

Saturday, September 30, 2006

Book Review

Mapping Inner Space
Author: Margulies, Nancy with Maal, Nusal
ISBN: 1-56976-138-8
Format: Softcover
Pub. Date: 2002
Publisher: Chicago: Zephyr Press
Pages: 159
Cost: \$32.95 (List)
Available: Amazon at as low as \$20.76 (new) - No used copies at eBay
™
Subtitle: Learning and Teaching Visual Mapping
The Books' Topics: Finding and Creating Symbols

Applications of Mind Maps

Mapping with Students

Discovering your Inner Capacities
The central themes of this book are: Everyone engages in some level of visual thought, and Mind Mapping taps this learning resource

Improved results with Mind Maps blossom with practice

Mind Maps assist in developing your inner capacities

Mind mapping techniques can be taught to young children, older children and adults

Effective mapping is a process, and artistic quality maps are not required in order to be used as effective learning and communication tools
Keywords: Knowing and Sensing

Activating Thinking Skills

Learning in Context

Improving Study Skills

Stress and Learning

Mapping and Sharing what we Learn
Main Idea: Visual thought is a foundation of thinking and learning, and Mind Maps can solidify the learning and thinking process.

Mind maps communicate complex relationships and make cognition and constructs concrete and explicit

Learning and knowing can be shared with visual strategies that draw on patterns, symbols and the inner dynamics of thought.

Phases in Mind Mapping Include: Generate the Central Map

Draw a central image and add key words

Associate

Add branches with more ideas. Brainstorm

Review

Check the overall pattern of the map and add new ideas

Incubate

Do something else, then return with a different perspective

Organize

Prioritize and highlight. Regroup ideas

Add symbols, image, arrows and lines to increase meaning and impact

Redraw Map

Redraw the map with the new organization and structure

Quotes: "Before we establish language, we visualize pictures in our minds and link them as concepts. Throughout our lives, the inner knowing that we sometimes call intuition appears as an image or sensation long before we articulate it in words. Unfortunately, we often block the creative channels by training children to write only words, monochromatically, on lined paper. Now that many educators are aware of the value of nurturing thinking skills and creativity, we can employ systems like visual mapping that don't restrict, but rather promote, creative thinking." (p. - 12)

"We now understand that the notion of right and left hemispheres each handling specific task is far too simple to explain the workings of our brains." (p. - 12)

"Most people report that note taking is frustrating, and many have so much trouble reading their own handwriting that they never bother to refer to their notes again." (p.- 18)

"We think we see, but what we usually do is recognize, and then continue looking at what we think we know. This process helps us store data in simplified forms." (p. - 80)

"...Mind Mapping uses key words and does not require the use of phrases, or even a knowledge of grammar. Thus, children who haven't developed writing skills and students for whom English is a second language can use mapping successfully." (p. - 88)

"...one style of thinking is more active when we are writing words on lines because this style deals with words and placing things in order. The other style is more Mind Map--like, using symbols and colorful pictures, and creating new ideas that are not in any special order. Mapping and writing together help us use more of our brain power." (p. -100)

"Our own limiting beliefs often pose a barrier to using our intuition and imagination fully. Most of us do not want to put our faith in our intuitive senses and have trouble accepting credit when our hunches turn out to be accurate." (p. -138)

"The best way to become a skilled visual mapper is to practice. Teaching mapping to others will anchor the learning....Your own capacity to make connections and think creativity will increase, as will your ability to see and record the systems within systems that make up our world." (p. - 152)Issues Addressed by the Book:This book focuses upon the visual aspect of conceptualization, and focuses upon the visual connections associated with learning.

The book also focuses upon methods for teaching the Mind Mapping process to young children, to older children, to business and professional people, and adults. The book demonstrates how the Mind Mapping process is useful for presenters.The Book's Shortcomings:The book models visual communication, and therefore is difficult to "read." Normal speed reading and scanning skills are slow going.

The book presents learning in a (graphical) artistic manner, but does not explore technology solutions for Mind Mapping such as the freeware, Open Source, and commercial products that are available to help us less artistic (and more in a hurry) teachers. (See our article on the free Visual Thought program in this issue of Classroom Toolkit.)

The book could have emphasized that visual learning is dynamic, not static, as the book's Mind Map drawings seem to demonstrate.

The book also fails to mention that the reason that people don't review lecture notes is that they don't have the time. If people don't have the time to scan lecture notes, how will they find the time to work through the notes at least once to re-conceptualize and redraw the concepts on a new map? It is possible that mental rehearsal of the redrawing of concepts would increase learning as much as physically drawing a second or third draft of the notes.

Of course, creating Mind Maps during the planning of a presentation, and sharing the Maps during the presentation will clarify the purpose and the concepts that the presenter wishes to communicate. Still, rather than scanning an elaborate and cluttered Mind Map, a presenter (who will be using electronic slide projection) can streamline the presentation process by creating the Mind Maps with software.

The only drawback of creating Mind Maps by using computer software is the loss of hands-on, tactile, kinesthetic and proprioceptive stimulation that occurs from drawing by hand.Comments:"Reading" this book presents an excellent exercise (and conceptual challenge) for teachers as they peer through a window into how at least one quarter of their students process information (visually).

The book's conceptualization could have been strengthened by mentioning that internal images contain sound, smell, taste, sensations, feelings, self-talk and words; not just visual images.

The author's ideas also would be stronger if she explained that a static drawing represents a minor subset of the rich, dynamic and multisensory internal pictures that many people think with.Summary: This is a book that is meant to be perused and explored, not studied and memorized. Look for inspiration and insight, not information. Use the examples and create maps of your own.

Rating (Four Point scale):Useful - 4Applicable - 4Relevant - 3Innovative - 4Original - 3Interesting - 3_____Overall Rating - 3.5

Posted by Classroom Toolkit Newsletter in Book Review at 05:00