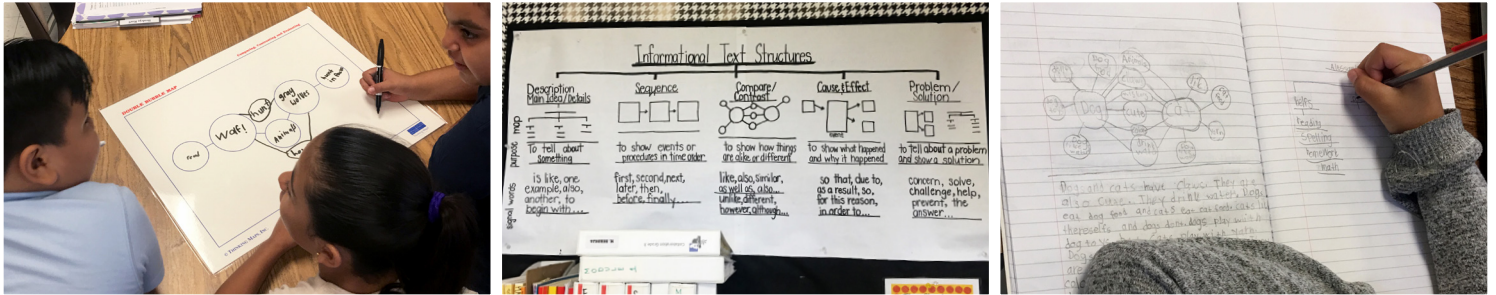




Kenmore Elementary School, Baldwin Park Unified School District, California



When Jane Sattari was named principal of Kenmore Elementary School in 2010, she asked her staff what students needed most to improve academically. Their answer was “a good writing program.” Adding *Write from the Beginning...and Beyond Text (WFBB)* to their Thinking Maps practice has resulted in academic gains across all content areas that took them from last place in their district to number one.

SNAPSHOT

Kenmore Elementary School

- 540 Students
- 20 Teachers
- Whole-School Title I
- 80%+ Free/Reduced Lunch
- 30% English Language Learners (ELL)

LEARNING TO WRITE BY LEARNING TO THINK

Baldwin Park Unified School District serves a diverse, urban student population in the San Gabriel Valley area outside of Los Angeles. Kenmore Elementary is a whole-school Title I school with a majority Hispanic population.

Kenmore initially implemented Thinking Maps in 2006, but teachers were only using the Maps sporadically when Jane came on board. She and her leadership team saw an opportunity to improve student outcomes by strengthening their Thinking Maps implementation and adding a specific focus on writing. “Writing is thinking,” Jane says. “When students can write effectively, we know that means they are learning and able to express what they know.”

Before diving into *WFBB* Kenmore spent a full year reintroducing Thinking Maps to students and teachers. Margarita Berdeja, a third grade teacher at Kenmore and a Thinking Maps Trained Trainer, acted as the lead trainer for the rest of the school.

After a year of focusing on Thinking Maps basics, teachers were ready to move into *WFBB*. Margarita and a fellow teacher attended a regional *WFBB* training before introducing the Map-based writing program to the rest of the school. Since the initial rollout in 2012, teachers at Kenmore have completed training for the Narrative, Expository, and Response to Text domains of *WFBB*.

A SUSTAINABLE TRANSFORMATION TO TEACHING AND LEARNING

Jane and Margarita both say that a gradual, intentional, and sustained approach to rolling out Thinking Maps and *WFBB* has been an essential component of their success. “We knew we had to chunk it for our teachers,” Jane says. “If we just blasted them with the whole program, it would be overwhelming.”

For both programs, Jane invested in substitutes for four Wednesdays in a row so teachers could be released and trained in grade-level groups. This allowed training to be tailored to the specific needs of each grade level and minimized classroom disruption. Training continued throughout the year through discussion groups on early release days. Margarita also provides ongoing coaching and modeling for teachers at her school.

One strategy that has been especially effective is peer collaboration. Jane supports ongoing collaboration with roving substitutes who enable teachers to spend time observing each other’s classrooms. Teachers choose their own partners and set their own goals for collaboration. Pairs of teachers model lessons for each other, provide feedback and suggestions, and take away new ideas for their own

classrooms. Teachers also share strategies and success stories with each other during whole-staff meetings. “We make it a safe place to try new things,” Jane says. “We don’t expect perfect. It’s about building your peers up and allowing them to take risks and try things out to see what works.”

Margarita has seen the impact in her own classroom and in the classrooms of her peers. Students use the Maps across all content areas to analyze text, take notes, and organize their thoughts for writing. “I’ve seen great improvement with Thinking Maps and *Write from the Beginning...and Beyond*,” she says. “Students are able to show what they know in a concrete way and keep their notes and evidence in a form that makes it easy for them to access later.”

“Our kids don’t come to school intuitively knowing how to organize their thoughts. They need to have these skills explicitly taught. Organizing their thoughts using the Maps helps them access the content and communicate what they know more effectively.”

- Jane Sattari, Principal

MOVING TO THE HEAD OF THE CLASS

Since implementing Thinking Maps and *WFBB*, Kenmore Elementary School has seen substantial gains in writing... and beyond! Before starting their Thinking Maps journey, Kenmore’s scores on state tests put them at the bottom of the 13 elementary schools in their district. Their student scores now make them the top-ranked school in Baldwin Park USD. In 2018, Kenmore was named a [California Distinguished School](#), the state’s highest honor. Based on their students’ Spring 2017 results on the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CASPP), the school was named an [Honor Roll School](#) by the Educational Results Partnership (ERP) and Campaign for Business and Education Excellence (CBEEE). They also received an [America’s Best Urban Schools Award](#) sponsored by the National Center for Urban School Transformation (NCUST).

“With *Write from the Beginning...and Beyond*, students are using the Maps to write about what they are learning. It’s not just about writing. It’s about taking our students to higher levels of comprehension, which impacts learning across all

subject areas,” says Jane. When she took writing samples from her students to a recent board meeting, they noted that her 5th and 6th grade students’ writing looked more like what would be expected at the end of middle school.

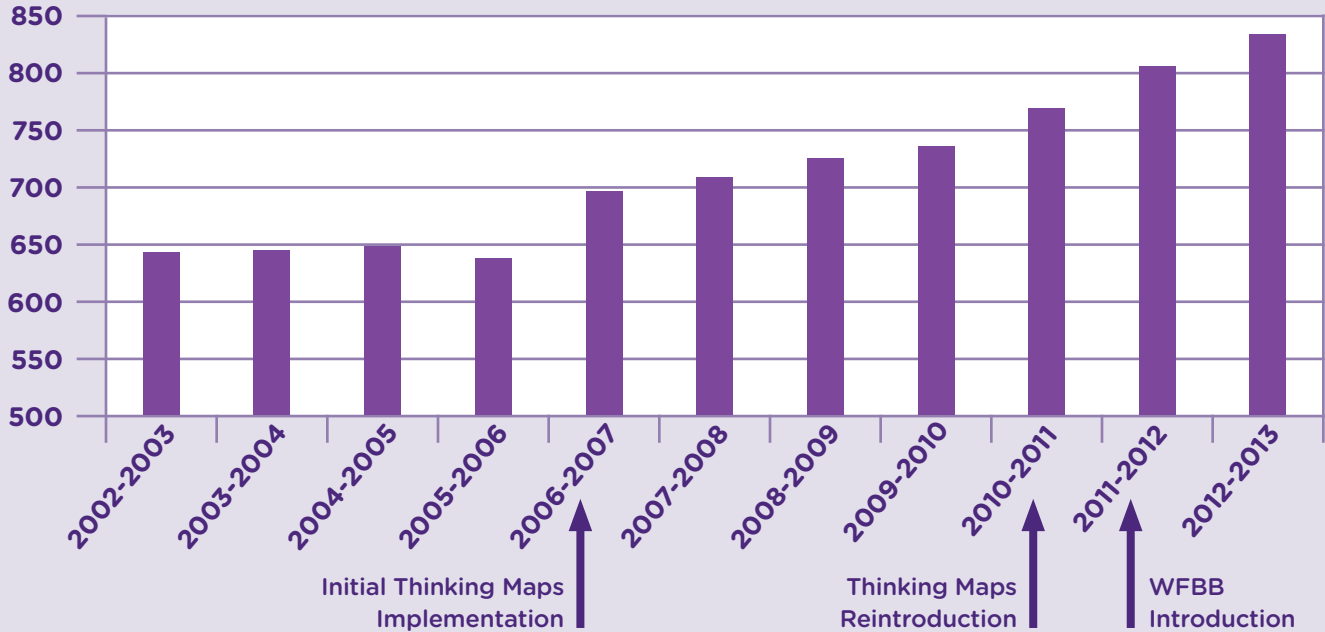
Margarita attributes these gains to the way that Thinking Maps and *WFBB* have transformed teaching. “I see a lot more intentionality in teaching. Lessons are more focused. And because the Maps are so well integrated with the standards, teachers don’t see it as something extra to do. It’s the tool we use to help our kids master the standards we need to teach.”

“Using the Maps has really helped our students with comprehension. They are more engaged with the material, and it’s easy for me to see their thinking and hold them accountable for their learning.”

- Margarita Berdeja, Third Grade Teacher and Thinking Maps Trainer

ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE INDEX RESULTS

Kenmore Elementary School



*Note: API measurement and reporting was discontinued by the state of California after 2013. New accountability measurements are not directly comparable.

API scores for Kenmore Elementary were flat until the introduction of Thinking Maps in 2006. Scores jumped again when Thinking Maps was rebooted in 2010 and *Write from the Beginning...and Beyond* was introduced in 2011.

STATE ASSESSMENT PERFORMANCE FOR 2016-2017

(Percentage of Students at Proficient or Advanced)

	Kenmore	State Average	% Over/Under Average
Grade 3 ELA	50.72	43.80	+6.92
Grade 3 Math	54.29	46.83	+7.46
Grade 4 ELA	53.74	45.06	+8.68
Grade 4 Math	45.71	40.45	+5.26
Grade 5 ELA	61.04	46.54	+14.5
Grade 5 Math	40.26	33.83	+6.43
Grade 6 ELA	65.96	47.03	+18.93
Grade 6 Math	48.23	36.48	+11.75

While current results cannot be compared directly to the pre-2014 data due to changes in the California accountability system, Kenmore Elementary has continued to make progress and demonstrate excellent results compared to state averages. Their 2016-2017 results earned statewide and national recognition for academic progress among urban/Title I schools.

DRIVING ACADEMIC GROWTH ACROSS THE BOARD

A Principal who is a strong Instructional Leader

Effective Teacher Leaders
(see the Tree Map below)

Ongoing, sustained professional development opportunities

Opportunities for peer modeling and feedback

“Thinking Maps is not just about writing. It’s about taking our students to higher levels of comprehension, which impacts learning across all subject areas.”

- Jane Sattari, Principal, Kenmore Elementary School

Thinking Maps Drive Continuous Growth in Academic Performance

Tips for Teacher Leaders

Margarita Berdeja
TMs Teacher Leader
Kenmore Elementary School

Create a Supportive Environment for Change

Be Patient.
Change will take time.

Infuse new ideas a little at a time.

Make school a safe place to try new things, ask questions, and talk about challenges or failures.

Don't ask teachers to do anything you aren't doing yourself. If you're not walking the walk, you're not credible.

Provide Modeling and Feedback

Model new strategies before asking teachers to try them.

Provide feedback that is clear, honest, constructive, and respectful.

Provide plenty of ongoing support, modeling, and feedback.

Focus on Success

Celebrate every success, no matter how small. Teachers need validation at every stage of the journey.

Help them see and share their own successes. When they see success, they want to keep going.

Share your own successes and challenges.

12 Years of Experience in Thinking Maps
6 Years of Experience in *Write from the Beginning...and Beyond*