Kenilworth School holds great prominence in Arizona history. Built in 1920, it is listed on the National Historic Register and boasts famous alumni such as Senator Barry Goldwater and numerous other prominent leaders from Arizona. However, like many urban schools, the school was in transition. When Mr. Anthony Pietrangeli was named principal in the spring of 2015, he jumped at the opportunity to reinvigorate the school's Thinking Maps practice. Thinking Maps soon became part of the school's new slogan: “Kenilworth, A Super Cool Thinking Maps School.”

RALLYING AROUND THE MAPS

Anthony saw an opportunity to revitalize the school culture with the use of Thinking Maps. Having used Thinking Maps in his previous school, he knew the Maps can be used to establish a consistent language for learning and enable students to reach higher levels of creative and critical thinking. Prior to his arrival, the staff had begun working with Thinking Maps but had not fully embraced them or integrated them into the language and culture of the school. Teachers were proud of their Thinking Maps heritage, but Anthony did not see much evidence of that legacy when he first came to the school. As a first step to revitalizing their Thinking Maps practice, Anthony and 15 of his teachers were certified as Thinking Maps Trainers during the summer of 2015. Kenilworth hosted the training and invited other schools in Phoenix Elementary School District #1 to participate. The new Kenilworth Thinking Maps Trainers delivered a six-hour training session to the school’s entire staff at the beginning of the 2015-16 school year.

Once everyone was trained, the entire staff infused Thinking Maps throughout the school: in classrooms, in the hallways, in the office and everywhere possible. Wall posters with the eight Maps were displayed in every classroom.
The school’s recommitment to Thinking Maps took place in a broader context of transforming the school into a “Super Cool” place for learning. The school’s nickname was changed from the Senators to the “Super Cool Senators.” Teachers were now “Super Cool Leaders of Thinking and Learning.” Thinking Maps were branded as “Super Cool Tools for Learning.”

It is not just talk; the Maps are really working. Students have embraced the Maps and have learned to use them independently to solve problems, clarify their thinking and demonstrate their understanding. The Maps have also become springboards for deeper discussions in the classroom. “We’ve empowered teachers with a tool that helps them do their job more effectively,” said Anthony. “Kids rely on the Maps for their notebooks and journals. When we give them problems to solve, a majority of them automatically start thinking about which Thinking Map can help them make sense of it,” he added.

Kenilworth 6th Grade Teacher Ms. Erin Patton says, “With the use of the Brace Map and Bridge Map, students are able to see the connection between plant and animal cells and make real-world connections. This year’s success with the Maps really sealed my commitment to using them as learning tools.” Erin’s student Leslie told her the Brace Map really helped her remember all the parts of the animal cell, and it was hard to remember them without the visual Map.

With students, teachers and the entire staff behind the use of Thinking Maps in the school, the shift in school culture is paying off. Teachers report a higher level of morale and disciplinary incidences are declining. Pride in their “Super Cool” school is at an all-time high and the teacher retention rate is improved.

In October, they introduced “Thinking Maps Thursdays.” Each week pictures of student- and teacher-created Maps are included in an email newsletter sent to the entire school staff to share the success stories throughout the school. In November, the Thinking Maps Learning Community (TMLC) was launched to provide teachers with ongoing training and support for their Thinking Maps practice. “Thinking Maps are everywhere you look now across our school. They have taken over bulletin boards and hallways, and it’s visual evidence of the thinking and learning taking place at Kenilworth School,” states Anthony.
CHERRY CREEK SCHOOL DISTRICT ACHIEVES OUTSTANDING ELL RESULTS

Becoming a Super-Cool School

Classroom discussions are more meaningful
Students are using Maps independently to aid learning
Teacher turnover has dropped
Students are using Thinking Maps to help them on District Benchmark Assessments
Students and teachers have more pride in school
Disciplinary referrals are down

A CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION AT KENILWORTH ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Becoming a Super-Cool THINKING MAPS® School

18 teachers are certified as Thinking Maps trainers
Thinking Maps wall posters are displayed in every classroom
Success stories are shared on Thinking Maps Thursdays
Student Thinking Maps are displayed in hallways and classrooms
Parents are introduced to Thinking Maps
TMLC introduced for ongoing training and support