

Pat Edward's Doctoral Dissertation Study Summary
Detroit, Michigan

Topic: *The Effects of Utilizing Thinking Maps with African American Children's Literature to Motivate and Improve Reading Comprehension in Urban Males.*

As an Instructional Specialist and Thinking Maps Trainer for the Detroit Public Schools, I provide professional development for teachers in instructional strategies and classroom practices aligned with research and standards-based instruction. I am one of four specialists in the district who provide support to special education teachers city-wide in the full implementation of the district's adopted reading programs. I was selected by the national SRA consultants to become a part of a cadre of "in-house" trainers for first grade general education teachers of Open Court. Other duties include assisting classroom teachers in diagnosing reading difficulties and planning appropriate instruction and accommodation strategies for all students including English language learners, students enrolled in Special Education programs, and all students with diverse learning needs. I am a Ph.D. candidate in Reading and Language Arts at Oakland University in Rochester, Michigan and expect to complete my doctoral studies by June of 2008.

Purpose and Methods

The purpose of this study is to explore if any association exists between implementation and use of the Thinking Maps program and reading comprehension. To date over four hundred general education teachers, special education teachers, and administrators have been trained to implement Thinking Maps from elementary through high school. The study will determine how Thinking Maps is being utilized in some elementary and special education classrooms. It will explore if there is any significant difference in comprehension test scores when students were instructed with and without Thinking Maps. This study will examine the effects of using Thinking Maps to improve reading comprehension when used to enhance the understanding of African American children's literature as compared to the core basal text. Gender and achievement levels will be factored in with boys who receive Thinking Maps instruction as compared to boys who are in classrooms where only traditional comprehension strategies are being utilized.

This mixed research design will primarily be qualitative in the form of a multi-site case study. Quantitative analysis will be used to compare pre and post test data using the Terra Nova, a standardized norm referenced test, to factor in the differences between comprehension scores in the control group as compared with the experimental group. The study will focus on an in-depth description and understanding of whether Thinking Maps facilitate motivation and improvement in reading comprehension among males using multiple text and genre from the core basal program and selected literary works from African American Children's Literature.

Anticipated Results

Anticipated results will indicate that Thinking Maps are being used consistently to improve cognitive processing and reading comprehension. Results will show that urban males particularly benefit by integrating Thinking Maps with supplemental children's literature that depict authentic, rich positive images of African American characters and themes.