



We appreciate the team at EdReports along with the teacher reviewers who conducted a rigorous and thoughtful evaluation of our curriculum. Exploring thousands of pages of instructional materials and teacher guidance is a huge undertaking. We are grateful for everyone who contributed to this report and the green light ratings that reflect the value of the expertise and practitioner wisdom that are captured in this curriculum.

About ThinkCERCA's Development Process

Rooted in [cognitive science](#) and decades of research and practice, we continuously optimize our proven pedagogy and validate our work with impact data. By prototyping everything we ensure the platform's user experience is easy, engaging, and aligned with our design principles, all in service of efficacy for learners. Through this process, we have continued to drive [industry-leading results](#) in our partner districts.

ThinkCERCA provides a collection of rigorous grade-level texts with increasingly challenging tasks across the course of each unit and progression that develops over the entire course. Through these experiences, students build both knowledge and skill representing a full year of instruction designed to help each student achieve grade-level proficiency.

We begin the year with more accessible topics, texts, and tasks, such as the personal narrative, and scaffold toward increasingly complex projects like the mid-year research paper and the end-of-year comparative analysis that challenges students to read, analyze, and write about texts across periods and genres.

Explore [our resources](#) to view the unique, lesson-specific strategies and guidance for teachers regarding scaffolding and more advanced skill development across the year.

A little more about our scaffolding:

Teachers often ask, “can we turn access to scaffolding off?” In response, we would encourage educators to explore the reasons students leverage these



supports. If we want students to become independent and effective readers, writers, thinkers, and engaged participants in discourse, we need to model the research-based mindsets that allow learners to understand their needs and enable themselves independently and, when appropriate, use available resources or jettison the scaffolds to challenge themselves.

Much like we wouldn't remove a light switch during daylight, we don't remove scaffolds that were unnecessary during one reading but became useful in a later reading, perhaps even a reading that was rated at a lower level of complexity. To exemplify this phenomenon, consider the sentence "The notes were sour because the seams were torn." To those unfamiliar with the workings of a bagpipe, this straightforward sentence made up of mostly single-syllable words is incomprehensible to even highly educated adults.

In the famous Recht and Leslie "baseball study," cognitive science explains why students who had a wealth of background knowledge, interest, and lived experiences with baseball increased their achievement in reading comprehension at a rate outpacing measurably higher-skilled readers who had low levels of background knowledge about the subject. The ability of high-performing readers to leverage previously mastered reading strategies and skills could not overcome the lack of prior knowledge the reader brought to the text. Given the lack of certainty many teachers may have about their students' prior experiences and knowledge and the variability of readers in today's classrooms, particularly among highly mobile populations, the predictability of our scaffolds mitigates against several common problems we have observed in working with districts over decades.

1. Predictable scaffolds reduce the cognitive load for teachers and students in leveraging necessary support for accessing grade-level text, giving both students and teachers greater confidence in attaining grade-level success. (See [TNTP's The Opportunity Myth](#) study for more on why this is so important even in settings with mandated grade-level curriculum resources.)

2. The routines allow students to grow increasingly independent. (See our [Continuum of Blended Learning and Young Adult Success](#).) When students can follow routines and work independently at times, teachers can redeploy



that teacher-led instructional time to personalize learning through 1:1 conferencing, providing highly contextualized supports such as further explanation, feedback, and clarification that may not work well for students in a whole class setting.

3. Given the increasingly complex nature of text collections and tasks, reliable scaffolds help students work at greater levels of rigor within each unique multimodal unit. Across the grade level experience, the reliable, optional frames for thinking, including protocols and sentence stems, allow students to build on knowledge and skill to attain ever-more complex engagement with texts, especially with discourse skills that one does not come across in everyday life.

4. Though students who are multilingual English learners may appear to have the same needs, they are often very different. Yet, one common need exists across the board for all learners of a language-- vocabulary. For this reason, ThinkCERCA provides vocabulary support in every lesson along with other robust, leveled English Learner supports for beginning, intermediate, and advanced learners. Each component of the student guide is accompanied by leveled, modified versions, so students can remain part of the class and work on similar tasks as they prepare to access the same grade level texts and tasks.

5. Opportunities for additional challenge are available across the curriculum and the platform for gifted and talented students.

6. For striving readers, teacher guidance, additional supports for pre-teaching, and technology-enabled tools enable grade-level access. Our [Foundational Reading and Linguistics](#) course provides strategies and modular lessons, units, and an entire semester of intervention resources for secondary students with larger foundational gaps.

Our approach to Research:

ThinkCERCA supports the development of formal and informal research skills in every unit across the course of the year as well as including research tasks that deepen knowledge in each unit and a full unit devoted to a sustained,



formal research project. Learn more here. Direct Instruction is provided for research skills and, like our other literacy strategy resources, a Research Toolkit is provided for use across the team to reinforce skills and deepen research experience across disciplines.