

Pedagogical approach

Five themes of ELA instruction

The California Common Core State Standards (CA CCSS) provide clear, specific information to help teachers challenge their students with instruction and learning activities that will prepare them for the demands of college and career. The mastery of this level of work also suggests the nurturing of a common student mindset toward learning present throughout all of the standards: a strong sense of engagement, a drive to investigate and express new ideas, and an understanding of language as a rich resource. To ensure a robust ELA program that meets the CA CCSS and nurtures this type of learner, the Amplify ELA curriculum focuses on five key themes that cut across its varied Learning Experiences: meaning making, language development, effective expression, content knowledge, and foundational skills.

The Amplify ELA lessons utilize a variety of Learning Experiences to target these themes, repeating types of Learning Experiences so that students become good at learning itself, more self-directed and purposeful the more times that they see what they gain from each one of these experiences.

These Learning Experiences are primary ways in which students engage in close reading and communicating about complex text. The Amplify ELA program has other instructional modes, including vocabulary and grammar instruction, independent learning, Quests, games, and more—but these Learning Experiences (described below) are at the heart of the instructional experience in the Amplify ELA curriculum.

- 1. Working With Text Out Loud:** In these Learning Experiences, students listen to the text, hear its cadences, and take in its meaning and interpret it based on how it sounds. These activities often occur in the beginning of a unit and in the beginning of class to make sure students develop fluency with a new type of text.
- 2. Working Visually:** In these Learning Experiences, students work out their readings of a text in visual ways—sometimes in simple charts and sometimes in more elaborate digital apps.
- 3. Working With Text as Theater:** In these Learning Experiences, students show their interpretation of a text by acting it out.
- 4. Choosing the Best Evidence:** In these Learning Experiences, students look through text to find the evidence that will best support a claim or develop a topic. They use the tools of highlighting and annotating.
- 5. Using the Text as Referee:** In these Learning Experiences, students try to figure out the author's intended meaning—often comparing two or more paraphrases to the author's actual words to figure out which one is closer to his or her real meaning.

6. **Writing for an Audience:** In these Learning Experiences, students describe a fully developed idea, using convincing evidence, so that they can communicate clearly and powerfully to a listener or reader.
7. **Revision:** In these Learning Experiences, students change, delete, and reorder text; they consider the impact of these changes on the clarity and power of their communication.
8. **Debate:** In these Learning Experiences, students organize their ideas and then present them in structured back-and-forth conversations with other students about open-ended topics.

As teachers prepare to introduce students to the range of texts in each grade of instruction and plan each activity, they should ask the following questions and use the guidance in each chart to target these themes throughout their teaching.

THEME: Meaning making

Ask yourself: How can I use these materials to make my students feel excited, challenged, and driven to *make meaning* from the texts they encounter in my class?

Close reading should feel like putting a new recipe through its paces: mixing the ingredients, adjusting the seasoning, checking when it's ready, and eating with gusto. No one claims to understand a recipe because they read it: They first have to make it.

Similarly, the work of close reading is to extract and construct meaning from the text. You want students to assert control over their understanding and interpretation of the text, whether they are listening to Chadwick Boseman read Frederick Douglass or rereading *Phineas Gage* to figure out why their answer about the brain was different from their partner's (and who was right). You want *them* to notice (and call out) particular details; you want *them* to find a connection to something they read five pages before; and you want *them* to describe the significance of specific words and lines as they write about what Emily Dickinson meant when she described a "narrow fellow."

How do the Amplify ELA Learning Experiences and my instruction within the Learning Experiences target meaning making?

Learning Experience: Working With Text Out Loud

How does the Learning Experience target meaning making?	How can I focus my instruction on meaning making?
<p>Early unit lessons regularly have students read along while they listen to (and often watch) a dramatic reading of portions of a text. The dramatic readings focus on making meaning from the text; for example, students hear the pacing of the words and the distinction between characters' voices. The follow-up discussions challenge students to extract this meaning and compare it to the meaning they construct as they reread the text.</p>	<p>Ask specific questions as students debrief these dramatic readings, pushing students to consider how the performer interpreted the text, and how they might interpret the text.</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why did the actor speed up when he read the final sentences? • Which words did he emphasize when he read, "All men are created equal?" How would the meaning have changed if he put the emphasis on another word? • The actor read these lines with a soft voice, suggesting that Aunt Polly isn't really mad at Tom. Did anyone find evidence in the text to suggest that she is or is not mad in this moment?

Learning Experience: Choosing the Best Evidence

How does the Learning Experience target meaning making?	How can I focus my instruction on meaning making?
<p>Students practice key strategies that instill the important habit of extracting an accurate meaning from the text before developing your reader's interpretation.</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Before holding a discussion about why Mercutio curses "both [their] houses," students have time to highlight words and details from the scene that might show why he blames each house. This regular practice of highlighting before analyzing teaches students to first make close observations, then interpret. • After students find a piece of evidence to support their claim or their answer to a text-dependent question, they are regularly asked to write 1–2 sentences to explain <i>how</i> this evidence led them to this answer or connects to their claim. 	<p>Make these investigations into meaning active and engaging.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take advantage of the visual aspect of the digital annotation tools (highlighting and making a note) by pairing students to compare what they each highlighted and explain their highlighting choices. • Note the many teacher tips in the form of over-the-shoulder conferences that bring "stuck" students back to these key strategies of highlighting something specific from a contained section of text in order to determine meaning. For example: "Highlight each of the things the doctor did after Phineas had his accident. Then consider which actions show that he did not understand the cause of infection."

Learning Experience: Working With Text as Theater

How does the Learning Experience target meaning making?	How can I focus my instruction on meaning making?
<p>When students are given time and guidelines for planning and performing their own dramatic reading or performance of a section of text, they are essentially being asked to construct a meaning of that text for their audience.</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students prepare a small section of <i>A Raisin in the Sun</i> to perform. They highlight key dialogue and stage directions to understand the character, then plan movement and facial expressions to present their interpretation of the character based on their reading. • With <i>Romeo and Juliet</i>, select students pantomime the actions they identify Romeo and Juliet making in the final “death” scene while the teacher reads aloud. Then, the class discusses why they chose those actions. 	<p>Question students during their planning time, supporting them to reread, markup, and make specific decisions about how they will perform the text.</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Why does Mercutio step in with this line about ‘vile submission’? Who will he look at in this moment to show who these words are directed toward? What do the words tell you about how he feels?” <p>Use follow-up discussion about specific choices students made during their performances to focus on how they understand the text.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Tevo lunged toward Tybalt, but Katherine looked at Romeo when she spoke. Can each of you talk about what you noticed in the text when you made those different decisions?”

Learning Experience: Writing for an Authentic Audience

How does the Learning Experience target meaning making?	How can I focus my instruction on meaning making?
<p>The regular writing prompts challenge students to write from the text, shaping specific words and images from the text into evidence to support their interpretation. These are moments when students are actively working to understand the text, rather than simply presenting their finished ideas.</p>	<p>Use the model over-the-shoulder conferences in each writing prompt to ensure students are using the writing to dig back into the text to construct meaning.</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “You write Phineas’s behavior was impulsive, but I’m not sure what you mean. Look back at these paragraphs and highlight two places where you see ‘impulsive’ behavior.”

Learning Experience: Using the Text As Referee

How does the Learning Experience target meaning making?	How can I focus my instruction on meaning making?
<p>These types of activities ask students with different understandings to use the text to arrive at a consensus. They provide a clear structure and sequence for students to work together to make meaning from the text.</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the Brain Science unit, students partner with a classmate who arrives at a different answer and go through a series of repeating steps to come to a consensus. • Each paraphrase activity includes a sequence for a follow-up discussion where students compare various paraphrases to the original text and discuss how each constructs a meaning similar to the original. 	<p>Teach and then guide students to follow the discussion sequence so that each participant both explains his or her interpretation and weighs other students' interpretations as well.</p>

Learning Experience: Working Visually

How does the Learning Experience target meaning making?	How can I focus my instruction on meaning making?
<p>These activities provide various methods for students to break apart and visualize the text in ways that promote new understanding. These activities provide a visual reinforcement that close reading involves constructing meaning from the text.</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Scene of the Crime: Sherlock Holmes app asks students to physically arrange the items in a room to match their understanding to the exact description of the room in Conan Doyle's "A Speckled Band." • Students cut and paste text into a data table that indicates what Beneatha wants and what Trevor wants from one scene in <i>A Raisin in the Sun</i>. Comparing tables allows students to discuss and refine their understanding. 	<p>When students are working with these activities, ask them to explain why they put a piece of text in a particular box table or how they decided the position of something visually based on the text. During discussion, point out or project different choices students made as they broke apart or visualized the text. Have a few students explain their decisions, using the text as the basis for their explanation.</p>

THEME: Language development

Ask Yourself: How can I support a growth mindset in my students when it comes to language development—to be excited about the new ways language allows them to express themselves and understand the world around them?

The Amplify ELA vocabulary and grammar programs are designed to ensure that students learn about words and language structure as a resource for communicating and understanding ideas. The vocabulary program (including the Reveal Tool, vocabulary activities, and the vocabulary app) challenges students to rely heavily on contextual clues when trying to understand a word, inculcating the idea that words do not have one static definition. The program also allows students to work with those words that will have the most impact on their ability to understand the ideas of a text. Equally, the grammar program targets the particular skills that will immediately boost a student’s ability to communicate his or her ideas. Teachers should read the discussion about these two important programs, grammar and vocabulary, in the next section, “Skill instruction and practice.”

These core lesson experiences also open up a world of words for students and all the subtleties with which humans use language to make sense of the world. Students are challenged to work with complex texts that use difficult words with joyful exactitude. They are constantly asked to use language to express their ideas, not just find and repeat an answer. Your students will think about the precise meaning of a writer’s choice: “What does the narrator of “The Tell–Tale Heart” mean when he says he is ‘nervous,’ and do his actions help you picture what he might mean?”

- Students will consider how words may have both an explicit and a figurative meaning: “Here is a picture of a holy shrine. Why do you think Romeo calls Juliet’s hand ‘holy shrine’?”
- Students will understand how the context offers clues to the meaning of a word and lends a particular meaning to a word: “How does Douglass understand the word ‘equal,’ and does Abraham Lincoln use this word in the same way?”

These lessons combined with the grammar and vocabulary programs, are designed to foster a growth mindset toward language development, rather than an idea that language is a vast list of “words and definitions I don’t know.” As a teacher, you will find tips to support this mindset within each Learning Experience. The chart below highlights some of the activities that promote this growth mindset to language development and describes the ways in which a teacher might take full advantage of this opportunity.

How do the Amplify ELA Learning Experiences and my instruction within the Learning Experiences target language development?

Learning Experience: Working With Text Out Loud

How does the Learning Experience target language development?	How can I focus my instruction on language development?
<p>Early unit lessons regularly have students listen to (while they read along) a dramatic reading of portions of a text, giving students an auditory experience of how the writer adapts language to particular situations.</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• As the actor adapts his voice to the rhythm and tone of each character in the dramatic reading of <i>The Adventures of Tom Sawyer</i>, students hear how each character speaks using a distinct language structure different from the narrator's.• The actors performing the <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> sonnet recite to each other, adding expression and emphasis to their lines showing that their words are not an explicit discussion of a religious pilgrimage, but a figurative flirtation.	<p>Students can be resistant when writers or adults use language structures that break current grammar conventions or rely on words or syntaxes that are complex and unfamiliar. The liveliness of these performances are opportunities to discuss how language adapts to situations.</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Discuss the distinctions students heard between the narration and the dialogue. Why does Twain use different words and sentence structures when he is writing Aunt Polly's dialogue?

Learning Experience: Working Visually

How does the Learning Experience target language development?	How can I focus my instruction on language development?
<p>These activities provide various ways for students to break apart and visualize language in ways that physically remind students of the purposeful choices writers make about language.</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students break apart one of Dahl's "multi-action" sentences into simple sentences to discuss why Dahl's more complex sentence structure gives a more precise picture of how the actions are connected. 	<p>As students break apart sentence structures and pull out particular words, focus discussion on how language is adapted for particular purposes, rather than a static entity.</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Here Dahl decides to combine many actions, but here he writes sentences that each describe one action. Let's look at what he is describing and see if you have any idea about why he changes the type of sentence he is using."

Learning Experience: Writing for an Authentic Audience

How does the Learning Experience target language development?	How can I focus my instruction on language development?
<p>The writing prompts challenge students to write from the text, shaping specific words and images from the text into evidence to support their interpretation. When students write in response to the text, they actively adapt the language of the text and push the boundaries of their own language to express their ideas.</p>	<p>Use the over-the-shoulder conference models in Mastering Conventions to help students integrate new sentence structures and grammar elements into these regular writing activities.</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "It looks like the action in this sentence depends on the action in this previous sentence. I want you to combine these two sentences into one sentence, perhaps using a dependent marker like <i>because</i>, <i>when</i>, or <i>although</i>." • Use the Words to Know lists from each student's lesson materials to make suggestions for a word that a student might try to use to develop his or her ideas during the writing activity. <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "You describe the narrator as being very unsure and nervous about the police. The word 'wary' means 'cautious and suspicious.' See if you can use this word as you continue to describe the narrator."

Learning Experience: Revising

How does the Learning Experience target language development?	How can I focus my instruction on language development?
<p>During each Flex Day, students are assigned a Revision Assignment, which asks them to practice applying a taught skill to a piece of their own writing. The specific Revision Assignments that target language development allow students to gauge the impact of small adjustments in syntax or punctuation.</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One Revision Assignment asks students to find two places in their writing where they could combine two sentences that have a specific relationship to one another. When they are done, they consider the impact: which version expresses their ideas more precisely? 	<p>As students work with the Revision Assignments, support them in practicing the skill correctly and provide precise feedback on the impact of their revision.</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Before, you began the second sentence with ‘then.’ Now, the combined sentence explains Phineas got an infection <i>because</i> the doctor didn’t wash his hands. The combined sentence describes the action and explains the relationship between them.”

Learning Experience: Working With Text as Theater

How does the Learning Experience target language development?	How can I focus my instruction on language development?
<p>As students plan and perform their own dramatic reading or section of text, they must make unfamiliar words and syntaxes their own. They are adapting language to a particular purpose.</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students are encouraged to memorize the first few stanzas of Edgar Allan Poe’s poem “The Raven,” and watch crowd-sourced videos of other adolescents reciting, rapping, and singing these lines. 	<p>As students perform, encourage the class to note how each group fills the language with their own style of expression.</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Note how the young men rapping “The Raven” in one of the crowd-sourced videos make sense of Poe’s complex and archaic sentence structure by using the cadences with which they are familiar.

Learning Experience: Choosing the Best Evidence

How does the Learning Experience target language development?	How can I focus my instruction on language development?
<p>Students will learn and practice “Describe your evidence.” In other words, noting those aspects of your chosen evidence that best illustrate your idea. As they describe what they notice in those words, students are encouraged to comment at the word level, explaining how an author’s particular word choice impacts the meaning or a sentence or passage.</p>	<p>Use the over-the-shoulder conference models to challenge students to pinpoint and describe the impact of particular words or phrases in their chosen evidence.</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Which words from your quote show you that he is mad? Write two sentence to describe what you notice about these words.”

Learning Experience: Debating

How does the Learning Experience target language development?	How can I focus my instruction on language development?
<p>Students are highly engaged with these debate activities and push themselves to use language structures purposefully and respond to the specifics of what someone else has said.</p>	<p>The teacher supports will help you challenge students to further articulate their ideas and use the specific words from the text to argue a particular point.</p>

Learning Experience: Using the Text as Referee

How does the Learning Experience target language development?	How can I focus my instruction on language development?
<p>As pairs of students compare their paraphrase to the original or return to the text to resolve competing understandings, much of their discussion is at the word level, trying to determine the precise meaning of a particular word and its impact on the passage as a whole.</p>	<p>The teacher tips point out that the focus of these activities is the rich conversation that occurs as students discuss two distinct paraphrases, rather than the arrival at one correct answer. Support students to focus on a word level at moments during these discussions.</p>

THEME: Effective expression

Ask Yourself: How can I support my students in experiencing these texts and the classroom itself as a rich and varied resource for communicating, developing, and challenging their ideas and understanding?

The Amplify ELA lessons are designed to feel like a fantastic playground, where kids push their skills in order to work with the tools they have in all sorts of ways. Each learning experience prioritizes discussion as a foundational way for students to develop their ideas, understand the text, learn to reason, and foster a dynamic, academically vibrant classroom. Your students will see new opportunities to make an impact with their ideas and multiple methods to work with texts that express ideas in varied and exciting ways.

Take advantage of the Get Started lessons to teach routines and establish expectations that create a classroom community where communication is engaging, focused, and productive. Students learn the power of sharing a piece of their writing and having a peer respond by saying one way in which the writing made an effective impact on the listener. When a teacher displays a small excerpt of a student's writing on Spotlight and uses it to instruct about the effective use of a skill, students understand that this is a classroom that prioritizes *their* ideas and understanding. When teachers help students notice and value the unique perspectives their classmates developed in response to a prompt, such as “Write about one moment in school when you felt nervous,” students believe that you want them to have faith in their own observations and develop their own insights.

How do the Amplify ELA Learning Experiences and my instruction within the Learning Experiences target effective expression?

Learning Experience: Working With Text Out Loud

How does the Learning Experience target effective expression?	How can I focus my instruction on effective expression?
<p>Early lessons within a unit regularly have students listen to (while they read along) a dramatic reading of portions of a text, showing students the key connection between written and spoken language, even with complex texts.</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> When students listen to Chadwick Boseman perform Frederick Douglass, they discuss how diction, emphasis, and expression add power to Douglass' written ideas. 	<p>Remind students of these powerful readings when they are asked to do their own read-aloud or even read a piece of their writing. Encourage students to experiment with similar expressive speaking tools.</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Remember how the reader paused at places where he wanted the audience to consider his point. Find two places where <i>you</i> make a key point and add a pause when you share your piece of writing.”

Learning Experience: Working Visually

How does the Learning Experience target effective expression?	How can I focus my instruction on effective expression?
<p>These activities provide various ways for students to break the language apart and visualize it in different ways. These activities provide new and exciting mediums for students to see their ideas expressed.</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using the Tell–Tale Art app, students storyboard their understanding of the final events of “The Tell–Tale Heart.” When complete, students have an actual storyboard of their reading of the text, which may look very different from their peers’. They then compare these visualizations, returning to the text to explain and refine their perspective. 	<p>The teacher tips provide instruction on how to use visual expression of students’ understandings of the text to guide a constructive partner discussion about their distinct perspectives.</p>

Learning Experience: Writing for an Authentic Audience

How does the Learning Experience target effective expression?	How can I focus my instruction on effective expression?
<p>The writing prompts challenge students to write from the text; shaping specific words and images from the text into evidence to support their understanding and interpretation. Each writing session is followed by a sharing session, where 1–3 students read their pieces aloud and peers respond by pointing out one place where they developed or expressed an idea effectively.</p>	<p>Use the over–the–shoulder conference models and writing time expectations to ensure each student writes something during each writing activity. This regular practice solidifies the connection between reading and writing and means students quickly begin to express their unique perspectives. Reinforce this during sharing by pointing to the variety of perspectives expressed by the class.</p>

Learning Experience: Revising

How does the Learning Experience target effective expression?	How can I focus my instruction on effective expression?
<p>During each Flex Day, students have the opportunity to practice applying a taught skill to a piece of their own writing. These Revision Assignments ask them to decide which section of their writing to revise and how they would evaluate the impact of their revision. Through regular repetition, students begin to develop a critical eye toward their own writing, understanding their own voice, and how best to express their ideas.</p>	<p>Use the tips about Revision Assignments in this Teacher Program Guide to get students excited about how small revisions can help them express their ideas in writing more effectively.</p>

Learning Experience: Working With Text as Theater

How does the Learning Experience target effective expression?	How can I focus my instruction on effective expression?
<p>As students plan and perform their own dramatic reading of a section of text, the embedded instructions about the performance offer moments for performing groups to discuss how each member understands the text.</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students preparing to act out a fight scene in <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> must underline 3–5 words, phrases, or sentences where they will add emphasis during the performance. Deciding which places to emphasize becomes a rich discussion in how each student understands this scene.	<p>Teacher tips during these activities help you push students to work with the text together in order to make performing decisions.</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• “Can you say what you noticed in the text that made you decide to underline ‘boy’ for emphasis in the line ‘Boy, this shall not excuse the injuries/ That thou hast done me.’?”

Learning Experience: Choosing the Best Evidence

How does the Learning Experience target effective expression?	How can I focus my instruction on effective expression?
<p>The lessons present multiple opportunities for students to compare how they are using the text to build a claim or develop an understanding. The structure around these moments allows students to learn how to express their ideas and listen to another perspective.</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the Brain Science Unit, students follow a sequenced discussion protocol for presenting distinct understandings of the text. They practice presenting their understanding clearly to a partner and then actively listen to their partner's perspective. 	<p>The Teacher Guides within these activities helps you ensure that students experience these informal presentations of their text ideas as productive.</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In Brain Science, teachers use a poll taken before and then after these partner discussions to help kids understand the impact of a focused discussion.

Learning Experience: Debating

How does the Learning Experience target effective expression?	How can I focus my instruction on effective expression?
<p>The debate activity provides a clear structure for students to state their own ideas, listen to their peers, and construct a response based on their peers' argument.</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the "The Tell-Tale Heart" lessons, students from opposing sides of a debate practice using the same piece of text to each defend their position. 	<p>The teacher's role as the moderator of the debate ensures that students begin to understand the give and take of this type of discourse, and the crucial importance of listening to another perspective and considering the other side.</p>

Learning Experience: Using the Text as Referee

How does the Learning Experience target effective expression?	How can I focus my instruction on effective expression?
<p>These activities teach students that an interpretation must be based on an accurate understanding of the text. As students compare two student paraphrases to the original text, they try to identify which paraphrase most closely expresses the meaning of the original.</p>	<p>The debriefing guidelines help the teacher convey that the class can use these discussions to work closely with the text and arrive at an accurate understanding, rather than look to the teacher to state the correct answer.</p>

THEME: Content knowledge

Ask Yourself: How can I support my students to eagerly investigate new texts, gather up new knowledge, and use it as a resource as they move through different texts and subject areas?

The emphasis on content knowledge in the CA ELA/ELD Framework points out what to many teachers is intuitive: “The more a student learns, the more a student knows, and the more a student knows, the more a student learns.” A student who has some knowledge of American slavery will be able to place Frederick Douglass’s narrative within its context more easily, and a student who has studied Frederick Douglass may understand more easily what Lincoln means by the “drop of blood drawn from the lash” in his second inaugural address. An ELA curriculum must systematically build students’ knowledge about global bodies of literature, the variety of text genres, word and world knowledge, etc. within a grade and as students move through the grade.

For this reason, Amplify ELA has put careful consideration into the texts selected for each grade, as students move through and pass the middle grades into high school. For example, the sixth–grader who has tackled the myth of Prometheus (and whether the Greeks think humans act productively when given power normally reserved for the Gods) will carry that myth and thinking into the eighth grade, applying it when delving into the questions about hubris raised in Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*. Make sure to read the discussion on the Amplify ELA text selection and content knowledge in Section 2, What’s Worth Reading, in this Teacher Program Guide to get a clear picture of how it builds content knowledge.

In addition, the Amplify ELA program pays particular attention to the word knowledge that students must develop while they read, and which they need in order to read the challenging texts within this curriculum and in the world of college and work. The discussion of the Amplify ELA vocabulary program within this Teacher Program Guide highlights how the program develops vocabulary and builds the skills crucial to reading a complex text that contains unfamiliar words.

Equally, however, content knowledge depends on students using a variety of strategies to gather and apply this knowledge. They need lots of experiences to reinforce a mindset that reading builds their knowledge of language, that writing builds their knowledge of reading, that understanding how Dickinson uses figurative language helps them read Shakespeare with an eye open for this level of meaning. They also need careful support at times, so that they can access the reading task without being shut down by the knowledge demands. Most important, perhaps, they need to feel that all these new ideas and new ways of communicating about the world are empowering.

These lessons and Learning Experiences develop students' awareness of how they are building this knowledge and show them how to use this knowledge as a resource to unpack future texts. They are also designed to showcase these achievements and allow students to delight in what they are learning.

How do the Amplify ELA Learning Experiences and my instruction within the Learning Experiences target effective expression?

Learning Experience: Working With Text Out Loud

How does the Learning Experience target content knowledge?	How can I focus my instruction on content knowledge?
<p>As students watch a dramatic reading or performance of a text, they share a common understanding about the intent of this text. They also may pick up on auditory or visual clues that can provide key background or task information, helping a student's initial foray into the text.</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students watch scenes from <i>A Raisin in the Sun</i> where the actors, set, and costuming help them understand the setting and context that contribute to this family's frustration. <p>Note: Amplify ELA's choice of the graphic novel version of <i>Frankenstein</i> is another instance of expecting students to work with the complex original text, but providing them with significant visual support to help with the knowledge challenge experienced by many students just trying to get oriented in this book.</p>	<p>Encourage students to return to these dramatic readings and performances of the text—many of which are available in the lesson materials—and have students discuss some of the content “clues” that they used to understand the text.</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> “When you watch this scene from <i>A Raisin in the Sun</i>, pay attention to what the actors are wearing. What clues do their clothes give you about this family—both when they are living and what their style says about how they understand themselves.”

Learning Experience: Working Visually

How does the Learning Experience target content knowledge?	How can I focus my instruction on content knowledge?
<p>These activities provide various ways for students to break the language apart and visualize it in different ways. Many of these activities help students piece together key information dispersed throughout the text. Students begin to see that the text does build content knowledge but will not always announce each piece of information. They practice actively building content knowledge, rather than waiting for it to be called out to them.</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the Brain Science unit, students pull together various sections of the text describing the brain and its functions to label a diagram of the brain. They then use this knowledge as a resource when reading “Understanding the Adolescent Brain.” 	<p>Reinforce with students that they might need to piece together content knowledge as they move through a text.</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> “You originally misunderstood how Phineas Gage’s injury became infected. Now you accurately write about bacteria. Rereading with your partner really clarified your knowledge.”

Learning Experience: Writing for an Authentic Audience

How does the Learning Experience target content knowledge?	How can I focus my instruction on content knowledge?
<p>Writing is a primary mode of understanding complex texts in these lessons. Students work with the text while writing, literally digesting the text into their writing as they develop their ideas about the text. The underlying message is that the text does not present knowledge as a package, but as a continual process between text and reader.</p>	<p>Use the feedback cycle during the writing activities to point out to students where their writing shows them integrating and building knowledge from the text.</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be specific when a student uses information from the text accurately. “You are accurately using the details of what doctors did and did not know when you explain why the doctor did not wash his hands.”

Learning Experience: Revising

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<p>Being asked to revise a piece of writing or clarify an idea underscores a mindset that knowledge and understanding are constantly evolving.</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The set Revision Assignments are explained in terms of clarifying an idea, rather than fixing a problem. 	<p>Teachers can access and use the Revision Assignments at times apart from the Flex Day -homework, or as a “do now” at the start of class. Encourage students to think of these as opportunities to develop their understanding to grow their knowledge.</p>

Learning Experience: Working With Text as Theater

How does the Learning Experience target content knowledge?	How can I focus my instruction on content knowledge?
<p>As students plan and perform their own dramatic reading or performance of text, they are using additional modes to understand that text, and are often motivated to “get the background right” for their performance.</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In The Greeks Unit, students plan and act out a section of text that describes a very Greek scene: riding chariots, forging swords and spears, etc. This preparation challenges them to acquire and express what might be unfamiliar pieces of content. 	<p>As students plan these performances, use the over-the-shoulder conferences to help them take account of the background and contextual clues.</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remind them of the Reveal Tool. “ ‘Forges’ is a Reveal word, so you can see that it is a fire used to heat metal. Use this clue to think about how the Greeks made these swords and spears. That will help you decide how to act out this section.”

Learning Experience: Choosing the Best Evidence

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<p>The lessons present multiple opportunities for students to compare how they are using the text to build a claim or develop an understanding. As students review how they might support a particular claim based on the text, they share and become cognizant of the knowledge they are gaining through their close reading.</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students use the Misunderstanding Notebook app in the Brain Science Unit to explain how they refined an inaccurate understanding of a topic from the text 	<p>Point to moments in these exercises where a student's work demonstrates growing facility with content knowledge.</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> "You originally misunderstood how Phineas's injury became infected. Now you accurately write about bacteria. Rereading with your partner really clarified your knowledge."

Learning Experience: Debating

How does the Learning Experience target content knowledge?	How can I focus my instruction on content knowledge?
<p>The debate activity provides a clear structure for students to share their knowledge through speaking and listening.</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The "mock trial" for the narrator of "The Tell-Tale Heart" pushes students to integrate their knowledge of the legal definition of insanity with their understanding of the narrator's state of mind. 	<p>Use the given debate parameters and the teacher tips to make sure all students have the opportunity to share their knowledge and benefit from the knowledge of others.</p>

Learning Experience: Using the Text as Referee

How does the Learning Experience target content knowledge?	How can I focus my instruction on content knowledge?
<p>These activities teach students that an interpretation must be based on an accurate understanding of the text. As students compare two student paraphrases to the original text, the class “pools” their content and vocabulary knowledge to determine the most accurate paraphrase.</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students work as a class to determine the most accurate paraphrase of the first sentence of the Gettysburg Address, using content knowledge to dissect phrases like “four score and seven” and “conceived in liberty.” 	<p>Use these discussions to point out moments when students drew on content knowledge either individually, or put pieces together as a group.</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Alex made a nice connection between the work the class did with the Declaration of Independence and his paraphrase of ‘conceived in liberty.’ ”

THEME: Foundational skills

Ask Yourself: Working with the types of complex texts called out by the standards for grade 6–8 requires a solid facility with foundational skills—print concepts, phonological awareness, phonics and word recognition, and fluency. This work assumes that by grade six students for whom English is a first language have developed basic phonics and phonological awareness of the sort outlined in the K–3 standards. These students then have ample and varied opportunities to practice and grow these skills within the Amplify ELA program, including hearing and dissecting dramatic reading, discussions of rhyme structures, spoken performances of text, and ongoing work with word morphology. Most important, these foundational skills contribute to students’ ability to engage in meaningful ways with these texts and to use printed language for their own purposes.

However, a certain number of proficient English speakers will not have developed a solid phonics and phonological awareness by sixth grade. Teachers should be observant and immediately responsive to students who are having difficulty with any foundational skill; the most effective interventions occur at the first sign of difficulty. Teacher tips embedded in the lessons guide the teacher to support students to be more purposeful with their reading strategies (rereading, highlighting, breaking apart the text) and offer ways for the teacher to be more explicit or systematic in her instruction (isolate a particular sentence, offer task-specific feedback, provide a specific piece of individual practice). For students who continue to struggle, fluency can be a common obstacle and effective intervention. The core program pays particular attention to fluency; two Learning Experiences, Working With Text Out Loud and Working With Text as Theater, provide regular fluency work and extensive opportunities for the teacher to assign additional fluency work. For example, Section 2, Rigorous instruction for all students: Differentiation strategies contains specific information about how to use the 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 provide additional fluency work for students who struggle with this foundational skill.

However, a small group of grade 6–8 students need to develop basic foundational skills. These students need the support of a Tier III intervention program in addition to their grade-level core and supplemental learning. This level of intensive Tier III intervention requires the guidance of a specialist. Until the teacher has been able to plan this intervention with a specialist, Amplify provides access to its free, open-source foundational skills website, www.freereading.net. This program offers many of the activities and supports that make up a Tier III intervention, and there may be cases where a student develops these basic skills rapidly once this supplemental instruction is provided. However, Amplify recommends that these activities be used as part of a planned intervention under the guidance of a specialist and using Amplify’s supplementary reading intervention, Burst:Reading.

How do the Amplify ELA Learning Experiences and my instruction within the Learning Experiences target effective expression?

Learning Experience: Working With Text Out Loud

How does the Learning Experience target foundational skills?	How can I focus my instruction on foundational skills?
<p>Early unit lessons regularly have students listen to a dramatic reading or watch a performance of portions of a text while they read along, giving students a clear model for the fluent reading of the text.</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The dramatic readings early on in the <i>Tom Sawyer</i> lessons establish a “voice” for each character and indicate phrasing and speech patterns. • The dramatic early reading of “The Tell–Tale Heart” allows students to hear the quickening pacing of the plot indicated by the switch to shorter sentences. 	<p>Take advantage of these dramatic readings, performances, and the audio that accompanies each text to practice fluency.</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Replay small sections of a dramatic reading and ask students to try to mimic that sentence or two. • Allow students to practice their fluency using a small section of the text from the dramatic reading. They can reflect on their reading versus that of the professional one.

Learning Experience: Working Visually

How does the Learning Experience target foundational skills?	How can I focus my instruction on foundational skills?
<p>These activities provide various ways for students to break the language apart and visualize the text in different ways. Even if students are unable to fully comprehend the text, these activities often allow them to focus on a small section and draw meaning about that small moment.</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In <i>Red Scarf Girl</i>, students find a small piece of text that gives them a glimpse into the character's feelings at one small moment. They plot that piece of text to a graph of how the character's feelings changed during this scene. 	<p>Support students to participate, even if they are unable to read the entire scene.</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ask them to point to one place where they did not notice or understand something about the character. Look for ALT (alternative) activities that present pre-highlighted views of the text to students who need this level of support.

Learning Experience: Writing for an Authentic Audience

How does the Learning Experience target foundational skills?	How can I focus my instruction on foundational skills?
<p>These regular and relatively low-stakes writing activities three times weekly allow students at all levels to express their ideas while developing facility with foundational skills. Even students who still need support with early foundational skills can immediately participate in these activities and begin to use writing as an expressive tool.</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> After experimenting with the skill of <i>showing</i>, students find unique and engaging details to include in a response to the prompt "write about one place you feel comfortable." The range of writing students produce helps each student experience the possibilities of writing as a mode of expression. The regular response to text prompts instill writing as a primary mode of understanding and discovery, in addition to being an orthographic system. The sharing sessions establish the expectation that each student will regularly read their writing aloud to the class. 	<p>Encourage all students to participate in the writing activities from the start, rather than expecting them to focus solely on foundational skills until they reach a particular benchmark.</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The over-the-shoulder conferences provide models for supporting students to write <i>something</i> during this time. The section on feedback in the Teacher's Guide will provide additional information on providing targeted skill feedback even if only 1–2 sentences are written. The Get Started lessons help the teacher establish a sharing routine where all students understand how to read loudly and clearly. The section on sharing in the Teacher's Guide helps teachers support students to prepare to read their writing aloud.

Learning Experience: Revising

How does the Learning Experience target foundational skills?	How can I focus my instruction on foundational skills?
<p>During each Flex Day, students have the opportunity to practice applying a taught skill to a piece of their own writing. These Revision Assignments can provide repeated practice with a needed foundational skill, in the context of helping students express their ideas.</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The focus Revision Assignment is a regular practice to “add 3-4 more sentences” and offers clear practice for students that need a boost with orthographic skills. • Mastering Conventions contains Revision Assignments that address specific foundational skills. 	<p>Regularly review student writing to track progress and note students who struggle with production or key orthographic or phoneme rules in their writing activities. Identify and assign a Revision Assignment to provide practice with a foundational skill for that individual student.</p>

Learning Experience: Working With Text as Theater

How does the Learning Experience target foundational skills?	How can I focus my instruction on foundational skills?
<p>As students plan and perform their own dramatic reading or performance of text, they practice important fluency skills, particularly in the early stages of working with a complex text.</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students memorize the prologue to <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> over a number of lessons, working with “cards” that call out for them the rhythms of each line. • Before practicing a small section of <i>Red Scarf Girl</i> to read aloud, students listen to a comically monotonous read-aloud to encourage them to put expression into their reading. 	<p>These dramatic interpretations are usually associated with text excerpts that contain lively dialogue, a regular rhythm, or fairly clear emotions. Emphasize this connection between reading fluently and bringing a character, a voice, or a rhythm to life (even when reading silently).</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide additional opportunities for students to plan and perform a dramatic reading when you note a decrease in fluency with that text.

Learning Experience: Debating

How does the Learning Experience target foundational skills?	How can I focus my instruction on foundational skills?
<p>The debate provides a clear structure for students to practice their pronunciation and fluency skills using more academic vocabulary and incorporating the text while they prepare and declaim their arguments.</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In The Chocolate Collection unit, students debate whether chocolate should be served at school or not, preparing their arguments based on research. Each student takes a turn presenting a distinct argument and connecting it to a specific piece of textual evidence. 	<p>Use the structure of the debate to encourage students to present their arguments, including quotes from the text, fluently and with expression.</p>

Learning Experience: Using the Text as Referee

How does the Learning Experience target foundational skills?	How can I focus my instruction on foundational skills?
<p>The peer-to-peer structured discussions in many of these activities guide students to see their peers as resources for certain foundational skills.</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The MAZUR technique that students practice in the Brain Science unit prompts students to reread a complicated section of text with a peer who arrived at a different answer. As students each explain their individual understanding and then come to a consensus, they are supporting each other's foundational skills, such as word recognition and fluency. 	<p>Maintain a supportive environment for these peer work sessions by making sure students follow discussion parameters. Also, take note of those students for whom these moments of misunderstanding are connected to deficits with foundational skills.</p>