



Patriot Elementary School, School District of Lee County, Florida



When Dave Burgess was named Principal of Patriot Elementary School in the fall of 2012, he saw tremendous potential and opportunity. *“It was literally a blank slate,”* he says. *“I saw all these clean white walls waiting to be filled. We had a strong staff, but to take our students to the next level we needed a common focus and language so we could all work together.”*

Thinking Maps® became the focal point that students and staff rallied around.

And in the last two years, the students of Patriot Elementary have filled not the just the walls but the ceilings, too, with hundreds of colorful Thinking Maps that put critical thinking on display.

SNAPSHOT

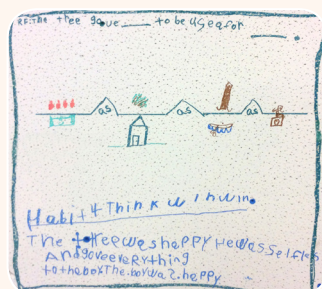
PATRIOT ELEMENTARY

- 650 Students
- 107 FT Faculty & Staff
- Full School Title I
- 75% Free & Reduced Lunch
- PreK – 5th grade
- 2014 Grade: A

PASSIVE LEARNERS, POOR RESULTS

Patriot Elementary School is a Title I school with a highly diverse student population. Founded in 2008, the school did well in its first years but saw student achievement slipping as the growing recession took a toll on the community. A growing number of students were struggling with writing and basic literacy. In addition, many students seemed

disengaged from the learning process. *“I saw the teachers working their tails off and the kids just cruising,”* says Principal Burgess. *“We had great kids and great parents, but there was no accountability on the students’ part. They weren’t engaged, they weren’t participating, and scores in all areas were headed in the wrong direction.”*



Additional winning Monthly Thinking Maps from Patriot Elementary

“The best thing about Thinking Maps is that all students are able to shine. When I was co-teaching 3rd grade, we had one little boy who was about two years behind. He used a Classifying Map to understand and explain a story he read. It took him two days, but he was able to do it. He was selected as a monthly Thinking Maps winner. He was grinning ear-to-ear when he drew his Map on a ceiling tile.”

- Nicole Gulli, Teacher

BUILDING A COMMON VISUAL LANGUAGE



Thinking Maps was among the first reforms that Burgess brought to the school. He realized that students needed to take a more active part in their own learning. They also needed a common language and structure for learning that would be shared across every classroom and grade in the school. “My first leadership team was my Thinking Maps team,” he says. “Finding the right people to take on this role was absolutely critical to the success of the initiative.”

These teacher leaders—one for each grade level plus a resource teacher—went to Thinking Maps training and implemented the Maps in their own classrooms before rolling them out to the rest of the school. They became peer trainers, mentors and cheerleaders for the rest of the staff.

Thinking Maps put more responsibility for learning into the students' hands, while giving them a versatile set of thinking tools that can be applied across all content areas and grade levels. “Thinking Maps gave our kids continuity in academic language and thinking, from Kindergarten on up,” explains 5th grade teacher Michelina Edwards. “Now we have more time to focus on content, because the kids already have that structure for learning. They know how to do it.”

PUTTING STUDENTS IN CHARGE OF LEARNING

The focus on building a common visual language is already paying off.

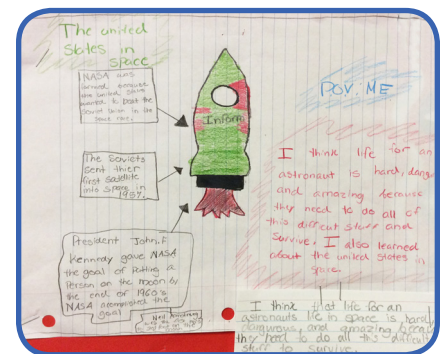
Patriot Elementary went from a grade of C in 2013 to an A in 2014. Thinking Maps has impacted student achievement across the board. The school was second in the state in two areas of Math, and first in the district in four areas. Teachers and school leaders have come from across the district, state and U.S. to see what the school is doing.

But the biggest change is in the way students learn. Teachers report that students are taking more ownership of learning and demonstrating better critical thinking.

“Our students really have embraced using the Maps. They are able to select the right Map for the assignment and explain why they selected it. It's not just busy work. It's a higher level of thinking. And the Maps allow us to actually see their thinking and better assess their understanding,” says 1st grade teacher Nicole Gulli.

Thinking Maps has become a highly visible part of the school culture, with student Maps proudly displayed in classrooms, hallways and on ceiling tiles. And students love showing off their critical thinking and artistic skills to peers, parents and guests. “We've gone from a school that was almost completely teacher-centered to one that is almost 100% student centered. Thinking Maps has been a critical part of that,” says Burgess.

“Students are in charge of their own learning now, and their pride really shows.”



“Thinking Maps is in our DNA now. It's part of everything we do.”
- Dave Burgess, Principal



A ROADMAP TO SCHOOL TRANSFORMATION

Selecting the Leadership Team

A seven-member team was selected to lead the Thinking Maps implementation

Team consisted of one teacher for each grade level (K-5) and a resource teacher

These teacher leaders became peer trainers and mentors for the Thinking Maps rollout

"It was really critical to have support for each grade level, so everyone could get immediate support and the trainers weren't spread too thin."

-Michelina Edwards, 5th Grade Teacher

Training the Trainers

Each leadership team member attended 5 days of Thinking Maps training

3 days in October; 2 more days in January

Started implementing Thinking Maps in their classrooms immediately after the initial training

"Everyone could see that engagement from the kids, and wanted to know what was going on in our classrooms. By the time we started training in January, everyone was hungry for it."

-Nicole Gulli, 1st Grade teacher

Introducing the Maps

Hour-long training for the whole school in January

Led by teacher leaders

Overview of the eight Maps and cognitive science behind them

"It was important that this was peer-led. Teachers got to see other teachers using the maps and having success before they tried them themselves. It built trust and credibility."

-Dave Burgess, Principal

Rolling Out

Individual Maps were rolled out one week at a time at regular weekly staff meetings

Each week, teachers were introduced to a new Map and asked to try it out in their classrooms

The next week, they were asked to bring in examples of student Maps to share

"We were able to roll these out effectively because we were already using them in our own classrooms. We had a chance to see what worked and really get comfortable with the Maps."

-Michelina Edwards, 5th Grade Teacher

Building Excitement

Faculty and staff wear Thinking Maps t-shirts every week on "Thinking Maps Thursday"

Each week an exemplary student Map is selected for display in the Hall of Fame

Winning students get their own t-shirts

"We're not looking for the prettiest Map or the best drawn. What we're looking for is a demonstration of thinking and learning. Kids of all ages and ability levels can use the Maps to demonstrate their thinking."

-Nicole Gulli, 1st Grade Teacher

Pulling in Parents

The Maps are explained to parents on Academic Night

Students take home an explanation for parents with each week's Maps as they are introduced

"Worksheets go in the trash. Thinking Maps go on the fridge."

-Patriot Elementary School Parent

Celebrating Success

Maps are displayed throughout the school

Monthly student winners draw their winning Maps on ceiling tiles for permanent displays

Student winners are celebrated at PTO meetings

"The kids have really taken ownership. When people come to do tours of our school, they are the ones who lead them. They are so proud to show off their Maps."

-Michelina Edwards, 5th Grade Teacher

Building Capacity and Continuity

New teacher leaders are trained each year

Teacher leaders spread Thinking Maps to other schools as they move

Building the common language between schools and districts provides continuity for mobile students

"I am so proud to see many of our original Thinking Maps teachers take leadership positions in other schools around the district and state. TM has really raised the capacity of our staff."

-Dave Burgess, Principal