



Planning for Growth: 4 Test Prep Strategies Every Admin Should Know



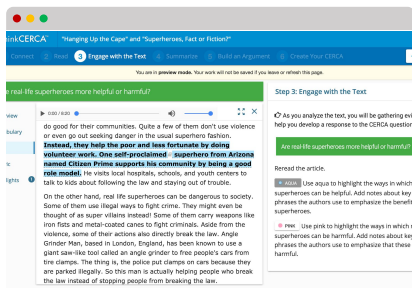
Agenda

- ThinkCERCA Growth
- Data-Driven Instruction
- Test Examples and ThinkCERCA Lessons
- Strategies for Test Preparation



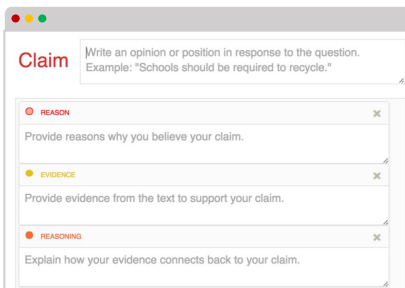
**ThinkCERCA
Growth**

ThinkCERCA: Read, Write, Grow



Read

- High-quality, authentic texts
- Differentiated lessons
- Close reading
- Standards alignment



Write

- Common Language: CERCA Framework
- Scaffolded writing process
- Argumentative writing
- Narrative and informational writing



Grow

- CERCA three times per month
- Students engaged in higher-order thinking
- More time with students
- Improved teacher effectiveness

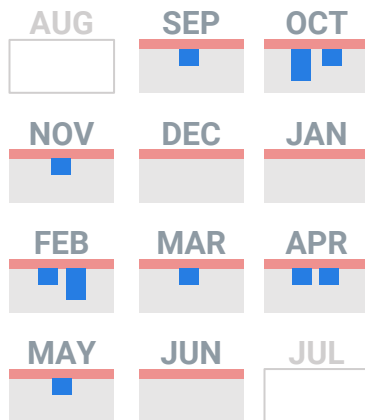
Grades 4 - 12 • English Language Arts • Science • Social Studies • Math

1.5 - 2.5 years of growth in a single year

★ Third-Party Verified

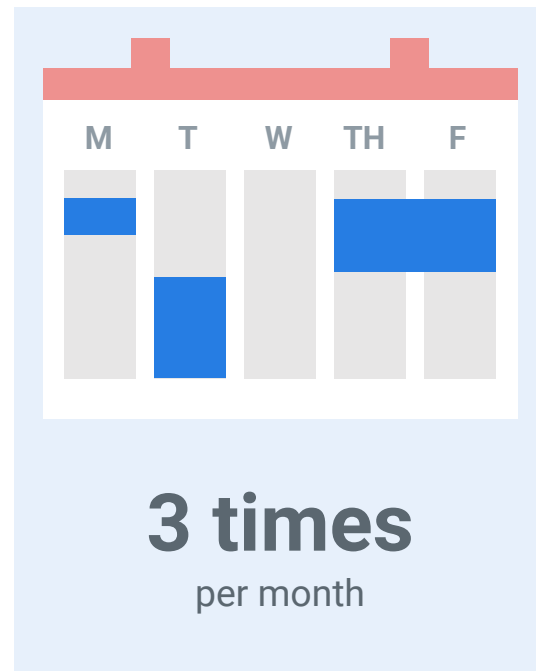
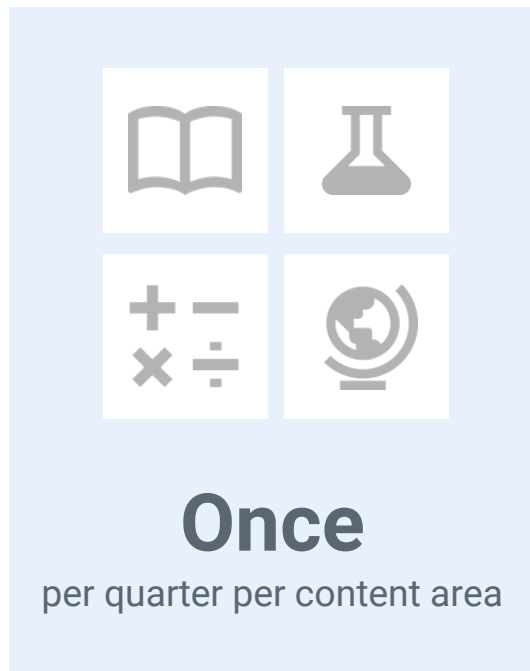
How Do Schools Reach Fidelity?

INTRODUCTORY GOAL



10 times
per year

ONGOING GOAL



3 times
per month



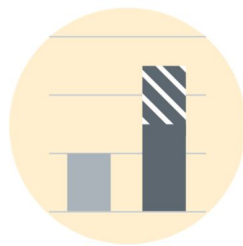
Positive Impact at Scale

In a study of 102 schools, ThinkCERCA students outperformed their peers nationally on the NWEA MAP test.



102

Schools with diverse student populations included in the study.



1.5-2.5

Average years of grade-level growth when compared to NWEA grade-level norms.

"[ThinkCERCA] was found to have an **extremely large impact**, producing gains equivalent to roughly an **extra year's worth of academic growth**."

- EdWeek



Two Years of Reading Growth

An evaluation of 26 ed-tech products showed ThinkCERCA helped students achieve an extra year's worth of growth in one school year.



6.29

Test-score points gained above the control group on the NWEA MAP test.



4x

Growth ThinkCERCA saw above the next-best product in the study.

Students using ThinkCERCA gained an additional **6.29** test-score points (NWEA Map test) above what the control group gained.

This is equivalent to closing the achievement gap by:

- **264%** for low-income students
- **456%** for black students
- **749%** for Hispanic students

Data-Driven Instruction



Students Submit **Writing**, Teachers Provide **Feedback**



- Argumentative, informational, and narrative writing
- Standards-aligned grading rubrics

Step 6: Create Your CERCA

Use your Argument Builder to write a CERCA that answers the CERCA question:

Would banning junk food in schools teach kids how to make healthy eating choices?

You can start your CERCA with your summary, ideas from your personal connection writing, or an attention question, fact, or quotation.

[NEED HELP GETTING STARTED?](#)

Write a formal argument.

Evaluation Rubric SUBMIT WITH NO SCORE

CLAIM/COUNTERCLAIM (x 3)	update score	4
EVIDENCE (x 5)	update score	5
REASONING (x 7)	update score	4
CONCLUSION (x 2)	close	5

BEGINNING DEVELOPING MASTERY

1 2 3 4 5

5 MASTERY

☐ Writer provides an effective conclusion that follows from and supports the argument presented.

☒ The concluding statement or section captures the writer's argument without merely repeating the claim(s).

☒ Demonstrates mastery level of achievement.

Students **Submit Writing**



- Development of analytical and synthesizing skills
- Practice providing supporting evidence using discipline-specific language
- Creation of constructed responses to text-based questions

Step 6: Create Your CERCA


🔗 Use your Argument Builder to write a CERCA that answers the CERCA question:

Would banning junk food in schools teach kids how to make healthy eating choices?

You can start your CERCA with your summary, ideas from your personal connection writing, or an attention question, fact, or quotation.

[NEED HELP GETTING STARTED?](#)

Write a formal argument.



Teachers Provide Actionable Feedback for Growth



- Standards-aligned grading rubrics
- Personalized, one-on-one feedback
- Real-time data to monitor student progress

Evaluation Rubric ☐ SUBMIT WITH NO SCORE

CLAIM/COUNTERCLAIM (x 3)	update score ▾	4
EVIDENCE (x 5)	update score ▾	5
REASONING (x 7)	update score ▾	4
CONCLUSION (x 2)	close ▴	5

BEGINNING DEVELOPING MASTERY

1 2 3 4 5

5 MASTERY

☐ Writer provides an effective conclusion that follows from and supports the argument presented.

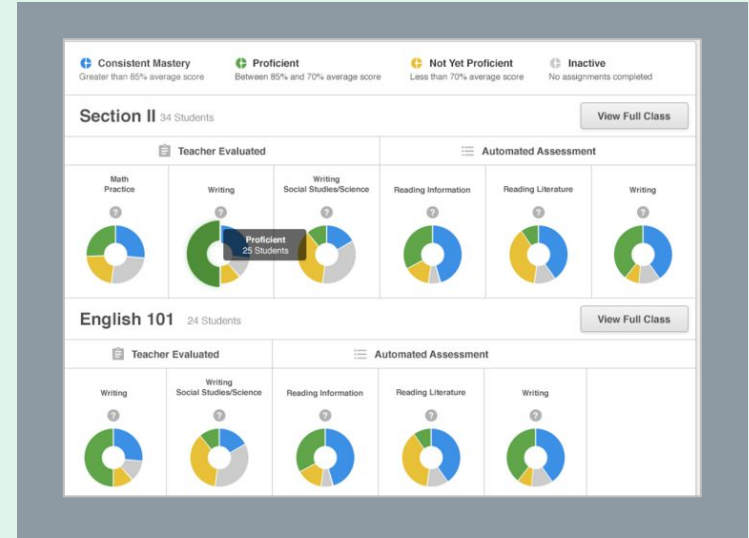
☒ The concluding statement or section captures the writer's argument without merely repeating the claim(s).

☒ Demonstrates mastery level of achievement.

District and School Leaders Monitor Progress



- Performance on literacy standards by grade or class
- Time-on-task and usage data
- Detailed reports to track individual student performance



A photograph of a classroom scene. A male teacher in a white shirt and dark trousers is leaning over a desk, smiling and pointing at a worksheet. A young boy in a grey hoodie is sitting at the desk, focused on writing with a yellow pencil. To the right, a girl with glasses is working on a laptop. The background is filled with colorful storage bins and educational materials on shelves. The text "Test Examples and ThinkCERCA Lessons" is overlaid in the center in a large, white, sans-serif font.

Test Examples and ThinkCERCA Lessons



Text:

Today you will do some research on animals and their natural environments. First, you will read an article about wolves in Yellowstone National Park. Then you will read an article titled “The Missing Lynx.” As you read these sources, you will gather information and answer questions about animals and their environments so you can write a response.

4 In fact, many American pioneers disliked wolves. They worried that the predators would attack their cows, sheep, horses—or even children. So they killed every wolf they could. The U.S. government even encouraged this widespread killing. As a result, by the mid-1900s, only about 400 wolves still survived in the “lower 48” states.

THE COMEBACK BEGINS

5 Then things began to change. In 1973, the Endangered Species Act became law. It helped protect gray wolves—and many other animals and plants that were in danger of becoming extinct.

Assessment Question:

Part A

What is a **main** idea of “A Howling Success”?

- ☐ A. Wolves have been missing from Yellowstone for over 70 years.
- ☐ B. Many people feared wolves and wanted them out of the park.
- ☐ C. Wolves helped control the number of elk living in the park.
- ☐ D. Scientists helped increase the number of wolves in Yellowstone.

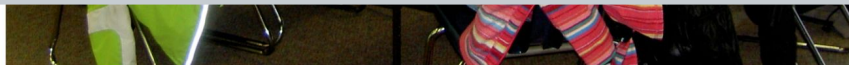
Part B

Which detail from the article **best** supports the answer to Part A?

- ☐ A. “They worried that the predators would attack their cows, sheep, horses . . .” (paragraph 4)
- ☐ B. “Then things began to change.” (paragraph 5)
- ☐ C. “. . . living wolf-free in Yellowstone for many years.” (paragraph 10)

Finding main idea and supporting details

Text:



Mr. Pai's third grade classroom is crowded. Kids lie on the floor, sit at tables, and gather around computers. Everyone is **concentrating** -- hard. And everyone is learning. But where's the teacher?

Mr. Pai has 20 students in his class. Each child has a different **learning style** or level of ability. He decided he couldn't do it alone. So he turned to computer power -- and games -- to help him teach. That way, his students can work at their own speed, and Mr. Pai can give everyone **individual** help when they need it.



Comprehension Check:

1 Which statement best expresses the main idea of this article?

- ☐ A. Mr. Pai does not like to teach.
- ☐ B. Computer games are too expensive.
- ☐ C. Mr. Pai's students like computer games.
- ☐ D. Computer games can help children learn.

Finding main idea and supporting details

Text:

In 1968 three students in Des Moines, Iowa, arrived at their separate schools wearing black armbands to protest United States involvement in the Vietnam War. The principals of the schools quickly instituted a policy banning the wearing of armbands, leading to the suspension of the students. A lawsuit filed on behalf of the students was eventually argued in the Supreme Court on November 12, 1968. Today you will read two passages and listen to a short audio clip discussing the context and impact of the case. At the end of the task, you will be asked to write an analytical essay.

from Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District

from Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District

Supreme Court Landmark Series: Tinker v. Des Moines (Audio)

Essay Prompt:

You have just read or listened to three sources discussing the Supreme Court case of *Tinker v. Des Moines* :

- the United States Supreme Court majority opinion by Chief Justice Abe Fortas
- the United States Supreme Court dissenting opinion by Justice Hugo Black
- an audio clip of an interview with law professor Catherine Ross

Consider the points made by each source about the issues surrounding the *Tinker v. Des Moines* case.

Write an essay analyzing the arguments of those who believe certain kinds of speech should be prohibited within an educational setting and those who believe the opposite. Base the analysis on the specifics of the *Tinker v. Des Moines* case and the arguments and principles put forth in the three sources. The essay should consider at least **two** of the sources presented.

B *I* U

Paired texts and analysis

Text:

How does the text of Article I explain the issue of government representation addressed in the article "A More Perfect Union"?

Overview

Vocabulary


Text

Rubric

00:00 / 29:31

A More Perfect Union and An Excerpt from The Constitution of the United States

By
www.archives.gov
www.archives.gov,



Engage with the Text:

Step 3: Engage with the Text

As you analyze the text, you will be gathering evidence that will help you develop a response to the CERCA question:

How does the text of Article I explain the issue of government representation addressed in the article "A More Perfect Union"?

Reread the article.

- AQUA** Use aqua to highlight problems facing the thirteen colonies at the onset of the Revolutionary War. Add notes about how the U.S. Constitution addressed these issues.
- PINK** Use pink to highlight official requirements for government officials in the Constitution. Add notes about how individual citizens' voices are represented.

Paired texts and analysis



Text:

Questions 1-5 are based on the following passage.

This passage is adapted from Edith Wharton, *Ethan Frome*, originally published in 1911. Mattie Silver is Ethan's household employee.

Line Mattie Silver had lived under Ethan's roof for a year, and from early morning till they met at supper he had frequent chances of seeing her; but no moments in her company were comparable to those when, her arm in his, and her light step flying to keep time with his long stride, they walked back through the night to the farm. He
5 had taken to the girl from the first day, when he had driven over to the Flats to meet her, and she had smiled and waved to him from the train, crying out, "You must be Ethan!" as she jumped down with her bundles, housework while he reflected, looking over her slight person: "She don't look much on housework, but she ain't a fretter, anyhow." But it was not only that the coming to his house of a bit of hopeful young
10 life was like the lighting of a fire on a cold hearth. The girl was more than the bright serviceable creature he had thought her. She had an eye to see and an ear to hear: he could show her things and tell her things and taste the bliss of feeling that all he

Assessment Question:

Select an Answer

Which choice provides the best evidence for the answer to the previous question?



- ☐ A Lines 1–4 ("Mattie...farm")
- ☐ B Lines 4–9 ("He had...anyhow")
- ☐ C Lines 9–10 ("But it...hearth")
- ☐ D Lines 11–13 ("She had...will")

Matching claims with textual evidence

Text:

Roman Fever



By Edith Wharton

From the table at which they had been lunching two American ladies of ripe but well-cared-for middle age moved across the lofty terrace of the Roman restaurant and, leaning on its **parapet** , looked first at each other, and then down on the outspread glories of the Palatine and the Forum, with the same expression of vague but **benevolent**  approval.



Engage with the Text:

Reread the text.

-  **AQUA** Use aqua to highlight Alida Slade's thoughts about Grace Ansley. Add notes about how the author uses the character's thoughts to help readers understand Alida's internal conflict and move the story forward.
-  **PINK** Use pink to highlight Grace Ansley's thoughts about Alida Slade. Add notes about how the author uses the character's thoughts to help readers understand Grace's internal conflict and move the story forward.

Matching claims with textual evidence

Text:

A Life in Traffic

A subway system is expanded to provide service to a growing suburb. A bike-sharing program is adopted to encourage nonmotorized transportation. **1** To alleviate rush hour traffic jams in a congested downtown area, stoplight timing is coordinated. When any one of these changes **2** occur, it is likely the result of careful analysis conducted by transportation planners.

The work of transportation planners generally includes evaluating current transportation needs, assessing the effectiveness of existing facilities, and improving those facilities or **3** they design new ones. Most transportation planners work in or near cities, **4** but some are employed in rural areas. Say, for example, a large factory is built on the outskirts of a small town. Traffic to and from that location would increase at the beginning and end of work shifts. The transportation **5** planner's job, might involve conducting a traffic count to determine the daily number of vehicles traveling on the road to the new factory. If analysis of the traffic count indicates that there is more traffic than the **6** current road as it is

Assessment Question:

The writer is considering deleting the underlined sentence. Should the sentence be kept or deleted?

- A** Kept, because it provides supporting evidence about the benefits of walking.
- B** Kept, because it provides an additional example of a community stakeholder with whom transportation planners work.
- C** Deleted, because it blurs the paragraph's focus on the community stakeholders with whom transportation planners work.
- D** Deleted, because it doesn't provide

Understanding what makes a sound, cohesive argument.

Text:

Should cities consider building light rail systems?

Overview

Vocabulary

Text

Rubric

0:00 / 7:53

Have U.S. Light Rail Systems Been Worth the Investment?

By Yonah Freemark

Atlantic CityLab, April 10, 2014



Five U.S. **metros** (Buffalo, Portland, Sacramento, San Diego, and San Jose) opened **light rail systems** in the 1980s to great **fanfare**. The **mode** offered many of the benefits of subway systems for far less public money; San Diego's system, per mile, cost

Create your CERCA:

Step 6: Create your CERCA

Claim

Your claim should clearly state your opinion—based on what you learned from the reading—about whether light rails are worth the investment. For example,

Light rail systems are ____ for cities with ____, and cities [should/should not] invest in them.

Do not begin your claim with “I think” or “I believe.” Readers will know these are your thoughts and beliefs, since you are the author.

Evidence and Reasons

Include at least two pieces of evidence (facts or examples from the selection) that support your claim. For each piece of evidence, give reasons that explain how it supports your claim. For example,

According to ____, the number of riders on light rails is _____. This data reveals that _____.

The example of _____ makes it clear that light rail systems are _____. In the case of _____, a light rail system [was/was not] worthwhile because _____. This [proves/does not prove] that other cities should _____.

Understanding what makes a sound, cohesive argument.

Text:

Prompt

As you read the passage below, consider how Dana Gioia uses

- evidence, such as facts or examples, to support claims.
- reasoning to develop ideas and to connect claims and evidence.
- stylistic or persuasive elements, such as word choice or appeals to emotion, to add power to the ideas expressed.

Adapted from Dana Gioia, “Why Literature Matters” ©2005 by The New York Times Company.
Originally published April 10, 2005.

[A] strange thing has happened in the American arts during the past quarter century. While income rose to unforeseen levels, college attendance ballooned, and access to information increased enormously, the interest young Americans showed in the arts—and especially literature—actually diminished.

Essay Prompt:

Write an essay in which you explain how Dana Gioia builds an argument to persuade his audience that the decline of reading in America will have a negative effect on society. In your essay, analyze how Gioia uses one or more of the features in the directions that precede the passage (or features of your own choice) to strengthen the logic and persuasiveness of his argument. Be sure that your analysis focuses on the most relevant features of the passage.

Your essay should not explain whether you agree with Gioia's claims, but rather explain how Gioia builds an argument to persuade his audience.

Connecting claims with evidence; explaining one's reasoning.

Text:

Is the author effective in convincing readers that families benefit from knowing more about their histories and sharing a common narrative?

Overview

Vocabulary

Text

Rubric


Your Work

0:00 / 10:13

The Stories That Bind Us

By Bruce Feiler

The New Yorker, March 15, 2013



I hit the breaking point as a parent a few years ago. It was the week of my extended family's annual gathering in August, and we were struggling with assorted crises. My parents were aging; my wife and I were straining under the chaos of young children; my sister was bracing to prepare her preteens for bullying, sex and cyberstalking.

Build an Argument:

Step 5: Build an Argument

are your thoughts and beliefs, since you are the author.

Claim The author is convincing in his argument that knowing family history and having a shared family narrative is important because he gives a few very concrete examples as to how it has impacted his life.

Now build your argument!

Add the following "cards" to support your claim:

- Reason** Provide reasons why you believe your claim.
School recycling would reduce trash.
- Evidence** Provide evidence from the text to support your claim.
The average person produces 1.5 tons of trash per year.
- Reasoning** Explain how your evidence connects back to your claim.
If recycling was required, each student could prevent tons of trash from entering landfills.
- Counterargument** Include at least one good reason why others might disagree

Connecting claims with evidence; explaining one's reasoning.

A classroom scene where a male teacher is leaning over a desk, pointing at a laptop screen to assist a student. Several other students are seated at desks with laptops, some looking at the screens and others looking towards the teacher. The classroom is filled with educational materials, including posters on the walls and bookshelves in the background.

Strategies for Test Preparation

Annotation

Annotation helps students locate information quickly and determine key elements.



Strategies for Scaffolding Annotation

Encourage students to annotate with peers to deepen their understanding as well as perspectives on a text. For example, **consider a gradual release of annotation:**



“I Do It”

Project a reading and model the annotation strategy for students. Provide a variety of types of annotation (questions, comments, reactions) and acknowledge the importance and use of each of them.



“We Do It”

Have students participate in annotation in a small group or whole class. Share out annotations and discuss the type of annotation that was done.



“You Do It Together”

Have students annotate in pairs. Encourage students to take a different goal in their annotation so they can share their learning with their partner.



“You Do It Alone”

Have students annotate individually. Make sure to give them feedback promptly.

Annotation Guidance

Provide students with guidance on what they should look for when re-reading the text to annotate.

In this example, students are asked to annotate considering the **benefits** and **issues** of mandatory voting.

Remind students that there are many reasons and ways to annotate, but this is one way to ensure students are ready to deliberately re-read the text.

Reread the article.

AQUA Use aqua to highlight benefits of mandatory voting. Add notes about how you think this would affect American politics.

PINK Use pink to highlight issues with mandatory voting. Add notes about how you think this would affect American politics.

What if every **eligible** voter in the country had to vote by law? **Mandatory voting would give lawmakers a better understanding of what the people want and how lawmakers could best govern.** It could also give people more **incentive** to educate themselves on issues and political players in the government. Mandatory voting might even give citizens more reason to become more involved in politics, to not just sit back and let the politicians have all the power in deciding the country's destiny. To quote Abraham Lincoln, the United States government was created "of the people, by the people, for the people," so it is the people who need to step up and share their honest opinion on how the country should be run.

On the other hand, requiring citizens to vote could hurt the government as well. In countries where voting is mandatory, such as Australia, **disinterested** **some voters have made their decision based on what order the candidates are listed in. This is a trend called "donkey voting."** Without any cause or reason to care for voting, citizens have used donkey voting to **protest** the mandatory vote or the government in general. The effect is much like not voting at all: the government receives an unclear or dishonest opinion from the people, and politicians won't know truly if laws or political actions they **enact** will meet the country's

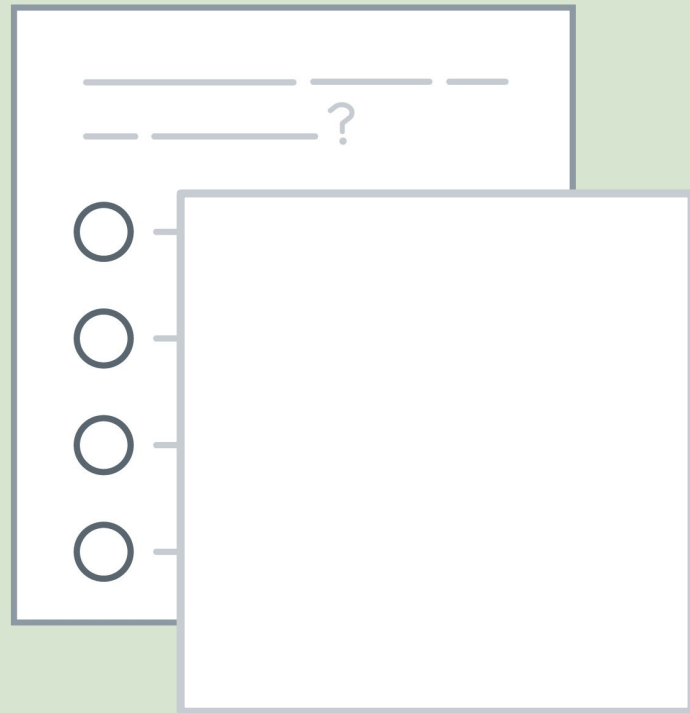
Prediction

Prediction strategies help students approach questions as opportunities to read a text more carefully.



Prediction Guidance

1. Read the question carefully.
2. Cover the answer choices.
3. Predict the answer.
4. Jot down the answer in your own words.
5. Find text to support your answer.
6. Select the multiple choice answer that matches your answer or use an error analysis for remaining distractors.



Prediction Guidance

Provide students with guidance on how to make predictions.

In this example, students can try to write out an expression on their own and then check the options to see if they match.

This is a great way to check and double-check their work, as well.

3

Which expression can be used to determine the amount of money spent on gas during the road trip while driving car A?

☐ A. $2500/25 * 2.99$

☐ B. $2.00 - 2500/25$

☐ C. $25/2500 - 3.45$

☐ D. $2500/25 * 3.45$

Prediction Guidance

Provide students with guidance on how to make predictions.

In this example, students can try to write out an expression on their own and then check the options to see if they match.

This is a great way to check and double-check their work, as well.

3

Which expression can be used to determine the amount of money spent on gas during the road trip while driving car A?



Error Analysis

Error analysis helps train students to identify the distractors in answer choices.



How Students Can Do an Error Analysis

1. Select a question you answered incorrectly.



How Students Can Do an Error Analysis

1. Select a question you answered incorrectly.
2. Write or discuss: why was your answer incorrect?
 - a. Was it brand new information? Is it something you do not remember learning?
 - b. Was the answer connected to the question, but not answering the exact question asked?
 - c. Was your answer partially, though not completely, correct?
 - d. Did you misread the question?
 - e. Did you calculate an answer incorrectly (as in mathematics)?
 - f. Was your answer completely disconnected from the question being asked?



How Students Can Do an Error Analysis

1. Select a question you answered incorrectly.
2. Write or discuss: why was your answer incorrect?
 - a. Was it brand new information? Is it something you do not remember learning?
 - b. Was the answer connected to the question, but not answering the exact question asked?
 - c. Was your answer partially, though not completely, correct?
 - d. Did you misread the question?
 - e. Did you calculate an answer incorrectly (as in mathematics)?
 - f. Was your answer completely disconnected from the question being asked?
3. Write down why the correct answer was correct.



Classroom Layout

Timed practice helps students practice pacing strategies to prepare for standardized assessments.



Why Classroom Layout

- More spaces to collaborate with peers elevates student engagement.
- Reduces time when shifting learning settings.
- Empowers students to connect with peers, technology, and resources.



Three Suggested Plans

Weekly Test Prep Focus

With this plan, you will focus on a different test preparation strategy each week. The benefit here is that students will experience and apply all of the strategies.

Rotating Test Prep Focus

With this plan, students will focus on two strategies over the course of multiple weeks. The benefit here is that students will build on their expertise in a few strategies

Single Test Prep Focus

With this plan, you will select a single strategy to focus on for multiple weeks. The benefit here is that students will get a *deep dive* into one strategy, allowing them to apply it in multiple settings.

Thank You



Spark Courageous Thinking in Every Subject

Personalized Literacy Platform for Grades 4-12