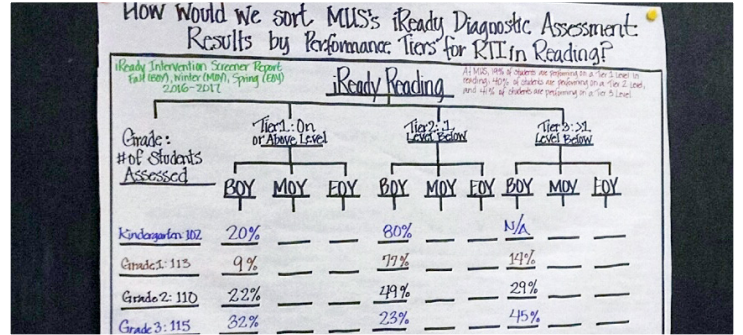
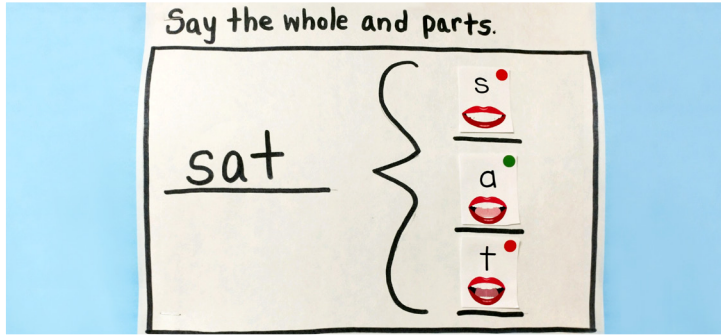




Meadow Hill Global Explorations Magnet School, Newburgh Enlarged City School District, New York



How do you help students move from passive consumers of content to engaged, self-directed learners? At Meadow Hill Global Explorations Magnet School, teachers and administrators were concerned about achievement gaps for English Language Learners (ELLs) and other student subgroups. Thinking Maps® helped them address the needs of all learners and create a student-centered learning environment.

SNAPSHOT

Meadow Hill K-8 School

- 1100 Students
- 87 Teachers, 30 TAs/Aides
- Whole-School Title I
- 76%+ Free/Reduced Lunch
- 20% English Language Learners (ELL)
- 20% SPED

ADDRESSING THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP

“We’re building 21st-Century learners. Thinking Maps gives students a support system for thinking so they can be more independent. They have become facilitators of their own learning.”

- Dennis Camt, Former Principal

Meadow Hill is a large urban K-8 school with a highly diverse student population. 20% of its students are classified as ELL. It also has a large program for “Exceptional Learners”, which serves students with autism and other learning disabilities from across the entire district. A co-teaching model is used at all grade levels to provide extra support to ELLs and Exceptional Learners in general education classrooms.

Even with dedicated co-teachers, the school struggled to close the achievement gap for many learners, especially their ELL students. Selina Watts-Delisfort, Instructional Coach, says, “Many of our students had problems accessing the language they needed to understand grade-level content, especially Tier 2 academic vocabulary that is not used in everyday conversation but is needed across multiple content areas.”

Assistant Principal Scott Prokosch (now Principal at Meadow Hill) noticed deeper issues across all classrooms. “We saw a reliance on spoon feeding information to kids as opposed to helping kids learn to think for themselves.” The leadership team wanted to see students from all

ADDRESSING THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP (CONTINUED)

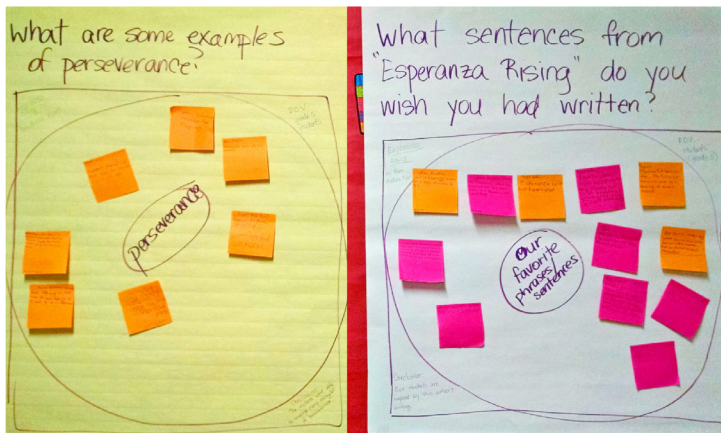
backgrounds thinking critically and engaging with grade-level content in meaningful ways.

They decided to implement Thinking Maps in 2016 after visiting a Thinking Maps School in New York City. The goal? To create an environment where students take control of their own learning and have the cognitive tools they need for success in the classroom and beyond.

“This is not just another initiative that will come and go. It has grassroots support from teachers and students because it’s really making a difference. Teachers who were reluctant to get on board initially are now some of the strongest leaders.”

- Scott Prokosch, Principal (formerly Assistant Principal)

GETTING STUDENTS AND TEACHERS ON BOARD



The school implemented Thinking Maps for grades K-5 in the 2016-2017 school year and for grades 6-8 in the 2017-2018 school year. To ensure a successful rollout, school leaders carefully selected teachers at each grade level who would act as the trainers for their peers. The trainers attended a six-day training with Thinking Maps before rolling out the Maps to the rest of the school. Selina says, “We deliberately included some that we knew would be resistant to the change. They came back believers.” Selina and the trainers provided modeling and support as teachers began using the Maps.

The embedded, ongoing professional development model was a critical component in achieving buy-in and fidelity from the faculty. Teacher teams work together in both grade-level and vertical teams to share ideas and lesson plans and discuss how their students are using the Maps. Every month, a different Map is featured in the staff newsletter. Selina also shares data about Thinking Maps usage and celebrates successes in monthly staff meetings. The leadership team

tracks key indicators to monitor how students and teachers are using the Maps and their associated cognitive vocabulary.

Teachers leveraged additional resources in the **Thinking Maps Learning Community (TMLC)**, including online professional development courses, lesson plans to help them roll the Maps out to their students, and the online Map Builder tool, which lets teachers and students build Maps digitally. Teachers use the online courses to reinforce and extend their Thinking Maps training. The courses are also used to support and onboard new teachers who were not part of the original training. The My Story exercises, which introduce the eight Maps in a student-friendly format, are used to train aides and support staff so they can also help students with Thinking Maps. The resources and training materials in TMLC have helped the school maintain program fidelity and build a strong community of Thinking Maps users.

It was also important to give teachers a safe space to try out new ideas and have fun using the Maps as they got started. Assistant Principal Laura Russell says, “We put them out there with an attitude of, ‘just give it a try.’ We didn’t evaluate or criticize. We just demonstrated and assisted and asked them to show us what they were doing. The rollout was about letting them get familiar with the language and the process.”

TRANSFERRING OWNERSHIP OF LEARNING FROM TEACHERS TO STUDENTS

This patient, supportive approach has paid off: Thinking Maps has been adopted nearly universally across all grade levels. In many cases, it is the students themselves driving adoption of the Maps. Students are applying the Maps independently and bringing them with them from class to class and grade to grade. Rather than waiting for teachers to assign them, students are using them spontaneously to organize their thoughts and ideas when completing writing assignments, projects, and even tests. They are even introducing the Maps to new teachers who have not yet completed training.

“The better we enable students to be independent thinkers and problem solvers the more successful they will be in high school and beyond. We’re setting our students up for success with Thinking Maps.”

- Donald Armand, Assistant Principal

Students across all grade levels create Thinking Maps notebooks for each content area. Taking notes in Map form helps students engage with the content in more complex and authentic ways. Assistant Principal Donald Armand explains, “The key to the Maps is the way they allow students to formulate their thought processes. They learn the cognitive vocabulary from kindergarten on up, and they learn how to apply the Maps to tackle any problem or assignment they encounter.”

Many students especially love creating Maps using Map Builder in TMLC. Map Builder allows them to create Maps quickly without getting bogged down by worrying about their handwriting or drawing abilities. Teachers can assign and collect exercises in Map Builder through Google Classroom. Dennis Camt, the Principal of Meadow Hills during the implementation, says, “It’s a real time saver for teachers and students...they love it!”

Since implementing Thinking Maps, Meadow Hill has seen measurable growth in student achievement across all subgroups. Student growth, as defined by the NYSED ESSA Plan, for ELLs and Exceptional Learners has been especially strong. The leadership team credits this growth to Thinking Maps and the focus the school has put on developing academic vocabulary and metacognitive skills through the Maps.

But the best result may be seeing the shift from teacher-centered to student-centered classrooms. Laura says, “I see teachers stepping back and students educating themselves. Teachers are now acting more as facilitators, and students are sharing their thoughts and interacting more in groups. They know what Maps to use to support their learning and they’re having meaningful conversations with their peers using the Maps. I didn’t realize what we were missing until I saw it in action.”

“We used to put too many limits on students. Thinking Maps eliminates those limits and lets all students be successful.”

- Laura Russell, Assistant Principal

HOW IS MH GEMS USING TMLC TO SUPPORT THEIR THINKING MAPS IMPLEMENTATION?

SOURCE:

Phone interview with Principal Scott Prokosch (site AP for previous 3 years) on July 9, 2019

TMLC use at MH GEMS

Leaders	Teachers	Students	School Support Team	Support Staff (Aides & Teaching Assistants)
All monthly agendas in Map form	<p>TMLC Maps and Map Sets are linked to Google Classroom</p> <p>Some teachers use TMLC Map Exercise sets to help students study for exams</p>	<p>Use TMLC "My Story" Tutorial to learn Maps</p> <p>1:1 ChromeBook program with TMLC allows middle school students to create Maps in their preferred medium - digitally</p>	<p>Use with 1:1 sessions in "Tool Kits" (Map Sets)</p> <p>Maps are used to support self-reflection and set behavioral goals</p>	<p>PD sessions for support staff include self-selected Training modules</p>
<p>Maps made in TMLC included in all parent communications</p> <p>Leadership PLC agendas made in TMLC</p>	<p>Students who are absent use shared TMLC Map Sets to catch up on content</p>	<p>Facilitates collaboration as they easily create and share Maps in TMLC in groups</p>		

"We found that our middle school students loved working in TMLC; they created their Maps much faster and they could share their Maps easily through Google Classroom. TMLC allowed for an additional layer of students taking charge of their own thinking."

-Scott Prokosch, Principal

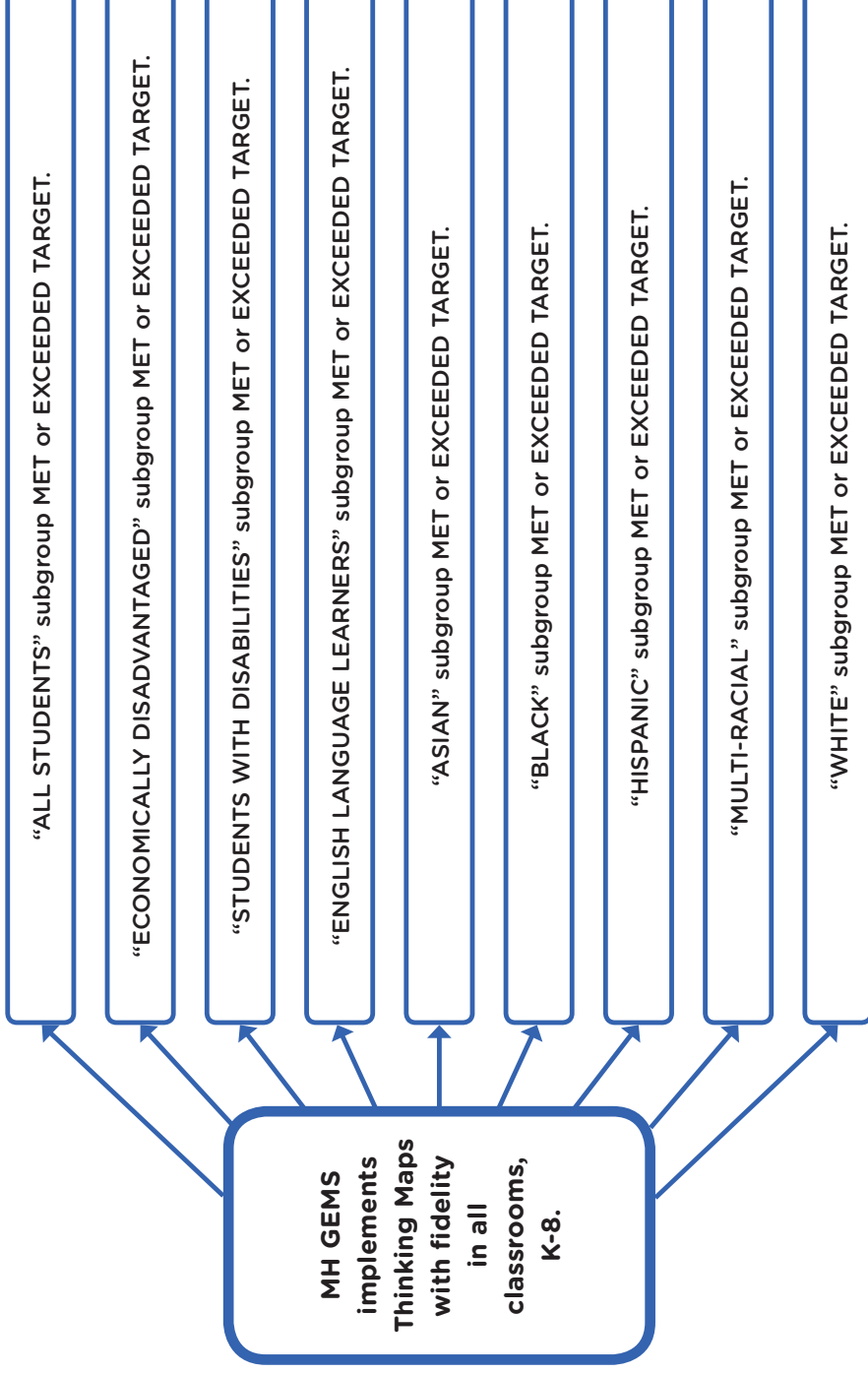
WHAT WAS THE IMPACT OF HIGH-FIDELITY IMPLEMENTATION OF THINKING MAPS AT MEADOW HILL?

INFLUENCE:

Under the NYSED ESSA Plan, measures of student growth are determined based on previous year performance for each subgroup in the school.

SOURCE:

The NYSED ESSA Student Growth Indicator for Meadow Hill School (January 2019)



CONCLUSION:

Based on the NYSED ESSA Indicators, all subgroups at Meadow Hill met or exceeded measures of interim progress determined by the NYSED. Meadow Hill attributes a portion of this success to the implementation of Thinking Maps and the use of a common visual language in all of their classrooms, K-8.