PREFACE

In the first phase of implementation of Thinking Maps across thousands of schools in the United States and several other countries from 1990 to 2000, the basic multiday professional development design focused on training teachers in whole-school faculties to use the maps to improve their own teaching while, most importantly, explicitly teaching their students across the school to use the maps as a common language for learning and assessment. We believe that if the students do not become fluent with Thinking Maps as their own language for learning, the implementation will remain at a superficial level. Extensive writing on the theory, research, and practice of Thinking Maps may be found in *Student Successes With Thinking Maps* (Hyerle & Alper, 2011) and *Visual Tools for Transforming Information Into Knowledge* (Hyerle, 2009). Practitioners' professional development training guides are used to foster the development of Thinking Maps across schools over multiple years. The primary training guide for teachers is *Thinking Maps: A Language for Learning* (Hyerle & Yeager, 2007).[1]

Thinking Maps have been applied deeply across all disciplines and grade levels from preK to college. Over time, they become a common visual language that unites a learning community around the focus on the explicit development of thinking skills and critical reflection. Professional development resources for improving writing, language development, and cross-discipline learning have been developed (as has Thinking Maps software) as schools have deepened their use of the maps. While this focus on the teacher-student relationship is still central, a new complementary strand of professional development emerged in the past decade as teachers and administrators began using the language for grade-level and faculty meetings, coaching, and a range of leadership practices. Over several years, many pilot sites began focusing on leadership using Thinking Maps, leading to the publication of *Thinking Maps: A Language for Leadership* (Alper & Hyerle, 2007). Most of the educators from the schools and school systems described in this book went through a minimum two-day Thinking Maps, Inc. training session in how to apply Thinking Maps to leadership practice. Most of these educators had already led the implementation of the maps into their classrooms and schools over many years.

The case-study analyses and examples we have included are based on a series of in-depth interviews and participant observations conducted throughout the 2008–2009 academic year with the leaders and schools profiled in this book. We gathered detailed field notes during the interviews and observations, which were analyzed for relevant themes and examples. Wanting additional time and space to develop their thinking, some participants shared written reflections. We have drawn from those throughout the book. In some instances, we have changed the names of participants and schools due to the confidential nature of the circumstances described.

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[1] Note: Before utilizing Thinking Maps® as discussed herein, the educators highlighted in this professional book participated in required Thinking Maps training. Resources and training are provided by Thinking Maps, Inc. (www .thinkingmaps.com). Thinking Maps® is a registered trademark of Thinking Maps, Inc.

We also asked participants in the study to share artifacts—Thinking Maps—they had created as part of their individual and collaborative thinking processes. Many of these are included throughout the book to provide the reader with a visual record of the thinking that took place. Each of these maps started from a blank page or screen. They became populated with boxes and bubbles and circles and arrows as the people engaged in these processes literally drew out their thinking in a highly transparent and collaborative manner. They appear quite neat in the book, but don't let that deceive you. In the process of creation, they no doubt reflected the dynamic, messy nature that thinking truly is. Unlike a painter's finished canvas, the maps in process look much more like a painter's palette. The mixing of colors is perhaps an apt metaphor for the formulation of the emergent ideas in these processes. In the end, it all comes together, or you start over.

The leaders in this study were chosen not only because of their experience with applying Thinking Maps in their work as school leaders but also because they all were pushing at the edges of their practice. In choosing to work with Thinking Maps as they did, they purposefully entered into highly interactive relationships with those within their school community. In almost every instance, the people we chose to study recognized that their existing practices only approximated what they envisioned possible or desired in their work with others. They saw in the use of the maps, however, an opportunity, as Linda Lambert et al. (1995) proposes, to "break set with old assumptions, and frame actions based on new behaviors and purposeful intentions" (p. 82). What they were reaching for—in a rather fearless manner—was greater alignment between the values and beliefs they held as school leaders and the practices they used to fulfill them. They chose to loosen the ground on which they walked in order to find a truer path. To do so, they needed a map, you might say.

Jeff Matteson, superintendent of the Canisteo-Greenwood Central School District, began the Thinking Maps process in his first meetings with his new leadership team. He made his thinking transparent and began the process of making it possible for others to do the same—from kindergarten to the school board level. Michael Sampson, superintendent of the Sedgwick Central School District, was asked to walk the talk and rescue an evaluation process headed for arbitration at the state level. His use of Thinking Maps not only saved a process from becoming protracted and potentially divisive, it did so in a dignified and respectful manner. It preserved the integrity of those involved with results far beyond their imagination. Superintendent Donna DeSiato and Assistant Superintendent Judy Morgan of the East Syracuse Minoa Central School District decided that to truly prepare its students for the 21st century, the school district couldn't simply do better what it already did. She and her colleagues believed they had to transform the very nature of the way people within the school district interacted with each other and the community in order to transform the learning experiences they offered to their students to meet these exciting challenges and opportunities. The stories from Ken McGuire at Bluebonnet Elementary School in Texas, Lynn Williams at

Yates Mill Elementary School in North Carolina, and Judy Kantor at Franklin Elementary School in New York—all school principals intent on building capacity within their schools for growth and sustainability—demonstrate that it is not enough to distribute leadership; it is necessary to cultivate the ability within groups and individuals to enact it skillfully and effectively. The account of the work of the Vertical Data Team at Blackham School in Bridgeport, Connecticut, describes the actions this group of teacher leaders has taken to use Thinking Maps as leadership tools and to improve their ability to fulfill their leadership responsibilities. This compelling story demonstrates how the use of the maps to develop their capacity as leaders helped the teachers to directly and indirectly improve student learning in their school in the process.

In all of the case studies woven throughout this book, we will be hearing from school leaders and visiting schools where Thinking Maps have animated the idea of leading connectively. After giving an introduction to Thinking Maps in chapter 1, we will contextualize this language for leading and learning within a new array of leadership theories and practices in chapter 2. Then we turn to how these themes emerge from the layers of human connection we all feel within the process of leading and thinking: from personal reflectiveness (chapter 3), to interpersonal interactions and coaching (chapter 4), to group dynamics (chapter 5), to schoolwide change processes (chapter 6), and, finally, to transformative processes at the school-system level (chapter 7). The epilogue will bring us back to the act of leading thinkers: engaging our capacity to connect the dots within ourselves and see more clearly the power of the collaborative drawing out of meaningful, connective thinking in maps.

There have been over 20,000 books published about leadership. One has to appreciate the degree to which this topic of leadership has been researched, documented, and theorized. Such close attention and study perhaps pay tribute to the complexity and critical role of leadership in the growth of and change in organizations. A common finding or conclusion in all of these studies is that leadership makes a difference, and effective leadership has the potential to transform lives. Naturally, then, we want to know and understand how and why the practices of leadership have such a profound impact on people and organizations.

With great respect for this vast field of research, we dared to further populate it with yet a new study. However, we were inspired to do so by the compelling nature of the stories from people who had begun to use Thinking Maps in their leadership practice, even, in some cases, before their use in this area had been formally articulated. As we heard and gathered these stories, it became evident that common themes were emerging across different settings and diverse applications of this work. It became apparent, too, that while the emergent themes were not totally unfamiliar, new dimensions to these themes were being revealed through the use of Thinking Maps. For these reasons and more, we felt it was important to bring this work forward and invite others to consider the contributions this work might make to the field of educational change and school-improvement efforts.