# ThinkCERCA

# Closing the Achievement Gap: Catching Up in Reading and Improving Writing Quality

## Low-Income Urban School with a Diverse Range of Learners

This urban charter school was able to **raise their reading scores by 2.2 grade levels on the NWEA Map test with one semester** by integrating ThinkCERCA's supplemental literacy curriculum and technology-enabled instructional tools into weekly classroom practice. The lead teacher was able to personalize learning for her students, yielding the highest growth in the network.

**School:**
Urban Charter
School

**Profile:**
92% Free &
Reduced Lunch

**Implementation:**
Grade 5

**Technology Access:**
1 computer / 1 student

## THE CHALLENGE

## Growth for All Students

How can we use an innovative blended learning model to help students catch up to achieve grade level reading?

With students entering our school with reading and writing skills significantly below grade level, we were focused on improving the the way we used technology to reach growth targets. We feared that our students' writing skills were not being addressed by current technology solutions and worried we weren't adequately preparing our students for the rigors of middle school. We found ThinCERCA through the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation Literacy Courseware Challenge and piloted the program. We were looking for new ways to incorporate literacy education technology from a traditional computer-lab setting. We wanted to bring the technology directly into the classroom. We chose ThinkCERCA because we wanted to increase the frequency of writing applied practice, while still focusing on rigor and the quality of writing. I could really see the engagement increase when the kids had a chance to debate.

*"The only thing this teacher did differently than the other teachers in the Network was use ThinkCERCA and as a result, on the Fall to Spring NWEA Map test, the students grew 2.2 grade levels on the reading section and 85% made their 1 year growth target, which was the highest in the network. "*

## Why We Chose ThinkCERCA

We learned about ThinkCERCA through the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation Literacy Courseware Challenge. ThinkCERCA provides resources that we can bring directly into the classroom and use for instruction, applied practice and progress monitoring. Because ThinkCERCA provides standards-aligned lessons that help differentiate instruction, our teachers can spend more time working with students on building critical literacy skills.

# Integrating ThinkCERCA

How can we use ThinkCERCA resources to spend more time working side-by-side with students to personalize their growth?



ThinkCERCA was implemented in the school's Rotational Block Model, where students spend most of their day in the traditional classroom setting and receive large group instruction, with small group and team learning. For part of each day they rotate into the school's Learning Lab for adaptive online learning, additional small group instruction, team learning and targeted intervention. During the Learning Lab rotation, the students were given one ThinkCERCA minilesson per week to teach the foundation skills. Teachers presented these miniles-sons in the lab. The students spent the rest of the week completing a full Applied ThinkCERCA les-son, directly related to the Minilesson. The students worked throughout the week, either individually or in small groups, as dictated by the instructor. The students also practiced the vocabulary sets used in the applied lesson and received additional sup-port from teachers in mastering the academic and assessment vocabulary.

| Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Introduce Skill & Vocab | Close Reading & Check for Understanding | Apply Practice with Scaffolded Lesson Design | Student Writing & Collaboration | Conferencing |

# Seeing Results

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

Our teachers spent more time personalizing learning and by implementing ThinkCERCA. Our 5th grade class gained the reading and writing skills they needed to be successful in middle school.

Our students increased their academic vocabulary, which enabled them to decode and analyze complex, grade-level texts, and make claims with textual evidence.

As a result, students were able to produce grade-level writing samples that prepared them for middle school and improve their reading scores by 2.2 grade levels with an average gain of 14.2 points in RiT scores. Their growth was highest in the network, 85% of our students hit their growth target and 75% made their 1.5 year growth target, both of which were highest in the network.

**Student Growth on Reading Scores from 2013-2014**
(based on NWEA RiT band growth)

**2.2 Grade Levels!**

Reading Level — 8th, 7th, 6th, 5th

Predicted Growth | Using ThinkCERCA™