Personalizing ELA Instruction with Small-Group Instruction

THE SCHOOL

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?

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.”
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:

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<tr>
<th>Station 1</th>
<th>Station 2</th>
<th>Station 3</th>
<th>Station 4</th>
<th>Station 5</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evidence Gathering with Classroom Aide</td>
<td>Independent Work with Technology</td>
<td>Vocabulary</td>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td>Writing Conference with Teacher</td>
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<td>Students practice close reading with authentic ThinkCERCA texts and gather evidence for their argumentative writing.</td>
<td>Students work directly with ThinkCERCA lessons on desktops.</td>
<td>Students focus on Tier-2 and Tier-3 vocabulary retention.</td>
<td>Students collaborate with peers and practice verbal argumentation skills using pre-writing.</td>
<td>The teacher conferences directly with her students and fosters personal growth by tracking progress on each student's growth focus.</td>
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The teacher was able to move around the room and facilitate learning, as well as integrate direct instruction when needed.

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.