

Differentiation strategies

Differentiation for students with disabilities

In cases when Amplify's UDL cannot meet the needs of all learners, Amplify ELA has provided instructional materials that enable teachers to provide differentiated instruction that provides access for all students to meet grade-level standards. In general, that differentiation is found in two places:

1. Teacher-facing differentiation:

- a. Throughout Amplify's embedded Instructional Guides, teacher briefs, and other supports, curriculum developers have written TIPS directly to the teacher about how to change an instructional experience to make it more appropriate for students with disabilities, for students reading below grade level, for advanced students and for English learners. These TIPS range from suggestions about grouping students, to focusing different students on particular parts of a text, to stopping before a discussion to do partner read-alouds. Teachers will find these TIPS not as generalized ways to reach these groups, but as highly contextualized moments when a particular adjustment will make a significant difference for students' access.
- b. *Mastering Conventions*: This four-volume resource is a teacher-facing book of exercises tied to the language standards related to grammar and also provides a remedial spelling program. The grammar section and the lesson brief every Flex Day provide a schedule for teaching the essential grade-level language standards and provides suggestions for reviewing earlier grade standards. Teachers can find the materials for teaching these grade-level standards in each Flex Day. For further review of language standards, teachers can access the four-volume *Mastering Conventions* in the lesson materials in the final lesson of Get Started, Unit A, Sub-unit 1. The grammar section above and the lesson brief for every Flex Day describe the various ways a teacher can put this resource to use.

2. Student-facing differentiation:

- a. In the lessons, teachers will find activities with supports particularly designed for ELs and also extra challenges for advanced students. In certain cases, the activities with supports for ELs are often also useful for students with disabilities or students reading below grade level. Direction in the Differentiation section of the Lesson Brief directs teachers when these differentiated student materials are helpful.
- b. During Flex Days, lessons inserted every five or so days in most units, teachers will find a range of Revision Assignments, labeled by writing skill that they can assign to students depending on what they see in student writing. These Revision Assignments are part of Amplify's larger feedback system and are described above in that section. Students have student-facing versions of these Revision Assignments in their materials section of their lesson briefs, and teachers can simply direct students to the skill on which they should work.

- c. In the more than 600 books in the Amplify Library, in the more than a dozen games, and in the Vocab app, students will find a wide range of leveled material that they can self-select on their own based on interest (in the library) and in response to automated feedback (in the games and in the Vocabulary app and activities).

3. Supplementary materials for basic foundational skills:

For students who need instruction in grade 2-5 foundational skills, Amplify can provide a supplementary intervention called Burst:Reading.

What does differentiation look like in the platform?

Every lesson brief has a section called, "Differentiation." When the teacher scrolls down in the lesson brief, he or she will see that section, collapsed, and it looks like this:

The screenshot displays the Amplify ELA platform interface for an 8th-grade lesson. The top navigation bar includes a hamburger menu, '8th Grade', the 'Amplify ELA CALIFORNIA EDITION' logo, and a user profile icon. Below the navigation is a horizontal toolbar with icons for a checklist, two people, a speech bubble, a lightbulb, a group of people, a single person, a group of people, a pencil, and a pencil with an eraser. The main content area is divided into several sections:

- Prep** (SEE MORE): Contains instructions on breaking the class into groups of four and printing group work handouts.
- Materials** (SEE MORE): Lists resources such as 'Sample Word Web: "sil...', 'Group Work Handouts', 'Writing Prompt Instru...', and 'Silence Dogood's First ...'.
- Words to Use** (SEE MORE): Lists 'Contagious', 'Attained', 'Homespun', and 'Schemes'.
- Differentiation** (SEE MORE): This section is highlighted with a blue box and a blue arrow pointing to it from below. It states: 'This lesson includes alternate Writing Prompts for ELL students at three levels and Advanced'.
- Skills & Standards** (SEE MORE): Lists 'Writing | Response to Text / Skill: Use of evidence' and 'Sub-skill: Describe what you notice'.
- Unplugged?**: A partially visible section at the bottom left.

The 'Differentiation' section is currently collapsed, and a blue box highlights its content, which is also shown in a larger view below the main screenshot.

When the teacher clicks on the Differentiation part of the lesson brief, it will expand and provide direction for the teacher about where to find specific teacher and student facing differentiation within the lessons. It will look like this:

The screenshot shows a user interface for a lesson brief. At the top, there is a navigation bar with a hamburger menu, '8th Grade', and a series of icons representing different features. The main content area is titled 'Differentiation' and contains several paragraphs of text providing differentiation strategies for ELL students and Advanced Learners. At the bottom, there is a green button labeled 'Unplugged?' and a 'SEE MORE' link. A 'View Credits' link is also visible at the bottom right.

Differentiation

This lesson includes alternate Writing Prompts for ELL students at three levels and Advanced Learners.

- **Writing:** This Writing Prompt provides quotes from the text and sentence starters as scaffolding to help students organize their writing. (ELL Students at the Emerging Level)
- **Writing:** This Writing Prompt directs students to a specific section of the passage to help students organize their writing. (ELL Students at the Expanding Level)
- ▶ **Writing:** This Writing Prompt provides sentence starters as scaffolding to help students organize their writing. (ELL Students at the Bridging Level)

Additional Text Writing Prompt: This Writing Prompt has students find evidence from multiple passages to explain how they know that Franklin was trying to create a likable character. (Advanced Learners)

(Review Solo) TIP: ELL students should be assigned to work with non-ELL students or ELL students at a different level. (ELL)

(Present: Listen to Dogood's First Letter) TIP: You may choose to play this audio more than once to support students' language acquisition and comprehension skills. (ELL)

(Group: Paraphrase Paragraph 4) TIP: ELL students should be assigned to work with non-ELL students or ELL students at a different level. (ELL)

(Group: Paraphrase Paragraph 4) TIP: You may choose to have students work in pairs in each group and paraphrase 2 phrases with their partner. (Students Below Grade Level in Reading)

● ■ **Independent Work: Why Silence is Likable** TIP: This lesson provides an alternate activity that has sections from the text bolded for students to choose from and explain. (ELL)

Unplugged? [SEE MORE](#)

[View Credits](#)

When the teacher clicks into the lesson itself, he or she will see activities with extra supports indicated with + signs. They look like this:



When the teacher clicks on these + icons, he or she will see shapes to indicate for what level of EL the activity is differentiated.

The circle ● indicates an activity at the Emerging level.

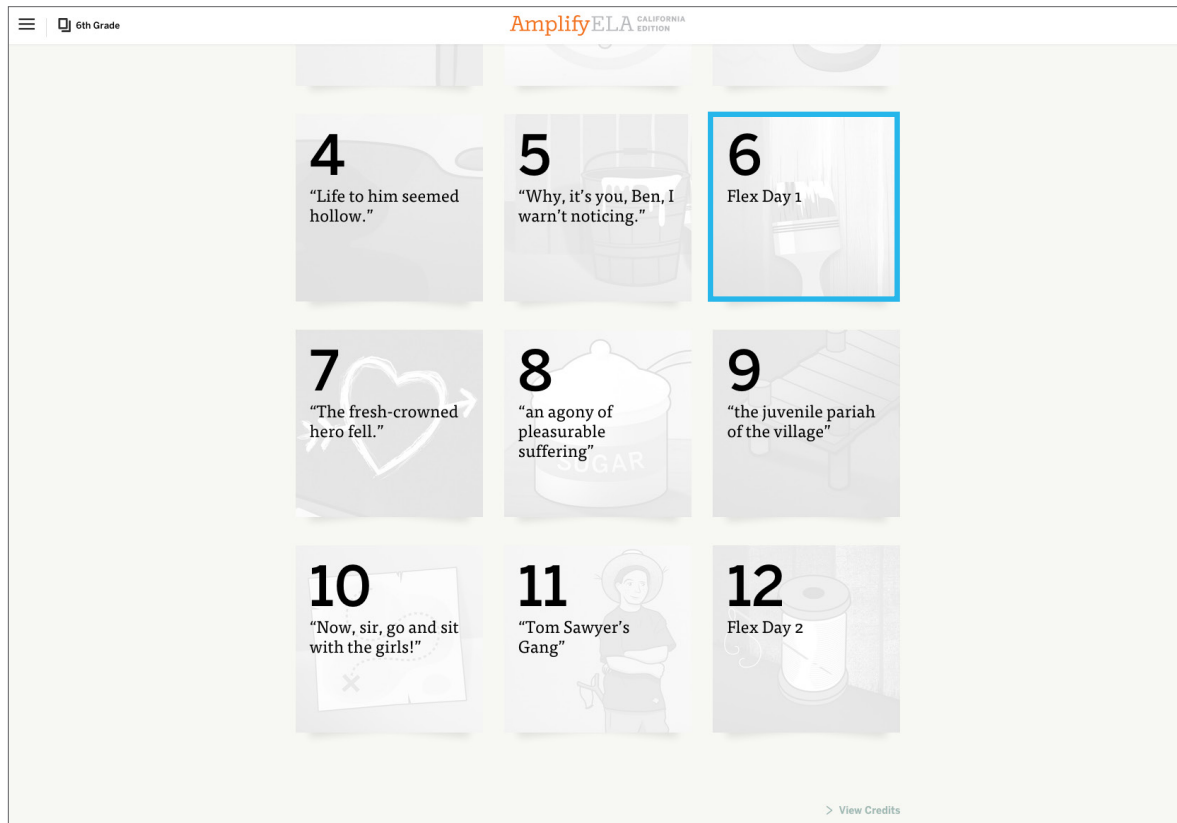
The square ■ indicates an activity at the Expanding level.

The triangle ► indicates an activity at the Bridging level.

The teacher-view will show the teacher a statement that also includes words that state the level of the activity; the student-facing material will only be differentiated with the shapes. The activities will always be presented in the same order, with the Emerging activity first.

Following the differentiated writing prompts for ELs, teachers will find one or two differentiated prompts for advanced students. In these writing prompts for advanced students, both Challenge Prompts and Additional Texts Writing Prompts appear in the same sequence as the + EL differentiated activities, and thus there is no stigma attached to students opening the supported prompts and using them. All students, regardless of which of the differentiated writing prompts they work with, will end up with pieces of writing on the same topic and texts, which can be read aloud in the sharing session that follows.

Throughout the lesson cycle, generally, every 5-6 days, teachers will see Flex Days. On those days, teachers will find a schedule and materials for teaching grade-level standards for remediating earlier language standards and for moving onto other instructional options once students have mastered the language standards.



When appropriate, the differentiation part of the Lesson Brief will guide teachers to use the supported versions of the writing prompts for Students with Disabilities even though these have been designed most directly for different levels of ELs. These student-facing materials are often useful for any student who needs extra support with language to write about complex text because they provide scaffolds such as word banks, sentence frames, and shortened texts. Sometimes, these scaffolded writing prompts break up a prompt into more easily digestible sections or simplify the language of the prompt. They are described in the sub-section on differentiation for ELs later in this section.

What is key about the range of differentiated writing prompts is that they make it possible for each student to produce writing in response to every writing prompt so that teachers have a starting point from which to identify the students' strengths and build those skills from the students' authentic writing. See the feedback section above for more information about Amplify's approach to feedback. It is particularly important for

Students with Disabilities that Amplify approaches learning skills from a position of identifying strengths, and by engaging students in activities in which they are most likely to show a skill emerging when writing about something that holds meaning for them.

In Section III of this guide, you will find student work that teachers can use with students to show them examples of what it looks like when particular skills emerge in writing. Amplify's guide to student work helps teachers help students learn new skills by picking up on what is working in a piece of writing, often ignoring deficits, and building stronger pieces from those strengths.

Once students have produced writing, utilizing the range of scaffolded prompts, Amplify ELA provides teachers with rubrics, to assess students and a wide range of Revision Assignments, that are organized by skill, that teachers assign to students based on their assessment of the students' writing. Students use the Revision Assignments to work on a skill in their own writing, a much more powerful way of learning a skill than by simply doing grammar exercises. When students with disabilities may be missing foundational language skills and need more background in order to understand the language terms in the Revision Assignment, Amplify ELA provides a four-volume resource of Grammar exercises called, *Mastering Conventions*, aligned to the Revision Assignments that shows teachers how to explicitly teach each of the foundational language skills back to the third-grade language standards. As a result, teachers have a straightforward adjustable plan to approach the skill development needs of students with disabilities.

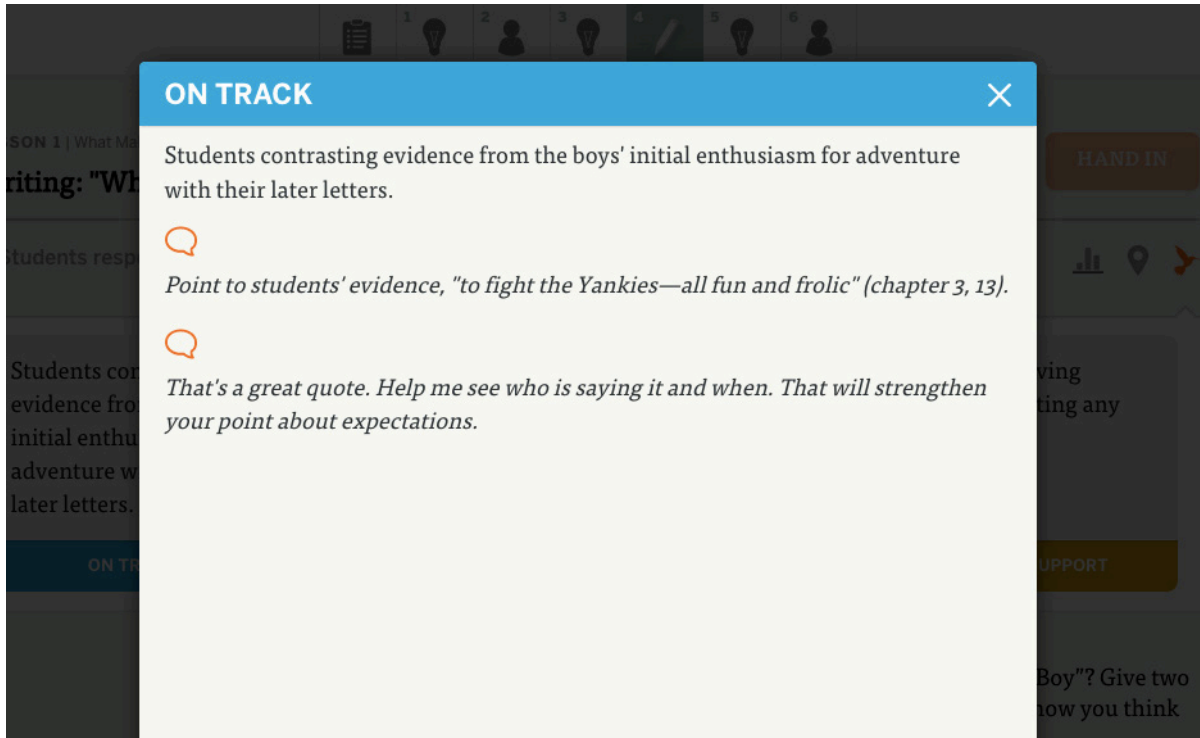
The Amplify program knows how hard it is for teachers to find time to do this differentiated instruction and so builds in Flex Days in the section on the UDL structure of the Amplify ELA lesson, described above, for teachers to work with small groups or individuals on these varied needs for foundational skills. For students who require instruction in grade 2-5 foundational skills, Amplify can provide a supplementary intervention called Burst:Reading.

Differentiation for advanced students

Because advanced students are often able to pursue academic study more independently, there are many ways for teachers to offer differentiated content to these students. The Amplify Library offer 642 books for independent reading. Within that collection, there are 15 curated Lapham's Archives, each including 10-30 sources, textual and multimedia, focused around a topic for independent study. These topics are linked to the texts studied in the units, and teachers can choose to direct students to explore them at any time. Depending on how independently a particular advanced student is prepared to work, a teachers can also choose to have that student pursue independent research in these collections, while the rest of the class follows along the more structured research mapped out in the lessons of the Collections units.

Within the lessons themselves, there are two kinds of teacher-facing content that directs teachers to differentiate content for advanced students:

1. Over-the-shoulder conferences for On Track Students. These contextualized tips for working with students who are “on track” during writing prompts and other activities, provide specific guidance for the teacher about how to push the student to probe more deeply into this particular text or topic.



2. Throughout the lessons, in the Instructional Guide, the teacher will find challenge questions at the end of a list of discussion questions to push a particularly engaged class or group of students a little further.

Within the lessons, teachers will also find two kinds of student-facing differentiated content associated with Writing Prompts. The first adds a little challenge, the second, a much more significant one, that also may add time to the activity if a student finds it especially engaging:

1. Challenge Writing Prompts are found as the fourth of the differentiated prompts. When students click on that activity, they find a prompt that is similar to the base writing prompt but has a little extra challenge. So, for example, the main writing prompt might ask students to support a claim, indicating a counter claim. The challenge prompt may ask students to go so far as to actually write the argument from one perspective and then write it from the other perspectives — in both cases, including a counter claim.

The screenshot shows a digital interface for an 8th-grade lesson. At the top, it says "8th Grade" and "LESSON 9 | From Parlor Trick to Science". The main heading is "Writing: Challenge (12 min)" with a "HAND IN" button. Below this, a note states: "This alternate Writing Prompt will be best for advanced students who need an extra challenge, students who finish early, or students wanting to go one step further." A link to a Loom video is provided. The challenge is divided into six numbered steps:

1. Create a new workspace and title it "Parlor Trick to Science."
2. Add the following source to your workspace: "Franklin the Scientist"
3. Copy and paste the prompt into your workspace.
4. Copy and paste the paragraph you wrote earlier in this lesson.
5. Write a second paragraph that answers the prompt by discussing evidence from this source.
6. When you finish, copy both paragraphs, paste them into the space below, and hand in your work.

Below the steps, the prompt reads: "Reread 'Franklin and the Socratic Method.' What connections can you make between the Socratic method and Franklin's scientific study of static electricity? How might the Socratic method help Franklin in this or other scientific experiments? Use evidence from both texts in your answer." It also instructs students to paste their writing into a specific workspace. At the bottom, there is a text editor with a "Word Count: 2" indicator.

2. Additional Text Prompts actually ask students to consider an additional text to answer the prompt. The additional prompt is short and is presented right there for the student to read. Sometimes, it may be something the student has read earlier and the challenge is for the student to synthesize the perspective of both texts. Other times, the challenge is for the advanced student to confront a text cold and consider along with a text that he or she has been studying with his or her class. If the student finds the new text especially intriguing, he or she may want to spend more time close-reading it and these Additional Text Prompts may be sources of work that go beyond the classroom.

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.

Differentiation for English Learners

Over the past decade, the number of English Learners (ELs) has grown significantly across the United States. Roughly one in four students in California is identified as an EL. Regardless of their level of English language proficiency, these students are exposed to, and expected to succeed in, California Common Core-aligned instruction. ELs face major challenges as they work to acquire conversational skills and the academic language necessary to learn content in English. To ensure ELs achieve academic success, Amplify ELA incorporates differentiated access strategies, which guide the teacher to adjust instruction so that ELs may access content at the same pace as their English-proficient classmates. The goal of differentiated instruction is to present the same content in different ways and at different language levels, while maintaining academic rigor and high cognitive demand. Differentiated access strategies reduce the language demands of learning by modifying either the process (how content is being learned) or the product (how students show what they have learned), while keeping the content and goals of the learning the same. Amplify encourages teachers to use a wide variety of differentiation strategies to ensure ELs' success. Amplify focuses on four high-leverage strategies:

- **Differentiated Access Strategy 1:** Modified prompts
- **Differentiated Access Strategy 2:** Language production supports
- **Differentiated Access Strategy 3:** Reduced text-processing demands
- **Differentiated Access Strategy 4:** Alternative vocabulary exercises

Amplify's differentiated access strategies reduce linguistic barriers to mastering the core ELA lessons, and they are woven into the curriculum, making them easy to implement according to ELs' individual needs. They are marked explicitly with a + sign on the activity icon for student-facing material or "EL Tip," for teacher-facing material, alerting teachers to moments when ELs may need something different in order for them to reach the same learning objectives as their English-proficient peers.



Differentiated Access Strategy 1: Modified prompts**Teachers adjust the wording of questions and writing assignments to ensure they are comprehensible to ELs.**

ELs are capable of meeting the same academic challenges as their English-proficient peers. However, complex language can impede ELs' ability to understand what is asked of them. The goal of this strategy is to keep cognitive demand high while reducing linguistic barriers to comprehension: ELs do complex, challenging work, but explanations of what to do are stated in more transparent language.

Example 1: Poetry & Poe: Sub-unit 4, Lesson 2, Activity 6 (ALT: Emerging-Writing)

In this lesson, the teacher has the option of assigning ELs an alternative writing prompt. The original writing assignment asks students to consider three details from the first 18 lines of the poem that they would want to include if they were directing a movie version. The goal is to give the imaginary audience "a clear sense of what the narrator is feeling and experiencing." In the alternative assignment, ELs are asked to consider directly what particular lines in the poem indicate what the narrator is feeling. The potentially confusing premise that they are movie directors is eliminated, and the assignment is stated in two short, clear sentences, giving ELs access to the core analytical goal: using textual evidence to infer a character's feelings.

Example 2: Tom & Sherlock: Sub-unit 1, Lesson 5, Activities 4-6

In this lesson, students write about the ways Tom Sawyer is tricky and the character traits he exhibits when doing tricky things. The writing prompt asks students to find a moment when Tom shows his trickiness and to describe what is occurring. The goal is to push students to use descriptive language, going beyond simply repeating that Tom is tricky, while drawing on evidence from the text. This writing prompt is intentionally open-ended, allowing students to select a "tricky" moment to describe. Such open-ended prompts can be overwhelming for ELs. In the alternative writing assignment, ELs are guided in two ways. First, the modified prompt is very focused and clear, directing ELs to focus on one specific tricky incident, "Describe Tom's whitewashing trick. Use evidence from the text." Second, the modified prompt uses language production supports (Differentiated Access Strategy 3) to provide additional linguistic support and to guide and structure ELs' writing:

In order to convince his friends to whitewashing the fence for him, Tom _____.

He convinces his friends by saying _____.

He convinces his friends by (include an action) _____.

The modified prompt also helps ELs focus their cognitive energies by specifically indicating the type of textual evidence they need to look for to support their description (e.g., a statement or an action). The supports provided by this modified prompt allow ELs to engage with the text in a meaningful way, while also allowing them to demonstrate their understanding of the material.

Example 3: Biography & Literature: Sub-unit 1, Lesson 1, Activities 9-13

In the original prompt, students are asked to use evidence from the focal text to respond to the question, “What does Isaacson mean when he calls Franklin ‘the founding father who winks at us’ (1)?” In the alternative version of this writing assignment, the same task is offered with greater structure: ELs respond to three separate questions, prompting them to (1) briefly answer the original question, (2) choose among three text quotations to justify the answer, and (3) explain the significance of the chosen pieces of evidence. This broken-down version of the prompt makes the requirements for a successful answer more transparent. Together, these modifications tear down language barriers and enable ELs to perform the same cognitive work as their English-proficient peers.

Example 4: Reading the Novel: Sub-unit 1, Lesson 4, Activity 6 (ALT: Expanding-Writing)

In the original prompt, students are asked to use evidence from the focal text to analyze M.C. Higgins’ feelings toward his father. The original prompt is: “M.C. feels both a ‘sullen anger at his father and an abiding admiration at the same time.’ Based on your reading, does M.C. think his father is his opponent or his ally? Make sure you cite textual evidence to support your answer.”

In the alternative version of this writing assignment, ELs are asked directly if M.C. thinks his father is helpful or harmful. The potentially confusing language of opponent and ally are eliminated, allowing ELs to focus less on figuring out the question and more on answering it.

Differentiated Access Strategy 2: Language production supports**Teachers provide sentence frames and word banks to enable ELs to produce linguistically complex writing and speech.**

All people can comprehend more language than they can produce. Even adults know what it’s like to understand a word that they have never used themselves, or to be unable to imitate an accent that they can perfectly comprehend. ELs are no different: they may understand very well what is asked of them but be unsure of how to convey their understanding. Word banks and sentence frames help eliminate linguistic barriers to ELs showing what they know. Students can use these linguistic scaffolds to produce writing and speech beyond what they could have done independently, giving the teacher a better sense of where their true understanding is.

Example 1: Tom & Sherlock: Sub-unit 1, Lesson 8, Activities 3-7

For this alternative writing activity, ELs are initially provided with the original, linguistically complex prompt: “Describe the way Tom acts in response to Aunt Polly’s accusation and explain what his response shows about him.” Students then are given three simple, focal questions and corresponding sentence frames to help them structure a complete answer:

1. Why does Aunt Polly accuse Tom?
2. How does Tom respond?
3. What does Tom's response show you about him?
 - Aunt Polly accuses Tom because _____.
 - Tom responds to Aunt Polly's accusation by _____.
 - This shows me that Tom is _____.

Through the sentence frames, ELs are enabled to clearly respond to each part of the prompt. They are also seeing what well-formed sentences look like, including how to use part of the question in their response. This practice will help them produce similar writing with more independence later on.

Example 2: Brain Science: Sub-unit 1, Lesson 11, Activity 1, Card 1-EL TIP

In this activity, students are asked to demonstrate their understanding of two competing theories of the brain each held by a group of 19th-century scientists, the Phrenologists and Whole Brainers. Students are asked to list the character traits of each theory and then to illustrate both theories, showing two facts for each theory. Added support is provided for ELs through the activity's EL Tip. The EL Tip suggests that the teacher develop a list of strengths and weaknesses of each theory for students to reference as they work. Word banks such as the one suggested in this EL Tip effectively support ELs in readily accessing and producing challenging academic terminology as they complete classroom activities and assignments.

Example 3: Biography & Literature: Sub-unit 1, Lesson 3, Activity 8

This alternative prompt uses the original question, "Why did Franklin create Silence Dogood to express his ideas?", but offers ELs two possible sentence frames to begin their response: "Franklin created Silence Dogood to share his ideas because..." or "Silence Dogood shares Franklin's ideas for him because...". By giving ELs multiple production options, the alternative assignment enables them to take increasing ownership over their use of English, while still allowing them to produce more than they could have on their own.

Example 4: Reading the Novel: Sub-unit 1, Lesson 7, Activity 1

In this activity students discuss with a partner what they noted about M.C. Higgins when they read Chapter 5. Students work with their partners to make connections and/or contrasts between selected passages. Teachers may direct their ELs to a page that offers a list of sentence starters to facilitate these partner discussions:

Two places that connect in the text are _____ and _____.

They connect because _____.

Did you find a place in the text that connects to mine?

What might we share with the class?

Sentence frames help ELs to produce more clear, formal, and linguistically complex speech.

Example 5: Tom & Sherlock: Sub-unit 1, Lesson 1, Activity 5, Card 2

In this activity students are discussing Tom Sawyer's character traits. Amplify ELA provides a word bank of possible character traits to help EL students describe what Tom is like and participate in the class discussion.

Examples of character traits:

- Sneaky
- Kind
- Shy
- Tricky
- Mischievous
- Clumsy
- Disobedient
- Happy
- Funny
- Honest
- Liar
- Smart
- Angry
- Clever
- Obedient
- Proud

Differentiated Access Strategy 3: Reduced text-processing demands

Teachers (1) highlight portions of text for ELs to focus in on, and (2) pre-select key vocabulary for ELs to look for.

Reducing text-processing demands makes content accessible to ELs. Often, ELs are confronted with material that is beyond their independent reading levels and must use it to answer a question or study an idea. If they must wade through an entire text word by word, they may become exhausted and discouraged, and could miss the most important parts of the passage entirely. By reducing the amount of text, providing basic definitions of unknown words, or highlighting a certain area of text to focus in on, teachers ensure that ELs have less language to decipher and can attend to the content. These practices reduce unnecessary complexity, but still require ELs to engage with challenging concepts and skills appropriate to their grade level.

Example 1: The Greeks: Sub-unit 2, Lesson 2, Activity 1, Card 1, EL TIP

In this lesson, the class is asked to look at a section of *The Odyssey* and analyze why the Cyclops should welcome the Achaeans. The teacher can direct ELs to focus only on paragraphs 23 and 24 as they search for evidence. This allows ELs to zoom in to the necessary, relevant information and answer the questions based on evidence in the text, without overloading them with excess language demands.

Example 2: Red Scarf Girl & Narrative: Sub-unit 3, Lesson 4, Activity 3 (ALT-Writing Prompt)

In this lesson, the class is asked to look at a portion of the text and write a description of the emotions they think the character feels. The teacher directs ELs to look for specific terms or phrases within the passage, like “That poor guy” and, “but I’d just die if somebody cut my pants open in front of everybody like that.” By providing these key words, along with sentence frames to initiate writing, ELs can more easily locate evidence and turn their attention to the real task: producing quality descriptions of a character’s feelings.

Differentiated Access Strategy 4: Alternative vocabulary exercises

Teachers ensure their ELs complete daily vocabulary practice targeted to their level of English proficiency. More advanced ELs may do the mainstream vocabulary work; ELs with less English knowledge may use the Word Match vocabulary game.

While all students in Amplify classrooms work on vocabulary every day, the core ELA lessons also include alternative vocabulary work specifically for ELs. Like the mainstream vocabulary words, the words chosen for ELs to study are essential to understanding the passage and will appear in many texts students encounter in the future, but are likely to already be familiar to non-ELs and unfamiliar to ELs.

Example: Red Scarf Girl & Narrative: Sub-unit 1–Vocabulary, Lesson 1, Activity 1, Word Match App

The Word Match app appears throughout Amplify vocabulary lessons and targets beginner and intermediate ELs. Through this app, ELs learn five words from the text of that day’s lesson. Learning occurs as ELs experience four additional methods for understanding essential vocabulary: pictures, example sentences, Spanish translations, and simple English definitions. These multiple expressions of meaning give ELs many opportunities to deepen their grasp of new words, and allows Spanish-speaking ELs (the largest group of ELs in the U.S.), to make use of their home-language skills. The EL vocabulary exercises are also followed with immediate practice opportunities to reinforce the words’ meanings. In this lesson, ELs learn about more common words such as *leader*, *blackboard*, and *scant* as they navigate at their own pace through the Word Match app activities. The interactive and highly visual activities included in the Word Match app move beyond memorization to support ELs’ deeper learning of key vocabulary and their meaning.

Differentiation for students of different grade levels in the same classroom

Combination classrooms are those in which students of a similar age are taught together under a single teacher. Proponents of alternative grouping approaches maintain that multigrade or multiage grouping is better “aligned with children’s natural groupings and learning tendencies” (Ong, Allison, & Haladyna, 2000). While multiage or combination classes may provide children with social and learning environments in which they can progress at their own pace, they present unique implementation challenges to teachers and administrators. Additional challenges are posed by the testing requirements set forth by the No Child Left Behind Act and the very specific grade-level expectations outlined in the CCSS (Mariano & Kirby, 2009). The CA CCSS and CCSS both lay out particular progressions by grade.

By looking at the program maps in Section 1, a teacher can see that each grade level presents units that challenge students to read within the middle school grade band—starting a little lower in sixth grade and pushing a little bit higher in eighth grade. So, any student at any middle school grade level will have sufficient challenge with complex text when tackling any of the units in any of the three grades of Amplify’s program. And, given the flexibility presented by the differentiation for advanced students in every unit, a teacher could teach a group of sixth- and seventh-graders, using the sixth-grade content, maintaining one classroom community around shared content while still pushing seventh-grade advanced students to a sufficient challenge using that differentiated content. And, during Flex Days, the teacher could provide appropriate grade-level content, as indicated by the language standard-based pacing map.

But, in order for students to address the specific requirements of each of the grade-level standards, they need to complete the activities in the way that they are written for their particular grades. So, ultimately, if teaching two grades in the same classroom, the teacher can pull together the two grades around shared content and sufficiently challenge students across both grades; however, in order to fully teach the standards of each grade, the teacher will need to teach the separate content from each grade’s units.