

# A District's Journey:

How We Increased Writing Growth While  
Enhancing Student Engagement



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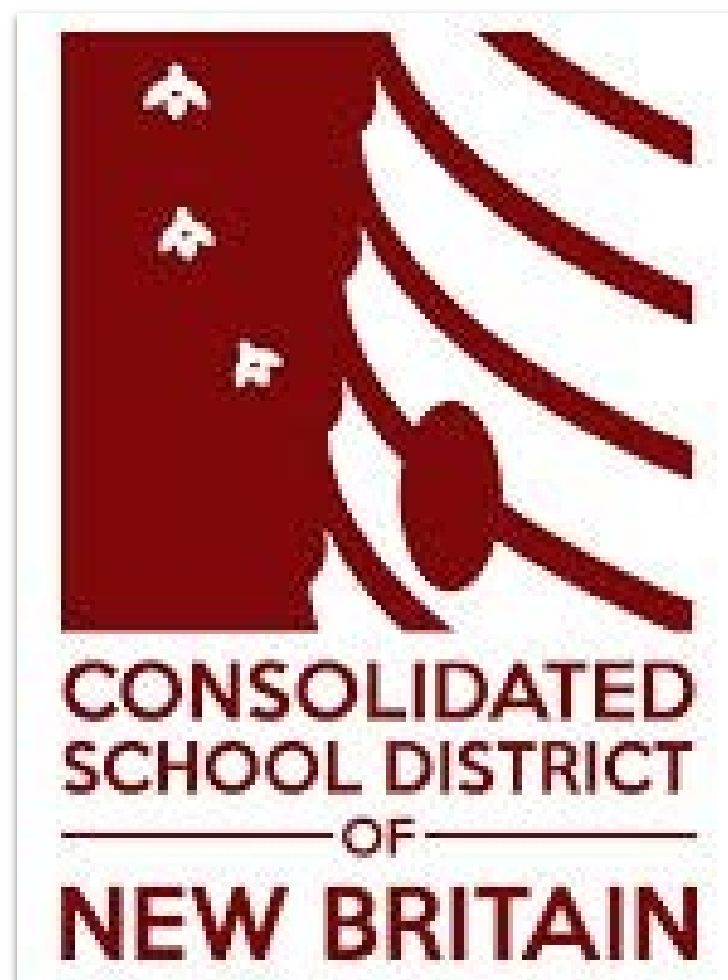
**Coming –  
Instructions slide for  
webinar controls**

# Today's Learning

**1. Problem**

**2. What we did**

**3. Results**



# About New Britain, CT

15.4%	English Language Learners
75.4%	Free Reduced Lunch
18.5%	Students with Disabilities

A large teal circle on the right side of the slide, containing the main text and quote. Three smaller teal circles of decreasing size are arranged in a diagonal line from the bottom right of the large circle towards the bottom right corner of the slide.

The skills connected to writing are frequently cited as 21st century skills **in high demand.**

*– Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation*

# The Problem 3+ Years Ago

## Time to Read & Write

Students needed time to read and write daily in a variety of genres: poetry, narrative, expository, and argument.

## Writing Declined

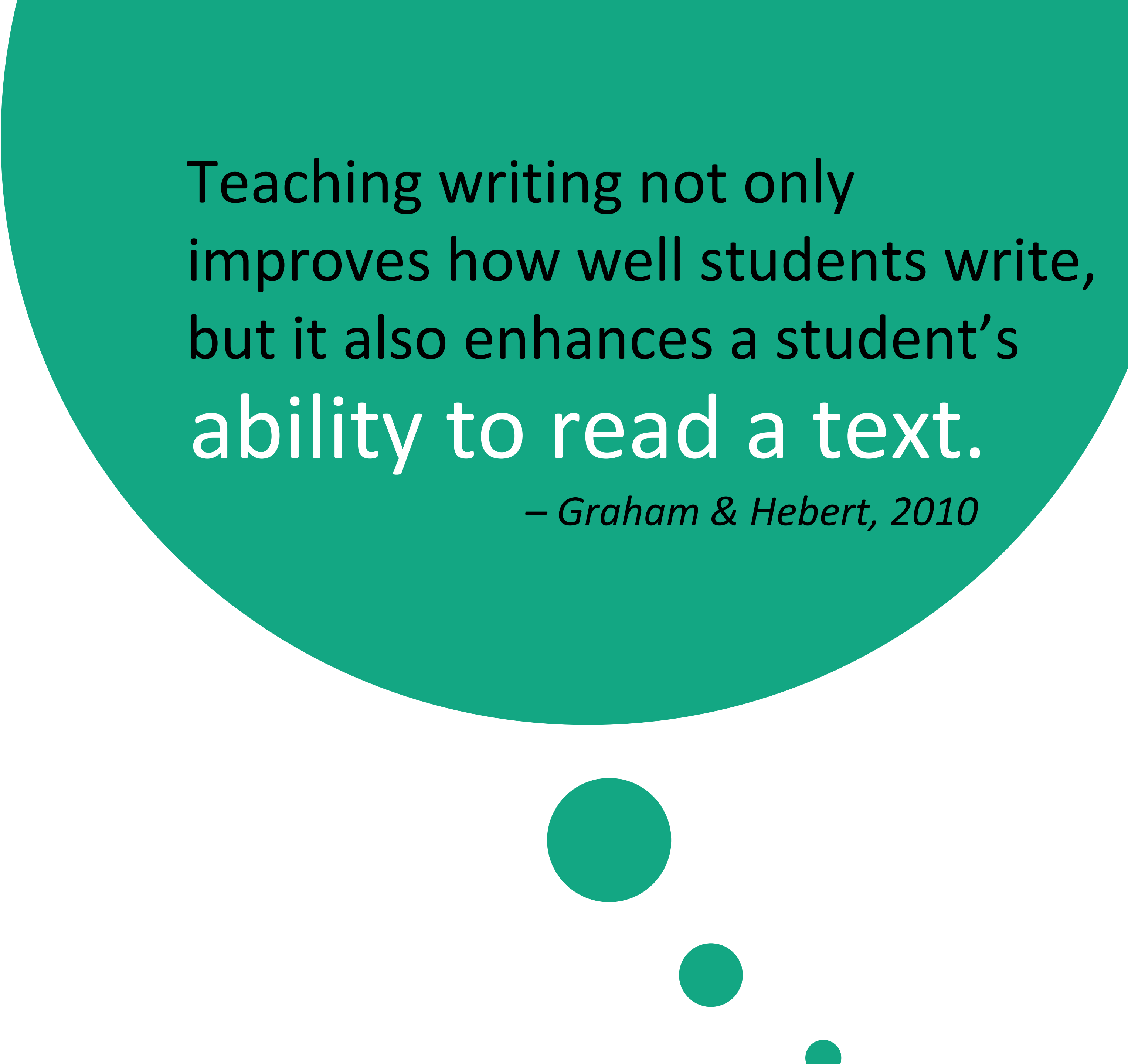
When we stopped monitoring writing, it declined in quality & quantity.

## Different Expectations

Expectations vastly different from teacher to teacher and school to school.

## Teacher Learning

Time for teachers to learn collaboratively was almost nonexistent.



Teaching writing not only  
improves how well students write,  
but it also enhances a student's  
**ability to read a text.**

*– Graham & Hebert, 2010*





# Why Argument?

CCR skills & Social Studies/Next Gen Science Standards included argument writing in science, social studies, and ELA.

Many teachers were teaching argument differently - inconsistent class to class.

“Argument is the primary skill essential to our success as citizens, students, and workers.”  
— *Schmoker, Graff, 2011*



# What We Did

# Multi-Tiered Approach

- **Assessment**

Create district-wide reading/writing assessments

Unified rollout of assessments & grading (Writable)

- **Instruction**

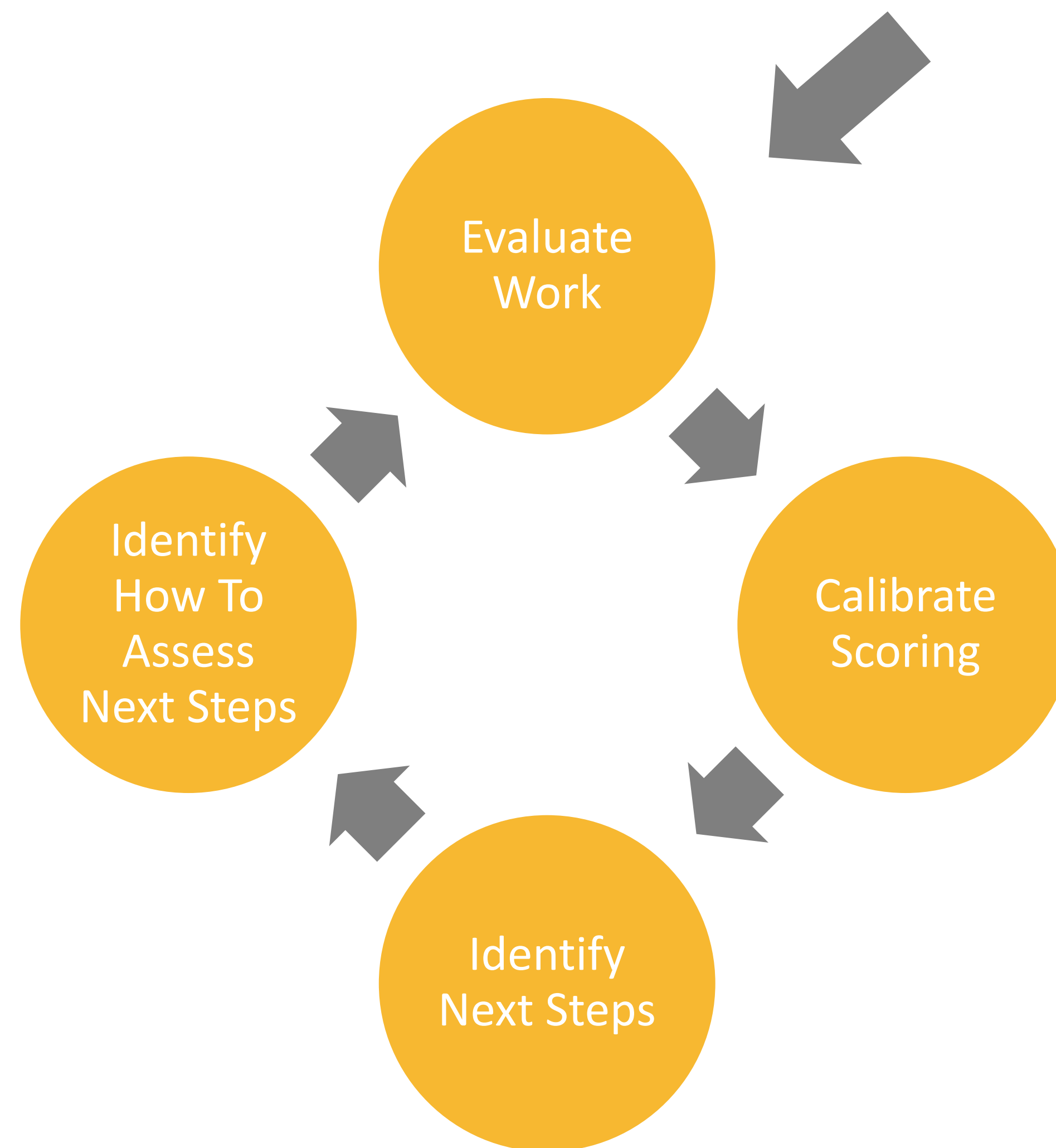
Professional development to support vertical alignment

PD focus on calibration, examination of student work

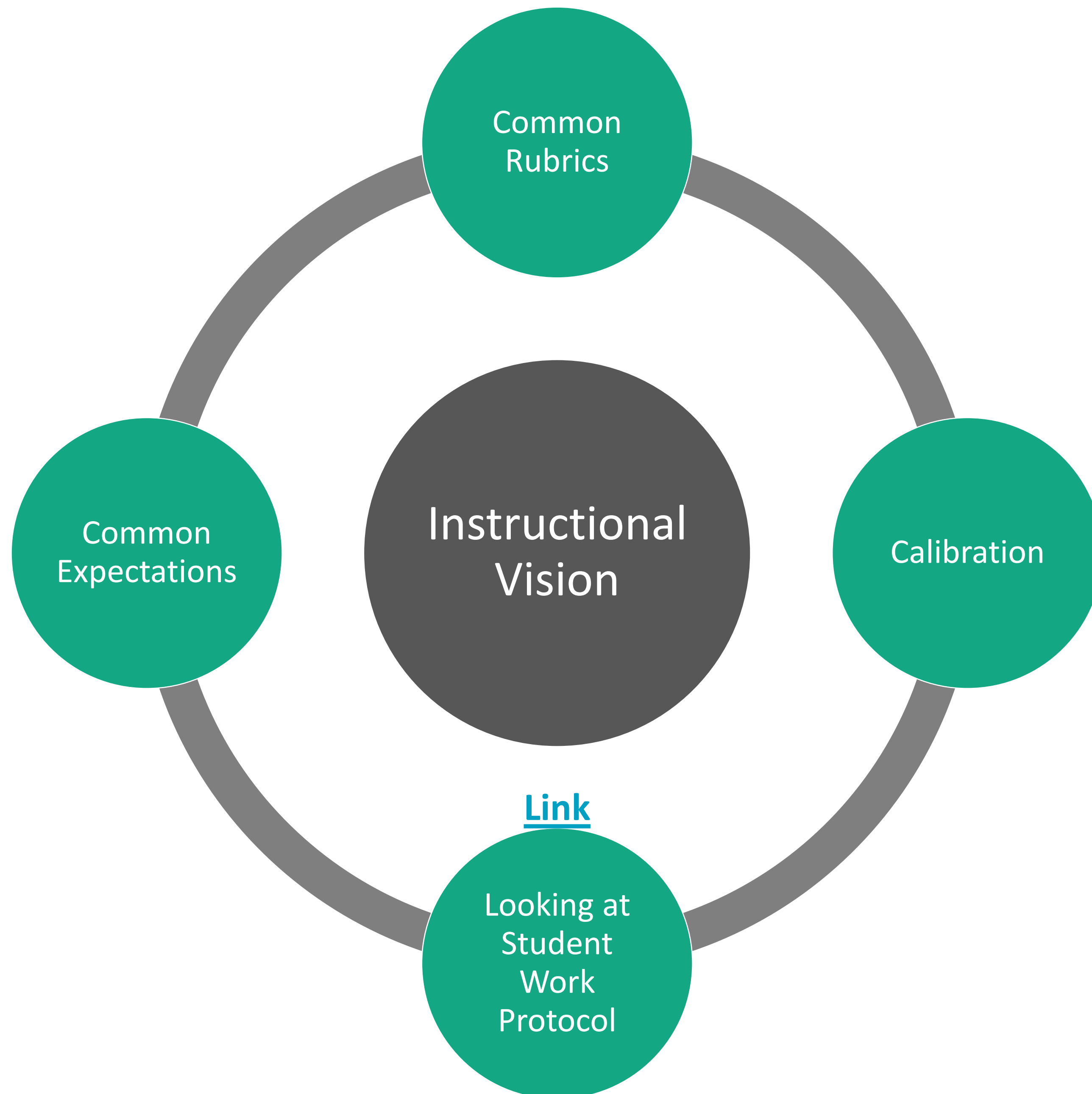
- **Technology**

Google Classroom for professional development in 6-12

Increased focus on authentic feedback & revision (Writable)



## The Process



**Unified around a  
common vision across  
ELA, Social Studies,  
Science**

Writable

Previewing as writer | [Preview as Reviewer](#)



## Four forces on a rocket

By NASA.gov



Rockets in Huntsville, AL

The study of rocket forces work. A force means an object in a specific direction.

Writable

Previewing as writer | [Preview as Reviewer](#)

Copy to My

## Legacy of Civil War Black Soldiers



African American Civil War Veteran

The African American soldiers who served in the United States army and navy during the Civil War made great sacrifices for the nation. The highest number of black soldiers serving at one time during the Civil War was 186,017 men. At the last muster call of black troops on July 15th 1865 there were a total of 123,156 black soldiers.

# Unified Assessments

- + 4x/year
- + Rubrics focus on text analysis.
- + Examples across subjects:
  - [6th Grade ELA](#)
  - [6th Science](#)
  - [8<sup>th</sup> Grade Social Studies](#)

By Maya Salam and Liam Stack

Feb. 23, 2018



Shortly after the school shooting in Parkland, Fla., President Trump said that violent video games and movies may play a role in school shootings, a claim that has been made — and rejected — many times since the increase in such attacks in the past two decades.

Movies are “so violent,” Mr. Trump said at a meeting on school safety on Feb. 22, a week after the massacre at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, where, the authorities say, a former student, Nikolas Cruz, killed 17 people with a semiautomatic rifle. A neighbor of Mr. Cruz’s [told The Miami Herald](#) that he played video games, often violent ones, for up to 15 hours a day.

# Instructional Strategies

- + develop a common language
- + how to read and annotate an argument
- + how to organize ideas
- + how to draft an argument
- + how to revise an argument
- + [argument toolbox](#)



# Student Work - Oration

*“Football is a dangerous sport that shouldn't be played unless contact rules are changed to make the game safer, in which everyone should play the sport because it teaches amazing life values and keeps you healthy.” [– Joe, 8th Grader](#)*



# Student Review & Revision

The Original Rubric



Peer, self, and teacher review  
checklists & comment stems

Writable

8

DogeMasterGaming

Submission 1 of 1

PREV

NEXT

Assignments / Dashboard / Review

ORATION (8TH WINTER)

Oration

REVIEW SUBMISSION

Did you know that about 1,000,000 people immigrate why they immigrate is to have freedom, equality, and have a family but can't because of their situation, that come in, they have to ask for access and they are so when applying. I think this is wrong, I think that if an i embraced, not shunned and looked down upon. I thir and not have to wait about 3 years or more. Not only marrying a U.S resident, it's also unfair that Canada t

3-STAR Proficient: The claim is precise and knowledgeable but lacks insight.

Choose a comment stem:

1. One thing I'd like to understand about your claim is ...

2. One way to make your claim more insightful is to ...

3. You could make your claim more precise by ...

No thanks, I'll write my own.

Review

1 Revision

Ready to Review

MY REVIEW

Write an argument in response to a text you have read, or about a topic on which opinions could vary.

1. The writer presents an insightful, sophisticated, precise, and knowledgeable claim.

2. The writer thoroughly support inferences or conclusions using substantial and relevant textual evidence.

# Anonymous, Structured, & Authentic

**The writer presents an insightful, sophisticated, precise, and knowledgeable claim.**

*ALICE B: “You have a decent claim, but are you saying that football should continue or there has to be contact rules so football can be safer. You have to be more specific. I don't want to be misguided and forget that football shouldn't be played.”*

**The writer provides an insightful and thought-provoking analysis of the topic/text, and uses valid and persuasive reasoning to connect evidence with the claim.**

*SAMUEL W: “The commentary isn't as thought provoking as the evidence is. I suggest that you get opinionated and try to really focus on the commentary specific to each piece of evidence. Also, remember that this is a text meant to read. Write it like it is meant to be read.”*

**The writer organizes the claims, counterclaims, reasons, and evidence to thoroughly develop the argument, using a purposeful and logical progression of ideas from beginning to end.**

*FAITH G: “Your essay might flow better if you put the paragraphs where you put your own opinion or what you support first then get into the paragraphs that discuss the negative sides to football which was your first and second paragraphs. ”*

# Everything you need to organize & measure writing

Writable

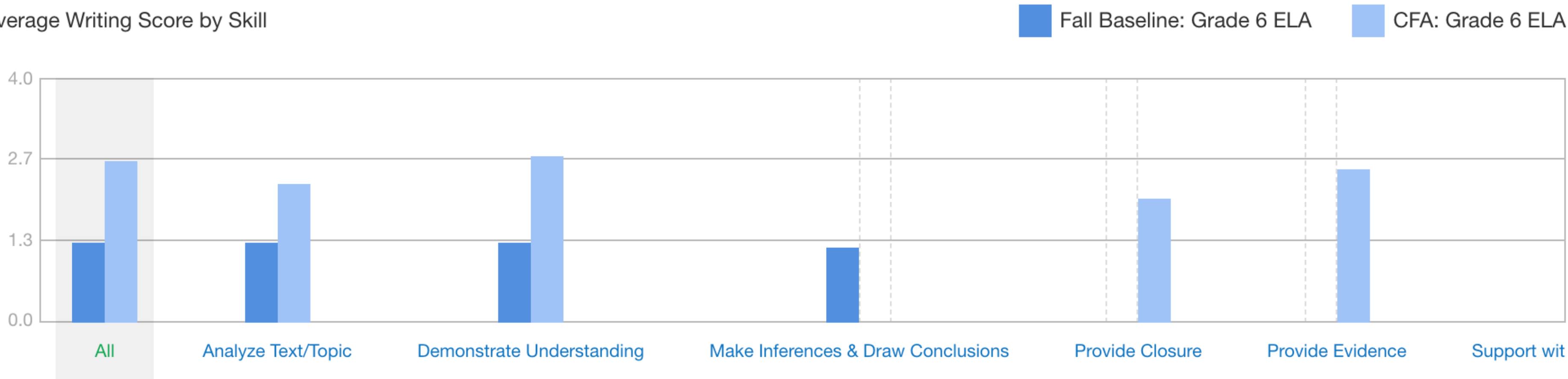
My Assignments Explore Classes Report

Elizabeth Crooks ▼



Category Skill Standard

Average Writing Score by Skill



Search...

Students Checklists Questions

Scores for All

1. My essay demonstrates sophisticated understanding of theme/central ideas and their development over the course of the text.
2. I use focused insightful textual evidence that clearly supports my analysis.
3. I provide commentary that clearly connects evidence to an insightful analysis.



Chat with Us

# The Results

# What We Saw

## 30% increase

In district calibrated assessments

## 1.7x higher growth

Cohorts using Writable vs. not using

## SBAC scores

Increase by 3% in year 1.

## Engagement

Student motivation grew

## 8th Grade Readiness

Curriculum shift in 8<sup>th</sup> due to 7<sup>th</sup> grade success.



# Questions?



**Thank you.**

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<https://app.getwritable.com/login/collections/Teacher3>

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