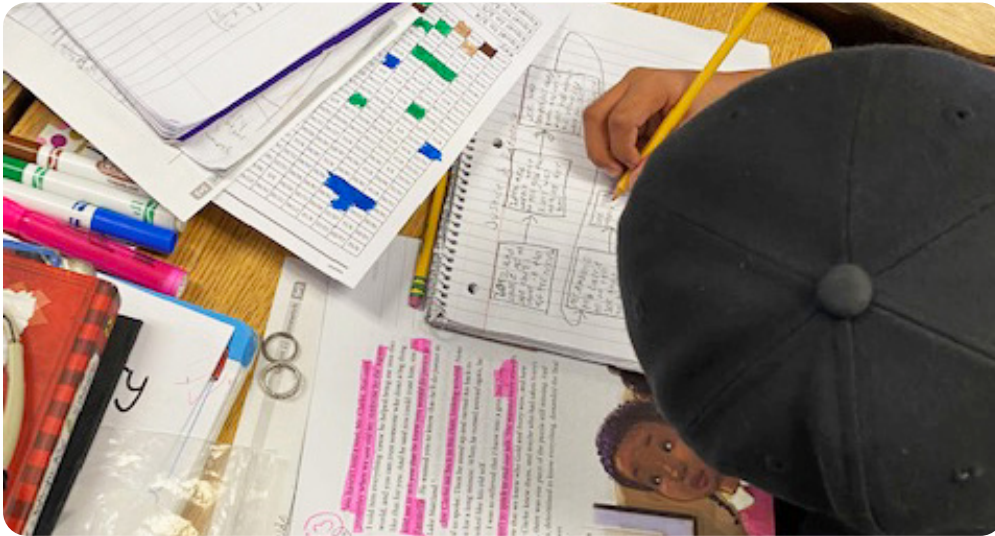




Desert Rose Elementary, Palmdale School District, California



SNAPSHOT

Desert Rose Elementary

- 640 Students Grades PreK-5
- 30 Teachers
- Full-school Title I program
- 87% Hispanic
- 25% English Learners
- Dual Language program (English/Spanish)

When Melanie Pagliaro was hired as Principal at Desert Rose Elementary, she knew she needed to make some major changes to improve student outcomes—especially for her English Learners. Thinking Maps, *Path to Proficiency*, and *Write from the Beginning...and Beyond (WFBB)* have transformed teaching and learning and united the staff around student achievement. Thanks to the commitment of the Desert Rose leadership team and training and coaching from Thinking Maps, their implementation is still going strong years later.

CREATING THE FOUNDATIONS FOR SUCCESS FOR ALL STUDENTS

Desert Rose Elementary serves a high-need, primarily Hispanic and African American population in northern Los Angeles County. A majority of students come from Spanish-speaking homes, and about 25% are classified as English Learners (ELs). In the 2013-14 school year, Melanie's first year at Desert Rose, only a handful of ELs demonstrated proficiency on their benchmark assessments for English Language Arts (ELA) and Math.

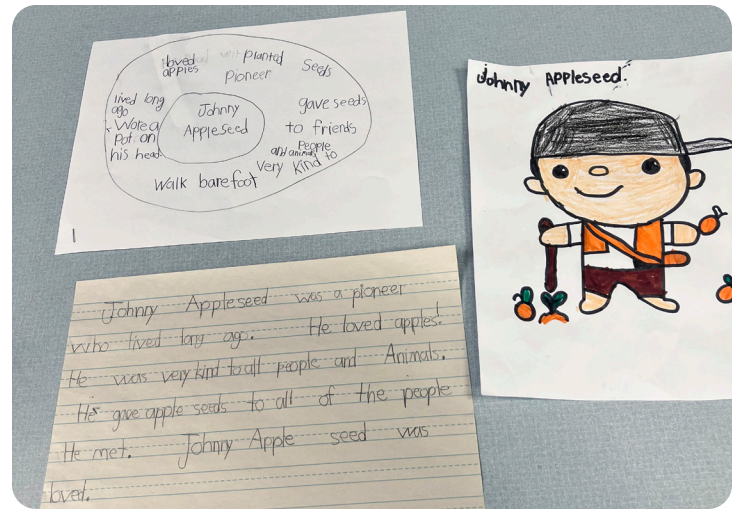
Melanie had used Thinking Maps as both a teacher and an administrator at a previous school. She knew that building foundational cognitive skills would accelerate learning for both ELs and native English speakers. The school implemented

“The beauty of Thinking Maps training is that teachers walk away with something they can use immediately, the very next day. They can talk about their curriculum and figure out how to use the Maps with the lessons they are teaching. The impact this has had on my staff is pretty impressive.”

- Melanie Pagliaro, Principal, Desert Rose Elementary

Thinking Maps in 2017 across all grades. In the summer of 2018, they added *Path to Proficiency* training for all teachers to learn strategies for addressing the specific needs of ELs. Since then, they have also implemented several modules of *Write from the Beginning...and Beyond*.

Melanie explains, “When we started our journey with Thinking Maps, it came out of looking at the data, which was not good at that time, especially for our ELs. It was clear we had to do something different for them. I knew that giving these students these kinds of thinking tools would really help them, especially when it came to any type of assessment.”



THINKING AND LEARNING — IN ENGLISH AND SPANISH

Thinking Maps are now used across all grade levels and all content areas at Desert Rose — even gym class. Teachers have learned how to integrate Thinking Maps into their curriculum and use them alongside other tools and resources. Melanie says, “Once the teachers realized that Thinking Maps weren’t something separate that they had to integrate, when they saw how it integrates with and supports the curriculum they are already teaching, that was really the key. That was the biggest thing I wanted them to understand from the Thinking Maps training.”

Path to Proficiency provided additional strategies for ELs at all levels of language proficiency. All teachers attended *Path to Proficiency* training so that strategies would be used across all classrooms. *Path to Proficiency* provides a framework for understanding the specific academic and social/emotional needs of English Learners, as well as strategies for using Thinking Maps to support language acquisition and comprehension. Students in Desert Rose’s Dual Language Immersion Program learn to use Thinking Maps in both English and Spanish. Melanie says, “Because they are visual, they really help all of our students — it doesn’t matter what language they are working in.”

Most teachers have also completed at least some of the modules of *Write from the Beginning...and Beyond*. Some teachers use *WFBB* alongside another writing program, while others use it as a standalone writing program. Adding *WFBB* has provided extra focus on writing skills across all

content areas, which has been especially beneficial in helping ELs demonstrate writing proficiency.

Implementing Thinking Maps and *Path to Proficiency* across all classrooms has produced results—not only for English Learners, but for all students. In 2017, English Learners, Socioeconomically Disadvantaged Students, and Students with Disabilities at Desert Rose scored at the lowest performance level (red) on the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP), while the school as a whole scored in the second lowest performance level (orange). Testing in 2018-2019 showed gains among all student groups, with the school as a whole and most subgroups scoring in the middle performance level (yellow). English Learners gained 4.8 points in 2018 and 13.1 points in 2019. Testing was suspended from 2020-2022 due to the pandemic, but Melanie reports that local progress monitoring shows that students are starting to make gains again now that they are back in the classroom full time.

“Writing is where a lot of EL students struggle most. *Path to Proficiency* and *Write from the Beginning* have given us strategies that are very easy to integrate in both languages. It’s provided an opportunity to really hone writing skills and help our students make that jump.”

- Melanie Pagliaro, Principal, Desert Rose Elementary

COACHING FOR SUCCESSFUL WHOLE-SCHOOL CHANGE

Melanie says that the keys to success with Thinking Maps, *Path to Proficiency*, and *Write from the Beginning...and Beyond* have been consistency, teacher buy-in and ongoing support and training. All teachers attended training for both Thinking Maps and *Path to Proficiency*. Professional learning was further extended through a series of coaching sessions with a Thinking Maps trainer with specific expertise in Dual Language and English Learners. During the 2018-2019 school year, after the *Path to Proficiency* whole-school training, the trainer provided five days of coaching, spending half a day with each grade-level cohort of teachers. These half-day sessions included Lesson Studies that showed teachers how to apply Thinking Maps and the strategies from *Path to Proficiency* with their specific curriculum.

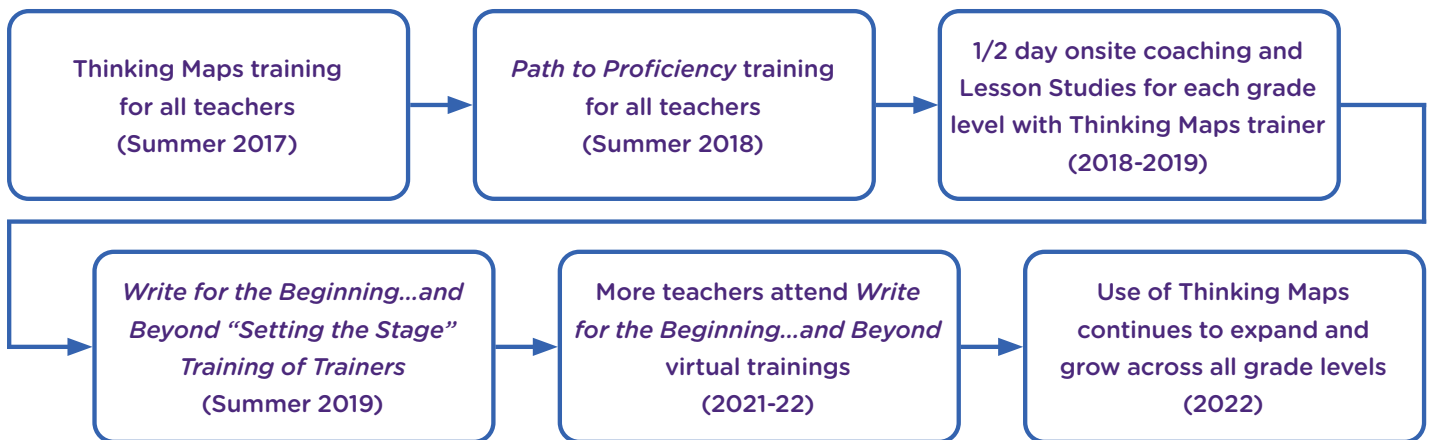
Melanie says, “We knew we wanted to be using Thinking Maps school-wide. So, we actually got together to plan what

it would look like in kinder, what it would look like in first grade, and all through our grades, up through fifth grade. They determined what the outcomes would be and what we needed each teacher to do.”

This approach, which combines whole-staff training with ongoing, job-embedded coaching, has proven to be very beneficial for the school. Because all teachers have attended training, it is easier to maintain the implementation over time as staff changes. Because the students themselves take ownership of the strategies and carry them from grade to grade, it is easy for teachers to jump right into the curriculum with Thinking Maps at the beginning of each school year. Melanie says, “Teachers have really been able to see the impact of Thinking Maps and *Path to Proficiency*. The grade levels who used it well first saw the strongest gains on assessments. So, they’ve all integrated these strategies into their curricula, and it has really stuck ever since.”

A PATH TO SUCCESS AT DESERT ROSE ELEMENTARY

Desert Rose Elementary implemented Thinking Maps, *Path to Proficiency*, and *Write form the Beginning...and Beyond* to give teachers strategies for meeting the learning needs of all students, especially English Learners.



After implementing Thinking Maps and Path to Proficiency, assessment scores went up for all student subgroups, with English Learners gaining 4.8 points in 2018 and 13.1 points in 2019.