

Differentiation for readers below grade level

The most likely reason that a middle school student will be reading below grade level is because he or she is having fluency issues. Amplify's solution for this widespread problem with fluency across middle school readers is to build many common instructional experiences for the entire class, that serve as fluency practice, but that are also very rich experiences for students who are more advanced readers.

It is very important for the teacher to treat these engaging audio and video readings, and opportunities to interpret the text through drama, as both common instructional experiences for all students, and, at the same time, as opportunities to differentiate instruction for students who require fluency training because they are reading below grade level. For those students, the teacher will need to take extra care to differentiate instruction by ensuring that those students who require this fluency training will follow along word by word when listening to the professional actor read, and will practice the same piece of text aloud repeatedly until he or she can read it with appropriate expression. Activities involving listening to talented actors read text and acting out the text are fun—and they should be—but they need to be approached with extra intensity by students working on fluency skills.

The good news about developing fluency skills is that almost every student will see improvement with repeated practice with complex text. And Amplify ELA provides plenty of complex text, and plenty of opportunities for practice. Amplify's almost daily comprehension checks should show whether or not this in-class practice is sufficient. If a student is not seeing improvement after two months of in-class fluency practice, or, if a student scores below proficient on the benchmark reading test, that student should take advantage of the audio recordings of professional actors embedded in the eReader to continue this fluency training outside of class, particularly when completing the Solo independent reading. Again, it is important to remind students that the only way to make progress in their fluency skill is to follow along in the text, putting a finger on each word as the actor says it aloud; as tempting as it might be, they can't listen to the readings while cooking dinner or going for a walk.

Teachers can further accelerate students' progress in fluency skills by assigning students short pieces of text to practice and prepare for presentations during Flex Days. Such passages can be as short of 6-7 lines and thus take very limited time for a teacher to assess student performance and ensure additional intensive practice.

For students who require further instruction in foundational skills, Amplify can provide a supplementary intervention called Burst:Reading.