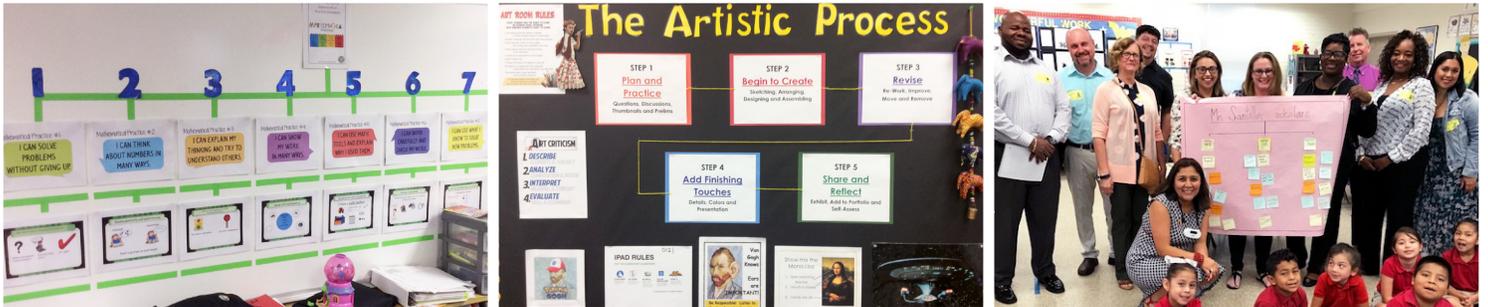




Bonita Springs Elementary School, School District of Lee County, Florida



When Principal Susan Caputo came to Bonita Springs Elementary School in 2014, the school was struggling with slipping ratings under Florida’s school accountability system. A highly focused school transformation plan with Thinking Maps as one of its key pillars moved the school from a D rating to an A in just two years—and earned them a coveted “Title I Exceeding Expectations” award from the state.

SNAPSHOT

Bonita Springs Elementary School

- 460 Students
- 33 Teachers
- Full School Title I
- 100% Free/Reduced Lunch
- 85% English Language Learners

CHOOSING A FEW KEY STRATEGIES FOR CHANGE

Bonita Springs is a neighborhood school serving a close-knit, primarily Hispanic community on the Gulf Coast of Florida.

Susan knew that students at Bonita Springs were capable of higher achievement, but noticed that in most classrooms they were not engaging deeply with the content or with each other. “There was a lot of teacher-directed instruction,” she explains. “When I visited classrooms, students were not talking and not making connections to learning. I wanted to see them using academic terms, connecting with what they were reading, and interacting with each other.”

Based on her experience with Thinking Maps at her former school, Susan decided to bring the Maps to Bonita

Springs as one of a small number of strategies to support whole-school change. She says, “I wanted to really narrow our focus to just a few key initiatives that we could commit to and do well. We wanted things that were brain-based, would support standards-based instruction, and would help us move from a teacher-directed to a student-directed model of learning. Thinking Maps supports this approach.”

“Thinking Maps is great because it gives teachers a way to show students how to process information. We’ve seen that teachers who put the most emphasis on Thinking Maps show the strongest gains when we look at the data.” - Jillian Flora, Assistant Principal

MAKING CONNECTIONS TO CONTENT FOR DEEPER LEARNING

Before introducing Thinking Maps in classrooms in the 2014-15 school year, Susan set up a whole-school professional development session for all of her teachers. “I wanted them all to have training, because I want them all to understand not just what Thinking Maps are but why we are using them and how they help students. I needed everyone to buy in.”

As teachers became more comfortable using Thinking Maps, they became an integral part of every classroom, from academic classes to art and gym. Teachers use them as bellringers, exit tickets, assessments, and homework. During class time, students may use the Maps to take notes, focus peer discussion, or collaboratively build their understanding of a lesson. During the 2016-2017 school year, Bonita Springs completed training for *Write from the Beginning...and Beyond*, which focuses on using Thinking Maps to support writing across content areas.

Aleida Green, a fourth grade English Language Arts teacher, has her students create interactive journals using Thinking Maps to help them engage more deeply with the texts they are reading, make connections to their own lives and prior knowledge, and improve recall of key ideas.

“Students really love working together to create Maps. It really makes creating lessons easy—I don’t even remember what I did before!”

- Aleida Green, Fourth Grade English Language Arts Teacher

Sarah Capo, a third grade math and science teacher, says she uses Thinking Maps nearly every day. “We use them to classify information, name and describe things and compare and contrast. Students now understand learning goals better—they know where I want them to start and where they need to end up. They can look back at the Maps they’ve created and really see how far they’ve come. I definitely see a positive correlation with test scores and learning!”

Brooke Muccio, a third grade teacher, uses Thinking Maps across all subject areas. “It’s amazing to see their thinking grow,” she says. “Now, I can give them the standard and a piece of text and let them tell me which Map they should use to achieve the objective, and they can justify their answers.”

“Thinking Maps has made my teaching more consistent. I see my students making deeper connections when they use Thinking Maps — they are learning so much more.”

- Brooke Muccio, Third Grade Teacher

Students are thriving with Thinking Maps. Many students like to bring their Maps into the office to show Susan what they are learning. She says, “Thinking Maps gives students a visual connection that deepens their learning. Since we’ve started using them, their language has changed. They are using more academic language, are interacting more, and are more excited about learning.”

AN AWARD-WINNING APPROACH TO SUSTAINING SCHOOL CHANGE

The leadership team at Bonita Springs has taken active steps to maintain the consistency and fidelity of the school’s Thinking Maps implementation. Susan says, “With any initiative, you have to continually train new teachers, refresh returning teachers, and reinforce expectations.” Ongoing support of Thinking Maps at Bonita Springs includes several approaches that add up to a winning combination.

This approach has reaped big rewards for the students and teachers at Bonita Springs. In 2013-14, the school received a D rating from the state of Florida. In the first year of their Thinking Maps implementation, they raised that score to a C.

Since then, they have received A ratings three years in a row, for 2015-16, 2016-17, and 2017-18. In 2017, they were one of just 23 schools in the state of Florida (including three other Thinking Maps schools) to receive the “Exceeding Expectations” award for excellence in Title I schools.

But the biggest reward for Susan has been the excitement she has seen from her students. “They are more motivated and more engaged with learning. I see them making real connections. It’s like planting a seed and watching it sprout. They can see their learning grow.”

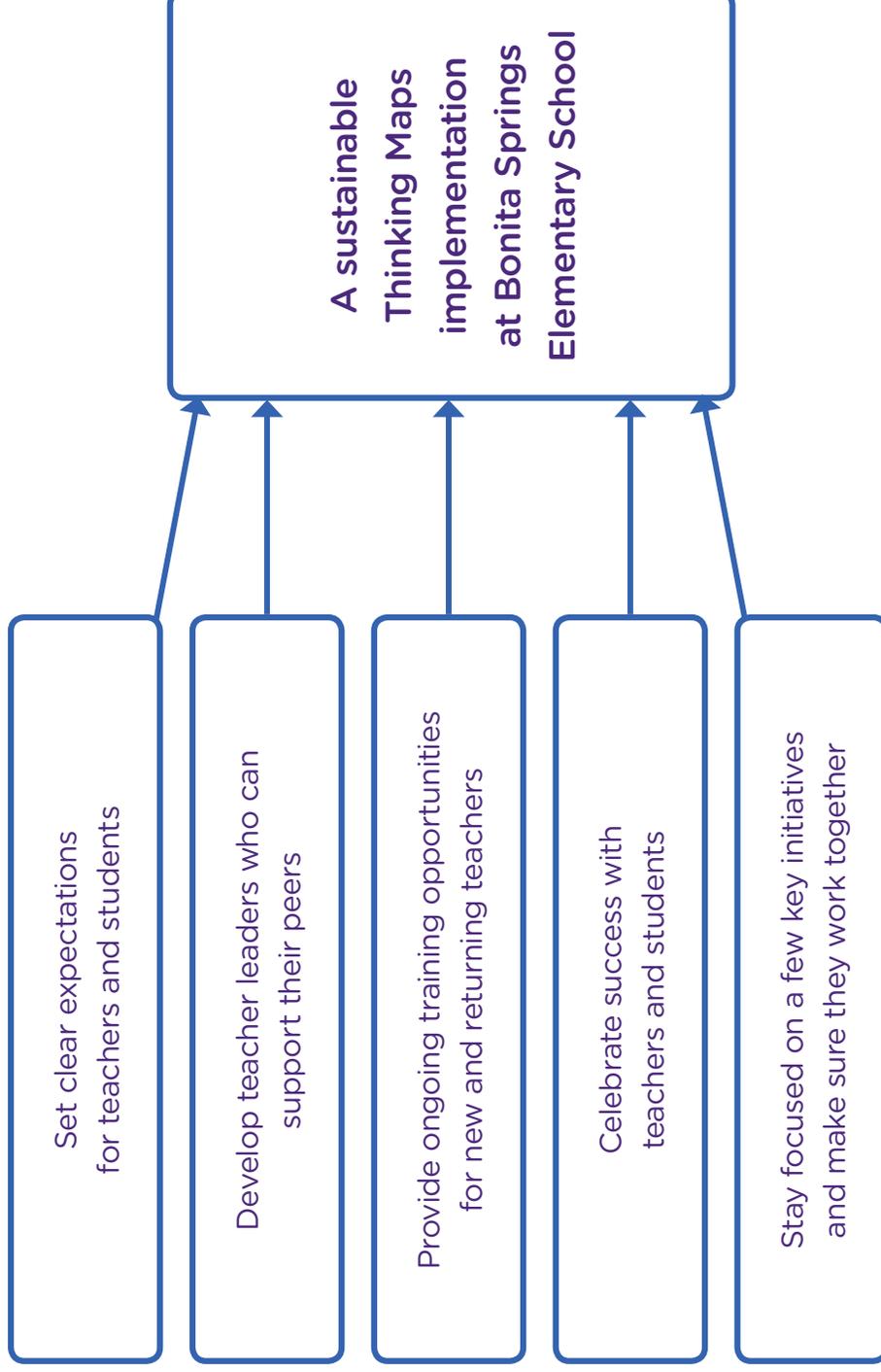
BONITA SPRINGS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL HIGHLIGHTS

5th grade science scores
grew from **26%** at or above
proficient in 2014-15 to **63%**
in **2016-17**
(state average 51%)

4th grade math scores
grew from **71%** at or above
proficient in 2014-15
to **92%** in **2016-17**
(state average 62%)

3rd grade ELA scores
grew from **36%** at or above
proficient in 2014-15
to **68%** in **2017-18**
(state average 57%)

BONITA SPRINGS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL AN AWARD-WINNING APPROACH TO SUSTAINING SCHOOL CHANGE

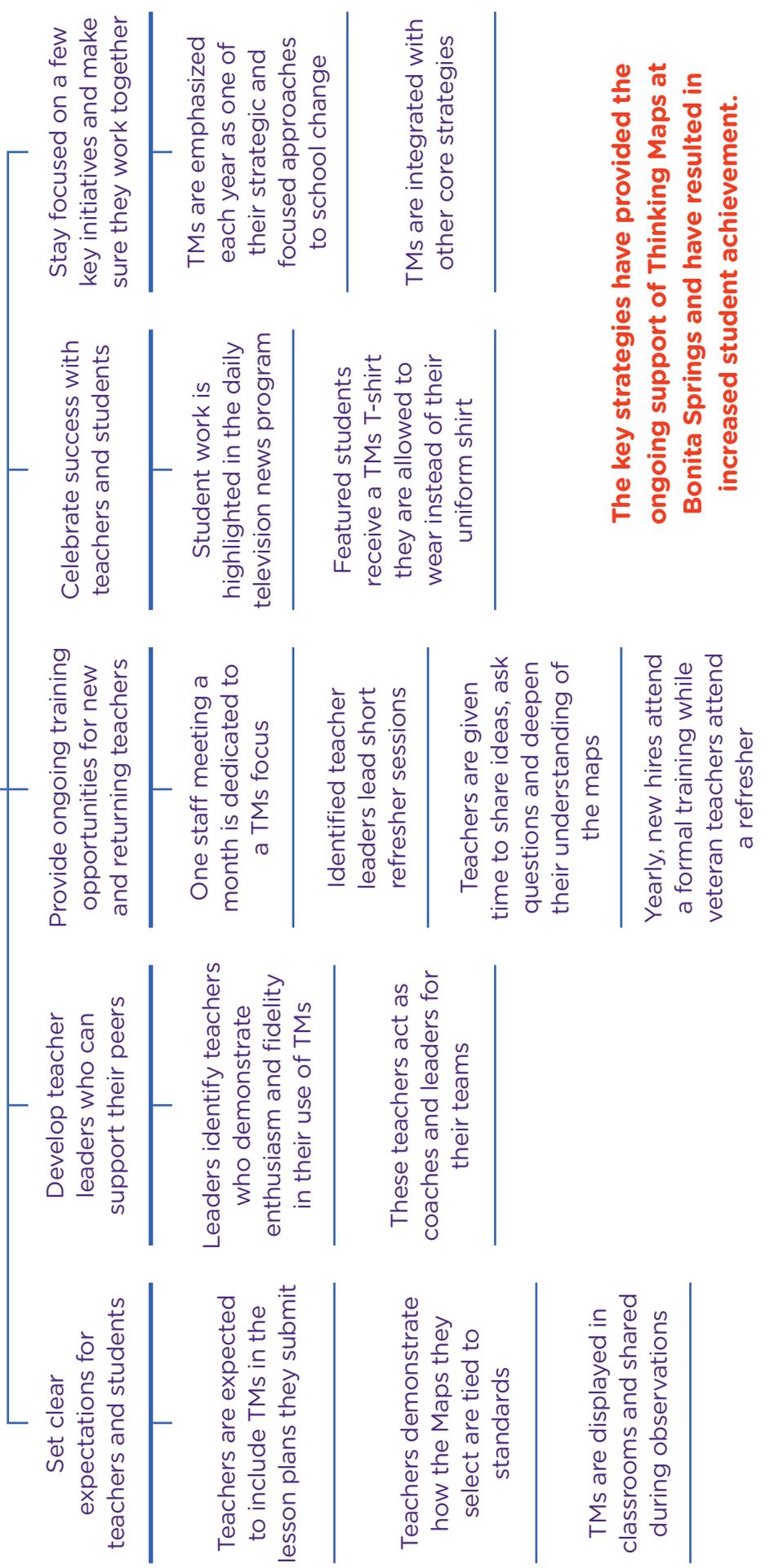


BONITA SPRINGS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

AN AWARD-WINNING APPROACH TO SUSTAINING SCHOOL CHANGE

The leadership team at Bonita Springs has taken active steps to maintain the consistency and fidelity of the school's Thinking Maps implementation.

Strategies for Sustaining a Thinking Maps Implementation



The key strategies have provided the ongoing support of Thinking Maps at Bonita Springs and have resulted in increased student achievement.