Mind Maps, Timelines, and Charts

We suggest three options as ways to get started with interpretation. For any option, start with butcher or poster paper, a white board, or even a graphical thinking tool such as the popular computer program *Inspiration*. While these activities may seem rather out of place in formal research, we have found that such creative approaches to interpretation are very useful.

**Option 1:** Create a *mind map* (diagram). Start by writing your CQ in the middle of the work space. Branch off from your CQ, using lines, arrows and shapes to represent what you have learned about your research project and what questions you still have.

**Option 2:** Create a *timeline* of your study. If you did this study as a student teacher, start the time line with your initial entrance into the classroom, even if you were not collecting data at that time. Add just the dates of important “Landmarks” during your learning-to-teach and-data collection phases. Add to the timeline when you collected data. Add specific incidents connected with data collection, e.g. “Taught lesson using computer simulations.” Add any other specific incidents that occurred during the data collection period. Include even those incidents that may not seem related. Complete the context for your study by adding memorable incidents from your entire student teaching period. You may want to include emotions as well as actions.

**Option 3:** Create a *chart* showing what you knew about your research project, what you have learned about your research project, and questions you still have about your project. Leave a lot of blank space on your chart to work with later. This option may work if you tend to be a linear/sequential thinker.