



Personalizing ELA Instruction with Small-Group Instruction

THE SCHOOL

School:
Urban Elementary

Population:
96% FRL
33% ELL

Implemented:
Grade 8

Technology Access:
20 desktops
to 30 students

An urban elementary school celebrated **85% of their students meeting growth targets in their eighth grade class**. The ELA teacher achieved this growth by creating daily ThinkCERCA stations in her classroom that allowed students to focus on specific tasks that promoted close reading and argumentative writing. While students were working independently, the teacher spent class time personalizing instruction and meeting the needs of her students.



THE CHALLENGE

How can a teacher plan effectively for a classroom with a wide range of skills?

The eighth grade ELA teacher at this urban school was faced with one of the greatest and most common challenges a teacher faces: a classroom of diverse learners. As students move into the middle grades, the range of academic achievement levels widens. In this case, students in the same grade level were assessed on the NWEA MAP assessment in the fall and demonstrated enormous diversity in terms of the skills that were mastered versus those that were evolving. In classrooms with paper textbooks written for one grade level, teachers have few resources and little time to prepare content at so many levels. While teachers strive to differentiate instruction, it is not always practical to plan that way on a daily basis. With

ThinkCERCA, instead of spending precious time differentiating individual lessons and assessments, this teacher was able to spend more time interacting with students and providing them with meaningful, targeted feedback on writing in order to facilitate growth.



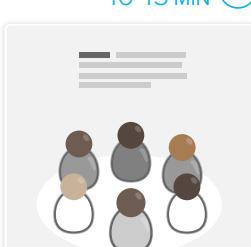
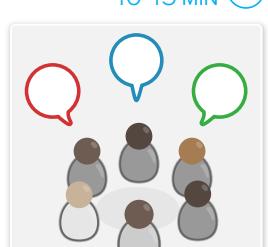
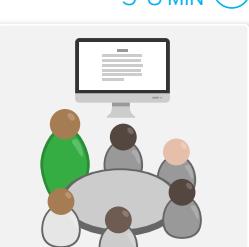
Why We Chose ThinkCERCA™

“Many web-based programs focus on individual student engagement, skill building, and so on, but ThinkCERCA assists the teacher by having at her immediate disposal all kinds of material at different levels to both reach out individually and also interact with larger groups, all within the same time frame and topics.”

THE IMPLEMENTATION

Integrating ThinkCERCA

In classrooms with technology constraints, such as limited mobility with desktop computers, stations are an effective way to have students working closely with technology, along with a variety of other engaging activities. In this eighth grade classroom, stations included:

5-8 MIN	15-20 MIN	10-15 MIN	10-15 MIN	5-8 MIN
				
Station 1	Station 2	Station 3	Station 4	Station 5
Evidence Gathering with Classroom Aide Students practice close reading with authentic ThinkCERCA texts and gather evidence for their argumentative writing.	Independent Work with Technology Students work directly with ThinkCERCA lessons on desktops. 	Vocabulary Students focus on Tier-2 and Tier-3 vocabulary retention.	Discussion Students collaborate with peers and practice verbal argumentation skills using pre-writing.	Writing Conference with Teacher The teacher conferences directly with her students and fosters personal growth by tracking progress on each student's growth focus.

The teacher was able to move around the room and facilitate learning, as well as integrate direct instruction when needed.

THE OUTCOME

Seeing Results

How does ThinkCERCA help meet the CCSS and achieve growth on current assessments?

After implementing ThinkCERCA lessons and stations regularly, 85% of eighth graders hit their growth targets in reading in the eighth grade class. By incorporating ThinkCERCA's library of authentic texts and differentiated lessons, student's individual needs were being met. This eliminated the need for the teacher to spend her time on labor-intensive lesson creation. Stations allowed the class to focus on specific areas of growth, while also collaborating with peers and receiving personalized teacher feedback.

After a few weeks of modeling and establishing a strong culture of student autonomy, the eighth grade ELA class came together as a community of learners. With their teacher providing dedicated feedback, students' reading and writing skills improved, along with their confidence.

Student Growth on Reading Scores from 2013-2014

(based on NWEA RIT band growth)

