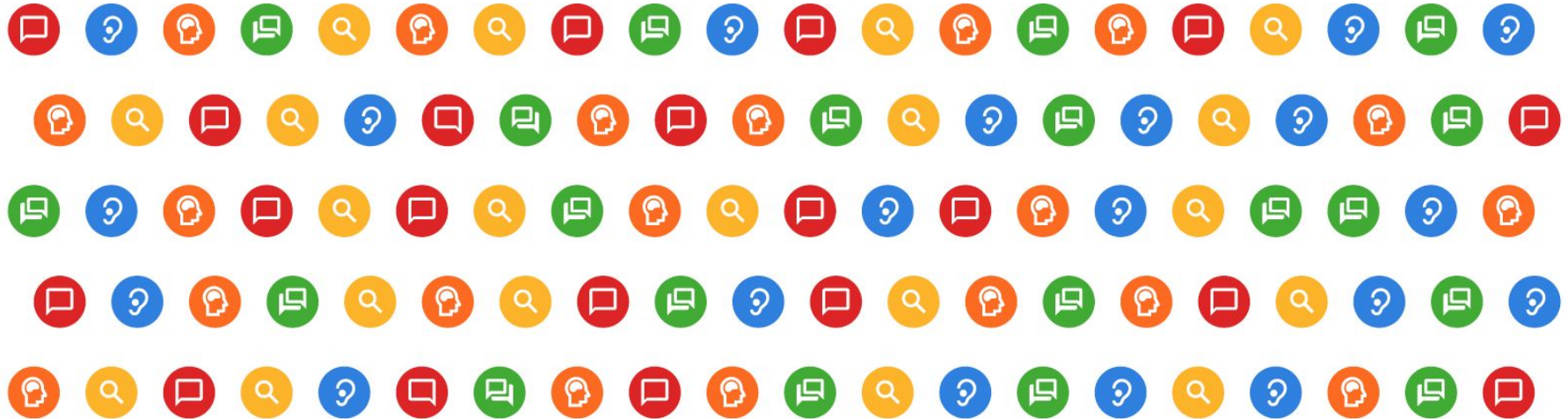




# Increasing Rigor Through Close Reading and Argumentative Writing



# Agenda

- Overview of Rigor
- Variables of Rigorous Instruction
- Making Rigor the Norm
- ThinkCERCA Overview

# Rigor

## What does rigor look like?

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A rigorous environment is one in which students are

- Expected to learn at high levels;
- Supported to learn at high levels; and
- Demonstrating learning at high levels

## What does rigor not look like?

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A rigorous environment is not one in which students are

- Doing more work
- Given more homework
- Told their work aligns to standards

*Blackburn, 2014*

# How can we achieve rigor?

Close reading can happen in many different ways, but it always boils down to three variables: **Text, Task, Context.**

- Increasing rigor means choosing texts that are worthy of study and tasks worthy of a student's time.
- Differentiation does not require sacrificing rigor.
- Student reading, writing, and peer collaboration improves when students begin to understand that an author makes choices and those choices make meaning.



# Continuum of knowledge and skills



Students must be given the opportunity to “build a meaningful continuum of knowledge in content areas, while introducing increasingly complex key skills and concepts” (Murphy, 2016)

# How to implement rigorous instruction

*How do we as leaders, create organizations and systems to improve instruction on scale?*

## Curriculum:

What does a student need to know and be able to do?

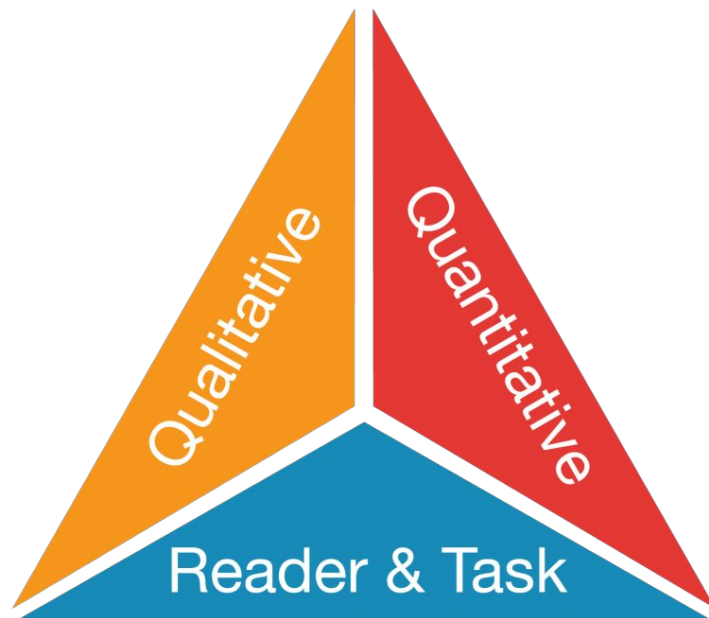
## Instruction:

How can we facilitate that learning?

## Assessment:

How will we know if they've learned it?

# Understanding text complexity

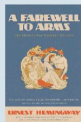
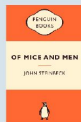


# Understanding text complexity

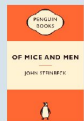
## QUANTITATIVE

Why the important job of assigning levels cannot be determined by a quantitative algorithm alone.

Perception



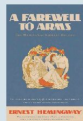
Reality



1  
L630



2  
L720



3  
L730

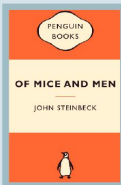


4  
L920



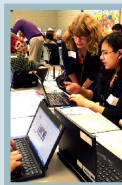
5  
L920

## QUALITATIVE



- » Complexity
- » Length
- » Themes

## READER & TASK



- » Language
- » Background Knowledge
- » Vocabulary
- » Work Habits



# What should teachers consider?

The **PURPOSE**  
of the  
**TEXT**



Does the text align to standards that are being practiced?

Does the text meet the demands of the performance task?

**TEXT Elements**

**Quantitative Measures**

**Structure**  
*Story structure or form of piece*

**Levels of Meaning or Purpose**

**Language Clarity and Conventions**  
*Including vocabulary load*

**Knowledge Demands**  
*Life, content, cultural/literary*

A photograph of three students in a classroom. A student with curly red hair is leaning over a laptop, pointing at the screen. A student with glasses is sitting behind her, looking at the screen. A student with dark hair is in the foreground, looking at the laptop. The laptop screen shows a webpage with text and a blue header. The background shows a classroom with other students and a bulletin board.

# The Task Variable

# Example Task Set Variable: The Road Not Taken



**Draw the action of the poem.**

What is the student doing cognitively?

*Understanding and describing the narrative structure of the poem through illustration.*

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,  
And sorry I could not travel both  
And be one traveler, long I stood  
And looked down one as far as I could  
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,  
And having perhaps the better claim,  
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;  
Though as for that the passing there  
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay  
In leaves no step had trodden black.  
Oh, I kept the first for another day!  
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,  
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh  
Somewhere ages and ages hence:  
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—  
I took the one less traveled by,  
And that has made all the difference.

# Example Task Set Variable: The Road Not Taken



**Highlight patterns that you find in the sounds used in the poem.**

**What is the student doing cognitively?**

*Understanding and analyzing the author's use of rhyme.*

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,  
And sorry I could not travel both  
And be one traveler, long I stood  
And looked down one as far as I could  
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,  
And having perhaps the better claim,  
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;  
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Somewhere ages and ages hence:  
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—  
I took the one less traveled by,  
And that has made all the difference.

# Example Task Set Variable: The Road Not Taken



**Highlight patterns that you find in the images described in the poem.**

What is the student doing cognitively?

*Analyzing the author's use of imagery.*

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,  
And sorry I could not travel both  
And be one traveler, long I stood  
And looked down one as far as I could  
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,  
And having perhaps the better claim,  
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;  
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# Example Task Set Variable: The Road Not Taken



**Perform a dramatic reading of the poem.**

What is the student doing cognitively?

*Analyzing the speaker thoughts, feelings, and actions and conveying the student's claims about the tone of the speaker at any given point through performance.*

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,  
And sorry I could not travel both  
And be one traveler, long I stood  
And looked down one as far as I could  
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,  
And having perhaps the better claim,  
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;  
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# Example Task Set Variable: The Road Not Taken



**Annotate the poem, noting how the author uses punctuation to reinforce meaning in the poem.**

What is the student doing cognitively?

*Analyzing the author's use of syntax and punctuation to underscore themes in a poem.*

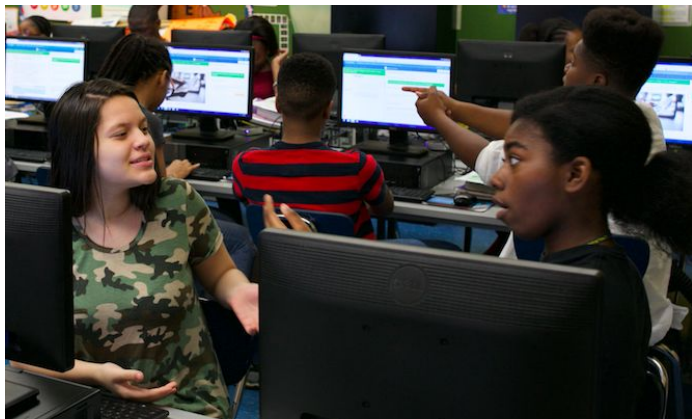
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And sorry I could not travel both  
And be one traveler, long I stood  
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# Example Task Set Variable: The Road Not Taken



**What is Robert Frost's argument about the nature of choice?**

**What is the student doing cognitively?**

*Evaluating the poet's technical choices and synthesizing the evidence of the poem to support a claim using text evidence.*

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,  
And sorry I could not travel both  
And be one traveler, long I stood  
And looked down one as far as I could  
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,  
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And that has made all the difference.



A classroom scene where a female teacher with brown hair, wearing a blue t-shirt and a denim jacket, is smiling and raising her fists in celebration. Several students are also raising their fists. In the foreground, a boy with blonde hair is seen from the side, also with his fist raised. To the right, a student with curly hair is wearing a black hoodie with "ATTACK THE GL" visible and has white headphones around their neck. They are sitting at a desk with a laptop and a green Gatorade bottle. The background features a blue bulletin board decorated with colorful stars and a banner that says "WORLD".

# The Text Variable

**The notes were sour  
because the seams were torn.**

# Example Text Set Variable: Increasing Rigor



- Lessons differentiated for 10 levels of readiness
- Same skill focus, same essential question
- More accessible texts

The screenshot shows the ThinkCERCA website interface. At the top is a blue navigation bar with the ThinkCERCA logo and links for Lesson Library, Custom Lessons, Classes, Insight, Resources, and Support. Below the navigation bar, the breadcrumb trail reads 'Library Home > The Role of Machines'. The main content area is titled 'Applied Reading and Writing Lessons' with a subtitle 'Close Reading and Argumentative Writing'. A yellow icon with a chain link is next to the title. Below this, a box states 'Automatically assign these lessons to your students based on their reading group.' with an 'Auto Assign' button. Three lesson cards are displayed:

- Grandmother's Robot**: Should robots be used to take care of the elderly? CCSS.CCRA.R.2. GRADE 3. Includes an 'Assign To' button.
- The Amish**: Will new technology change the Amish way of life? CCSS.CCRA.R.2. GRADE 4. Includes an 'Assign To' button.
- The Robot Revolution Already Happened**: Are robots good or bad for society? CCSS.CCRA.R.2. GRADE 5. Includes an 'Assign To' button.

On the right side, there is a sidebar for '8th Grade' with 'CLASS CODE LP7DTW'. It features a 'CREATE ASSIGNMENT' button and a list of reading groups: 'Entire Class', 'Grade 4 Reading Group' (containing 'The Amish' and 'Counterargument'), 'Grade 5 Reading Group' (containing 'The Robot Revolution' and 'Counterargument'), and 'Grade 6 Reading Group' (containing 'A Double-Edged Sword').



# Differentiating without Sacrificing Rigor



**Grandmother's Robot**



**Moral Machines**



**Facing a Robo-Grader? Just  
Keep Obfuscating Mellifluously**



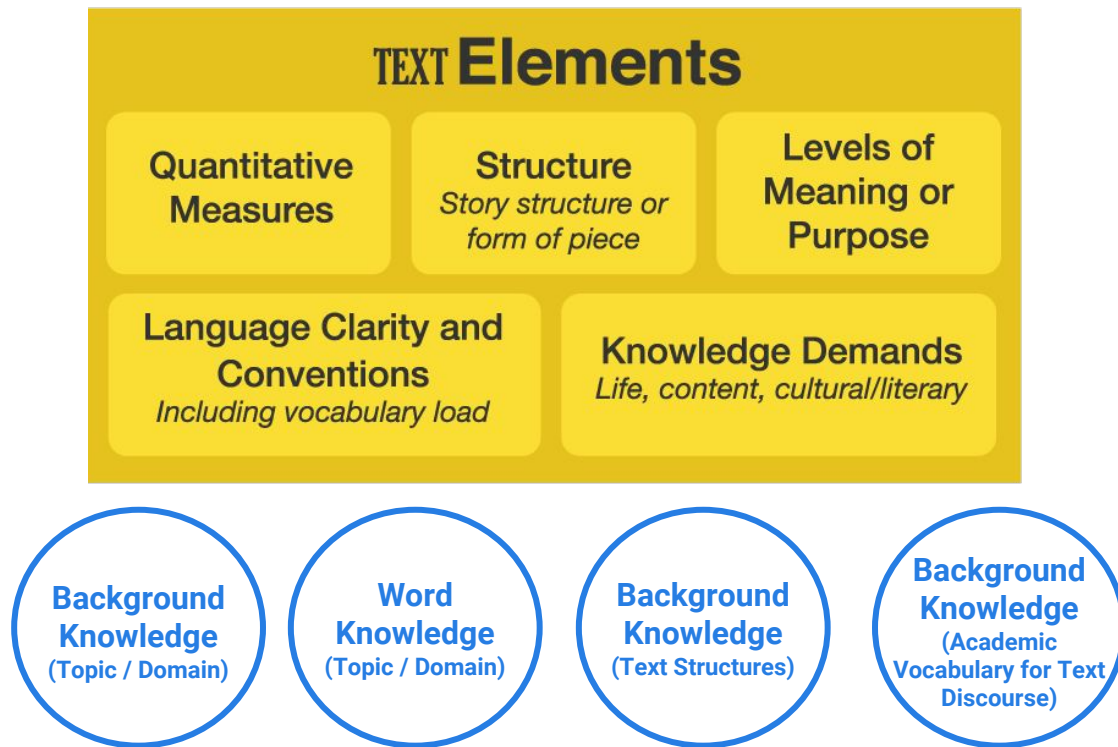
# The Context Variable



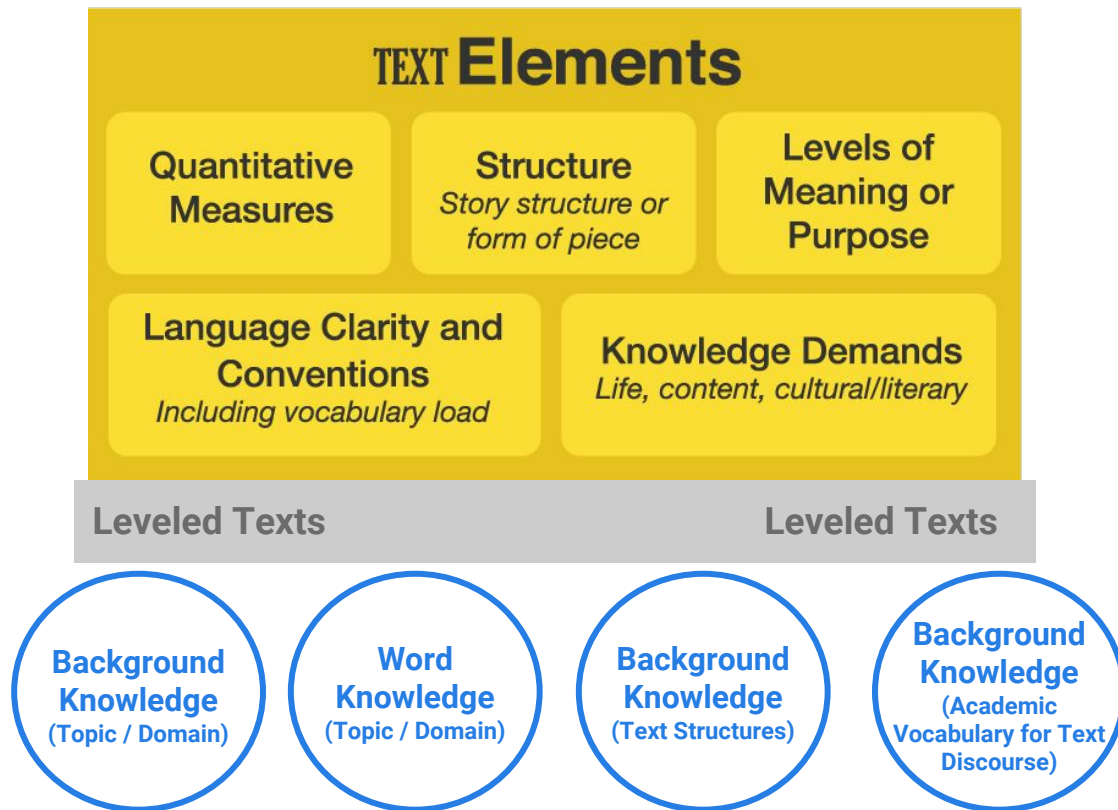


**Whole Class Instruction for  
Diverse Learners Means Text  
is Too Hard or Too Easy**

# Context: Building Background Knowledge



# Context: Building Background Knowledge



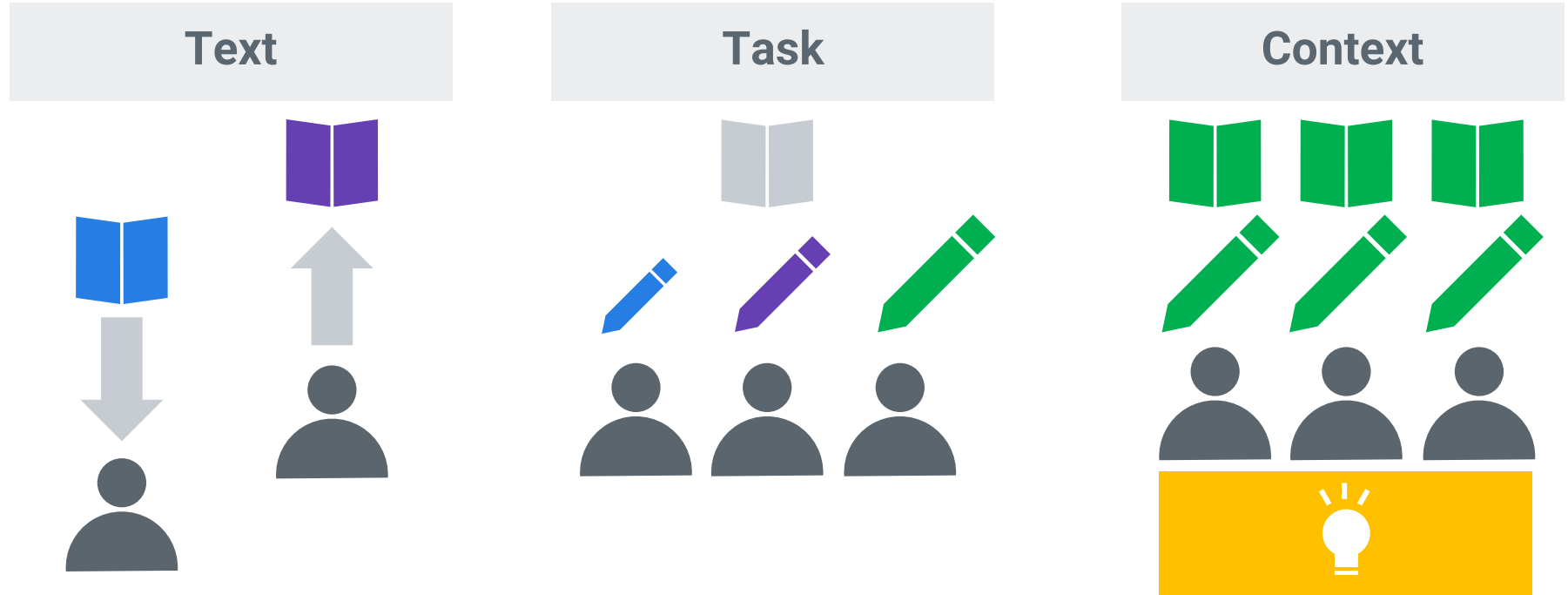


# Argumentation and Writing Drive Growth

English Class Practice	Rise in English Subtest Score	Applied Using ThinkCERCA
<b>Rewrote</b> a paper or essay in response to comments	0.19	✓
<b>Discussed</b> how culture, time, or place affects an author's writing	0.27	✓
<b>Explained</b> how writers use tools like symbolism	0.35	✓
Improved a piece of <b>writing</b> through <b>collaboration</b> with a class or with partners	<b>0.38</b>	✓
<b>Debated</b> the meaning of reading	0.22	✓
Across all classes, the students <b>wrote</b> papers defending their point of view of ideas 5 or more times (compared to less than 5)	<b>0.39</b>	✓
<b>Discussed</b> how culture, time, or place affects an author's writing	0.19	✓
Math Class Practice	Rise in Reading Subtest Score	Applied Using ThinkCERCA
<b>Discussed</b> possible solutions to problems with other students	0.29	✓
Used a graphing calculator to complete an assignment	0.31	
Science Class Practice	Rise in Science Subtest Score	Applied Using ThinkCERCA
Used laboratory equipment or specimens	0.16	
<b>Wrote</b> lab reports	0.12	✓
Generated their own hypothesis/ <b>claim</b>	0.18	✓
<b>Used evidence</b> /data to support an argument or hypothesis	0.21	✓
Found information from graphs and tables	0.19	✓

# Creating a Culture Where Rigor is the Norm

## 3 Variables in Increasing Access to Rigorous Instruction:



# Creating a Culture Where Rigor is the Norm



# Thank You



**Spark Courageous Thinking in Every Subject**

*Personalized Literacy Platform for Grades 4-12*

# Continuum of Knowledge & Skill™: Coherent, Differentiated Curriculum

**Basic**

**3**

**4**

**5**

**6**

**7**

**8**

**9**

**10**

**11**

**12+**

# Continuum of Knowledge & Skill™: Coherent, Differentiated Curriculum

Basic

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12+

# Continuum of Knowledge & Skill™: Coherent, Differentiated Curriculum

**Emergent  
Bilingual**

**Basic**

**3**

**4**

**5**

**6**

**7**

**8**

**9**

**10**

**11**

**12+**

**Early  
Childhood**

# Continuum of Knowledge & Skill™: Coherent, Differentiated Curriculum

Basic

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12+

ELD Supports



# Continuum of Knowledge & Skill™: Coherent, Differentiated Curriculum

Basic

3

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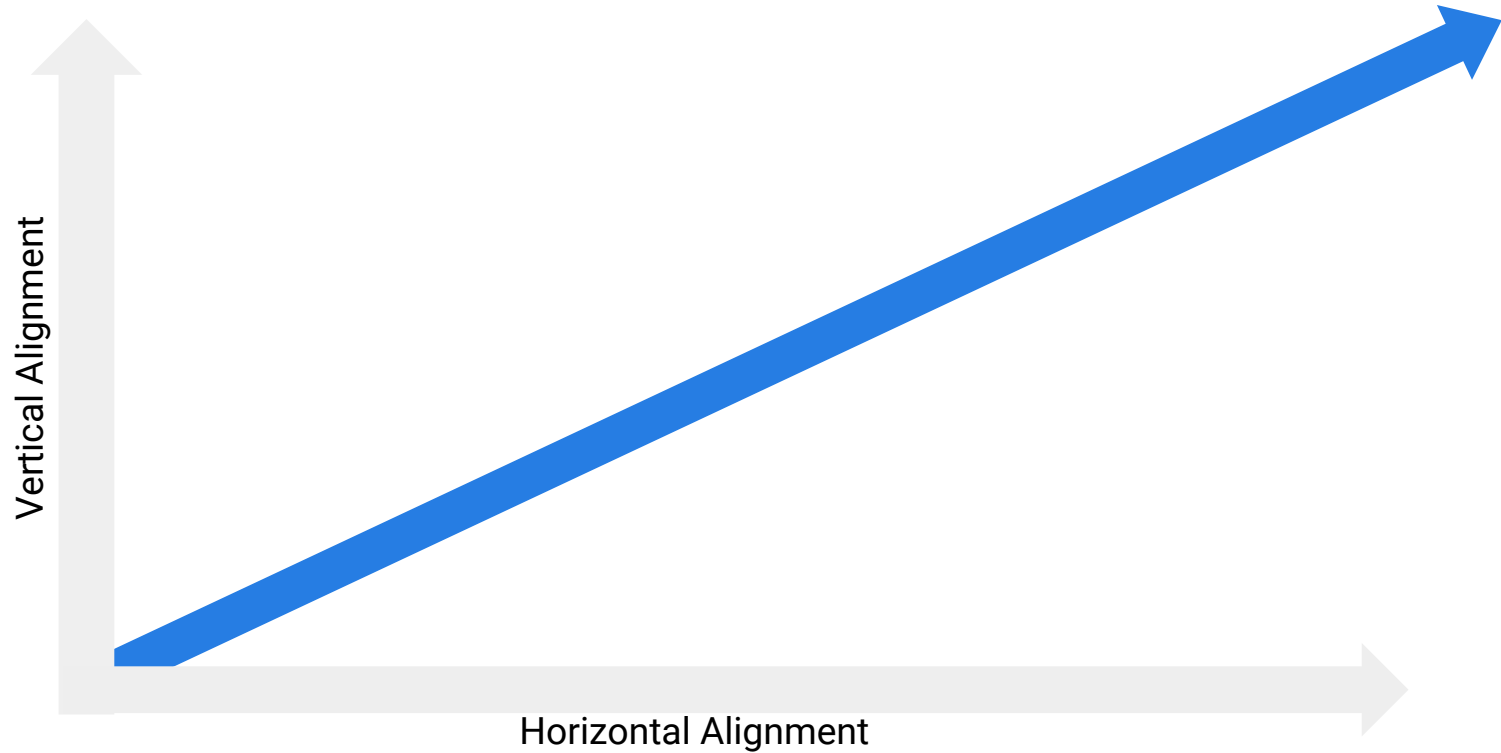
12+

CCSS

NWEA/PARCC

PARCC/PSAT/SAT

# Districtwide Platform for **Personalizing Literacy**



# Schoolwide Literacy for Curriculum-Instruction-Assessment

Fall

Winter

Spring



ELA



Social Studies



Science

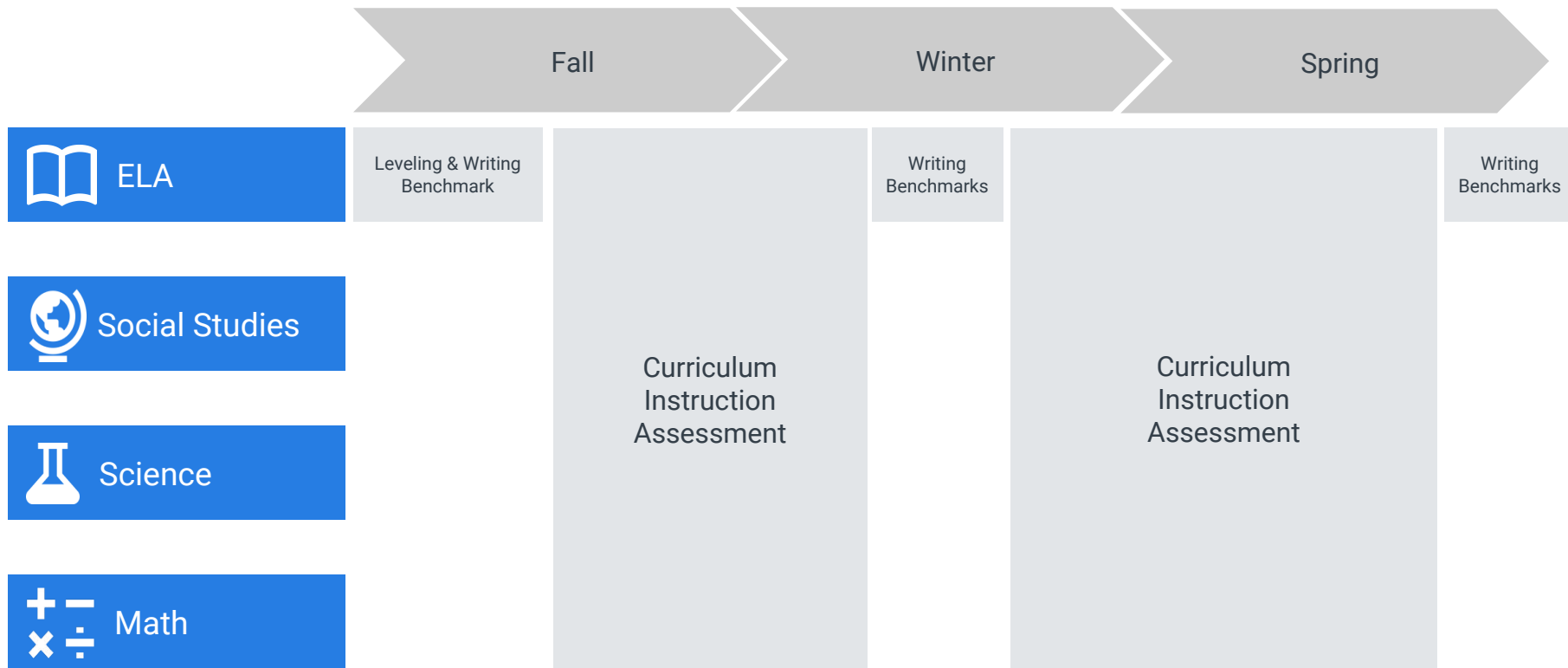


Math

# Schoolwide Literacy for Curriculum-Instruction-Assessment



# Schoolwide Literacy for Curriculum-Instruction-Assessment

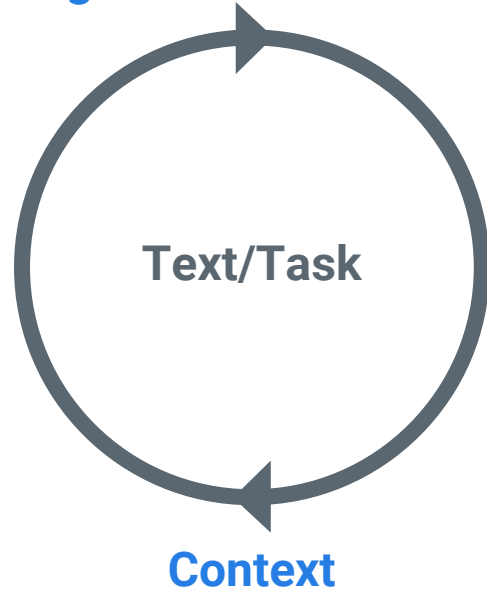




I would love a visual that showed something along this line, with whole class same level (see image on right) bringing students up to text (see image on left) but add a third image that shows bringing the text down to the student. If we were to go with a similar imagery, we could talk about how it is as unlikely that the stadium will remove the fence as it is that the New York Times will rewrite itself to your lexile level or that google will deliver search results only at your lexile level...this is a really important image we need to include at some point in our storytelling.

# Creating a culture where rigor is the norm

## 3 Variables in Increasing Access to Rigorous Instruction















# Creating a culture where rigor is the norm

## 3 Variables in Increasing Access to Rigorous Instruction

