



Lake County Schools, Florida

Student Actions for Accountable Talk		
Accountable to the Learning Community	Accountable to the Content	Accountable to Rigorous Thinking
Listen carefully to the statements of others	Clarify your understanding of previous statements and content details	Defend your reasoning against a different point of view
Restate the ideas of a previous speaker using different words	Explain how you arrived at your answer	Ask a previous speaker to explain & provide evidence for a statement
Add to statements provided by others	Give examples & evidence to support your answer	Incorporate knowledge from multiple sources to form a summary
Direct the attention to the importance of a statement made by someone else	Point out the relationships among previous statements and content	Draw conclusions about what might happen next, or as a result of ideas



Lake County Schools, just outside of Orlando, serves more than 42,000 students in communities spanning rural, suburban and urban environments. Over time, the district has grown significantly, and demographics in the district have changed. Compared to a decade ago, Lake County now has more English Language Learners (ELLs) as well as a higher percentage of students qualifying for free and reduced lunch. Over the last several years, they have rolled out Thinking Maps to nearly all of their 48 K-12 school sites.

SNAPSHOT

Lake County Schools

- 48 Schools
- 17 Title I schools
- >42,000 students
- >5,500 teachers, leaders and staff
- 66% Free/Reduced Lunch
- 2,061 English Language Learners
- 14% Exceptional Student Education

A BOOST FOR STUDENTS IN UNDERPERFORMING SCHOOLS

When Kati Pearson joined the district as Director of Teaching and Learning in 2010, Thinking Maps had recently been implemented in a single elementary school. At the time, Sawgrass Bay Elementary had the highest percentage of English Language Learners (ELLs) in the district. They brought in Thinking Maps to help all students build thinking, writing, and language skills. Within a short time, they were noticing impressive progress for all of their students — especially the ELLs. Kati says, “Students were able to speak and write at a higher level because they had a Map to support their thinking. Progress was especially striking for our English Language

Learners — you couldn’t tell which students were ELL when they used the Maps!”

Based on this success, Kati and her team of School Improvement Program Specialists (SIPS) decided to implement Thinking Maps in more schools, starting with those with identified areas of underperformance. In 2012, they rolled the initiative out to 11 additional schools. They have since expanded to nearly all of their K-12

schools and will soon have Thinking Maps implemented district wide. “We first concentrated on schools with the greatest need, based on their school report cards,” Kati says. “After that, we concentrated on filling out the feeder patterns. We didn’t want students leaving elementary school with Thinking Maps and arriving at a middle school that didn’t use them yet. We wanted students to own these strategies and take them with them.”

“Thinking Maps builds confidence for our students and allows them to tackle higher-order tasks on their own. They own the learning.”

- Kati Pearson, Director of Teaching and Learning

STRATEGIES STUDENTS CAN “TAKE WITH THEM EVERYWHERE”

Kati and her team say that giving students strategies that they own and take with them from grade to grade and subject to subject is key to the success of Thinking Maps in the district. “There is an idea that when students are struggling in an area, what schools need is a program to address that specific area,” Kati says. “We tend to supply a lot of individual programs to fill those gaps. But what we really needed were student-owned systems or processes that go with them wherever they go, forever and ever.”

Thinking Maps provided the consistent language for learning that students needed. “Thinking Maps helps them understand how their brain works and think about their own thinking. It gives them a way to work through the learning pathway so they can answer higher-order questions,” says SIPS Hana Insanally.

Now, instead of waiting for teachers to tell them how to start a task, students automatically turn to a Thinking Map to organize their thoughts and make

their thinking visible. The Maps are not an assignment for students but rather a tool that they use both in class and at home. “Students take interactive notes in Thinking Maps form now. Since they have been using the Maps from Kindergarten on up, it’s automatic. They use them at home. We even have seen students pass notes in class using Maps!” says SIPS Bianca Williams. In fact, students are so proficient in using the Maps that they even correct teachers if they are not using them correctly!

A MAP FOR WHOLE-DISTRICT IMPROVEMENT

Thinking Maps has become embedded in the district culture and will soon be used across all schools in the district. To ensure the success of the program, schools must commit to using Thinking Maps across the entire school. Implementing Thinking Maps across feeder patterns helped the district to focus its efforts while ensuring consistency for students across grade levels. Kati and her team orchestrated school visits for middle and high school leaders so they could see the Maps in action at the elementary school level before beginning their implementation. “Kids are coming to them with this tremendous strength: they all speak this same language. I tell principals that if they capitalize on this strength, teachers will be able to deliver content more seamlessly and effectively,” Kati says.

To ensure fidelity to the program, all SIPS have been certified as Thinking Maps trainers. As the implementation begins at each school, teachers in each grade level are also certified to

act as peer mentors and trainers. Kati emphasizes the need for continuing monitoring, support, and follow-up to ensure that the Maps continue to be used effectively and consistently.

The commitment to fidelity is paying off: the district has seen substantial increases in student performance at each school that has implemented Thinking Maps. While recent changes in state testing make quantifying these gains difficult, **seven of eight schools have moved off of the “needs improvement” list** and teachers report seeing higher levels of thinking and writing evidenced in student work.

While the Maps were implemented primarily for the students, they have become embedded in school-based and district staff communication and planning as well. The district’s School Improvement Guide makes use of Thinking Maps to quickly communicate complex information for teachers and school leaders. “This is something our staff will actually use, because

it’s succinct but still very meaningful,” SIPS Julie Staton says. They also make the Maps part of their district curriculum blueprints, with suggested uses of the Maps included with each Florida standard.

Moving forward, the district is finishing its rollout to the final schools and engaging in additional Leadership training. They also plan to expand their Thinking Maps practice by continuing to implement Write from the Beginning and Beyond, Language for Leadership, and Path to Proficiency in selected schools.

“The Maps aren’t something we pull out for a specific area. They permeate how we work and live. It’s a language we use all the time, not just with the students but with each other.”

- Hana Insanally, School Improvement Program Specialist

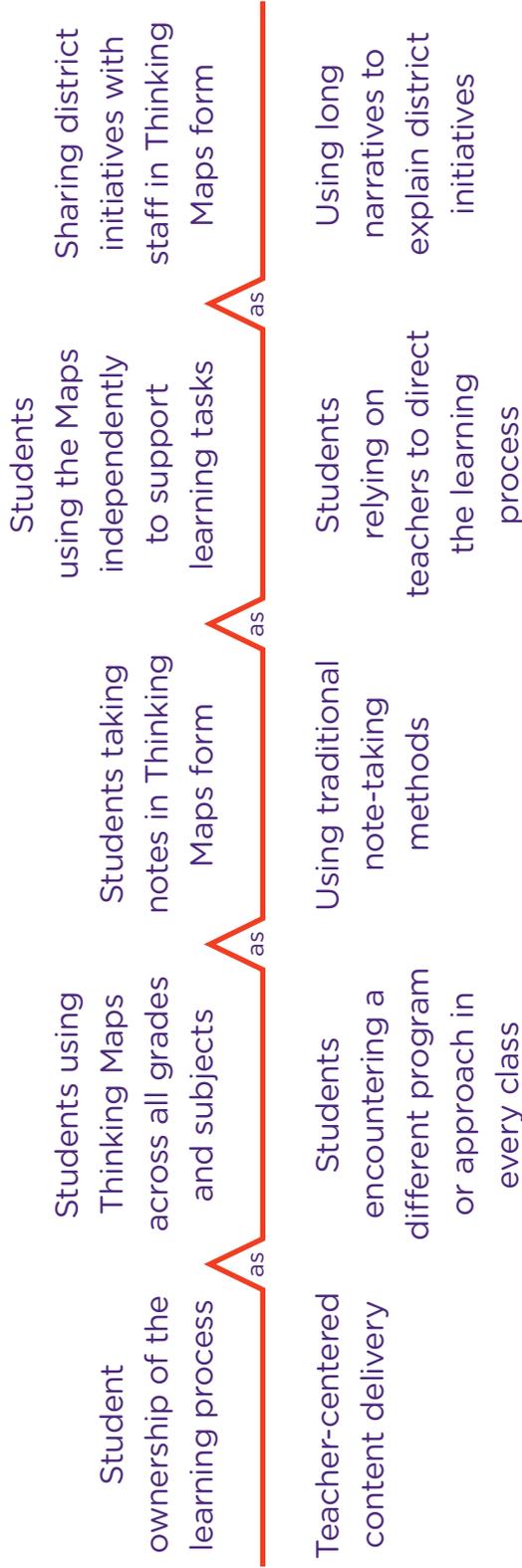
SUPPORTING STUDENT-OWNED LEARNING WITH THINKING MAPS

Lake County Teaching & Learning Department



is more impactful than

Relating Factor



Kati Pearson, Rehana Insanally, Bianca Williams, Julie Staton
 Visit: www.lake.k12.fl.us/Page/48814