

Introduction to program themes

Welcome to Amplify ELA: California Edition

To create the California edition of Amplify ELA, we assembled educators from California and across the country and invited them to join forces with the leading experts in adolescent literacy, language development, learning science, neuroscience, motivation and other non-cognitive skills, and curriculum design. We then invited some of the leading thinkers of our time about literature and history to join our creative process and help us make sure that our ideas about texts and language were truly state of the art. Finally, we added the innovative visions of great game designers, animators, moviemakers, and digital artists who have their own ways of engaging today's kids and teachers but have rarely been a central part of core curriculum development.

The result is a new kind of English Language Arts curriculum. But we didn't just bring these great minds together and take their word for it—we tested everything we created with real teachers and real students in real classrooms. We learned that a lot of our most promising ideas needed to be revised or discarded, and we learned that sometimes more minor ideas became the centerpiece of great learning experiences.

A rigorous curriculum

Teachers will recognize that we have preserved a core focus on the ancient and essential activities of reading, writing, speaking, listening, and forming a literate community. They will recognize that the program gives students a lot of opportunity to think in solitude, to concentrate without distraction, to figure things out by themselves and with their peers. These essential activities are helped along by technology, but at their heart they are about the time-honored, proven project of learning from and about texts. The program often suggests that there be nothing on the screen except the text and a box for student work—just like a book and a sheet of paper. The texts are complex but accessible. The work students do is rigorous, text dependent, analytical, and deep.

A riveting curriculum

In addition to the many familiar aspects of the program, teachers will see multimedia and technology used in new ways to engage students and to inspire them to read more, write more, discuss with their peers more actively, and think harder. The curriculum speaks to digital natives by being thoroughly interactive, by enabling real-time communication with peers and with the teacher, by giving students new interactive formats in which to gather evidence, solve problems, and explore mysteries. Sometimes a game or an animation will be the way into a challenging text, but we never let the game or animation obscure the reading and writing. Audio supports, visual supports, and personalization technology help learners with varying needs access texts in differentiated ways.

Based on open, accessible technology



Amplify ELA: California Edition (referred to as Amplify ELA from this point forward) is primarily digital. Class can happen without technology (and we provide a paper non-digital resource guide for days when the technology isn't available), but the Amplify program is at its best when students and teachers have devices that are connected through a network. Teachers and students interact and share work in a classroom orchestration platform—think of it as a shareable, online workbook where students do their reading, writing, and skills practice, and teachers can see their progress, and support their needs, in real time.

The curriculum is one big website—or rather, an interconnected system of websites that seems to the user to be one big website. Because it lives on the web, it can be accessed by any device that has a modern web browser—on a laptop, desktop, or tablet. Teachers, students, and parents don't need any proprietary device to access the curriculum.

Igniting a passion for reading and writing

Our carefully sequenced digital lessons provide a year's worth of instruction that allows teachers to:

- Engage students' innate curiosity in great texts, without sacrificing rigor.
- Improve writing skills while helping students think analytically and independently and communicate original ideas and opinions.
- Swiftly and efficiently narrow the vocabulary gap by helping students learn academic words in the context of reading.
- Push students to dig more deeply into texts and extend their understanding through curriculum-embedded apps, not worksheets.
- Inspire students to read in and outside the classroom, with hundreds of texts from our virtual Library, and a curriculum-tied suite of educational games that make an adventure out of reading, writing, syntax, spelling, and vocabulary.

A deeper connection to students and their individual needs

With the tools included in Amplify ELA, teachers can keep a close eye on student activities and progress throughout the day, and better understand and respond to the needs of each student. Our program provides teachers with:

- **Classroom orchestration tools** that allow teachers to guide individual students to activities that are appropriate for them, as well as manage group discussion and interaction.
- **Feedback tools** that allow teachers to provide targeted and immediate support to improve students' skill development in real time.
- **Integrated assessments**, including embedded progress monitoring, and formative and summative assessments.





Addressing the key themes of the California ELA/ELD Framework

Amplify ELA incorporates a variety of Learning Experiences to ensure that students of all backgrounds and abilities learn to read, write, and articulate with clarity and confidence, as well as develop analytical, critical-thinking, and problem-solving skills.

Each of these Learning Experiences is crafted to align with the key themes of the California ELA/ELD Framework:

- **Meaning making**
- **Language development**
- **Effective expression**
- **Content knowledge**
- **Foundational skills**

In the following pages, we will comprehensively describe the many ways we address these key themes.

Meaning making

In order for students to extract and construct meaning from text, they must develop close reading skills: the ability to dig deeply into complex texts and to build strategies for grasping their meaning. They must share those meanings with peers in supportive classroom communities.

Amplify ELA accomplishes this by helping students to:

Study and interpret the text in a variety of ways. Students read aloud, memorize, follow along to dramatic readings, use charts or digital apps to explore the text more visually, and discuss with teachers and classmates. Each of these approaches allows students to ponder interpretations and gain new perspectives on the language.

Observe first, then interpret. Before developing an interpretation of the text, students first study it, by highlighting or annotating it, gathering facts or evidence they can refer to as they set out to interpret what it is saying literally and what it may be saying beyond the literal meaning.

Write regularly for an authentic audience. Frequent writing prompts within the curriculum challenge students to relearn the text and interpret it in their own words. Various sharing protocols invite students to present their understandings to their peers.

Draw comparisons and contrasts within the text. Working together, students gain meaning from text by debating various interpretations and, sometimes, arriving at a consensus.

Language development

Students must continue to gain the language and vocabulary skills necessary to express themselves clearly and accurately. More significantly, they need to grasp the possibilities of language development, to continually experience how their new skills allow them to express themselves, engage in discourse with others, and understand the world around them. The interactive activities and tools of Amplify ELA's robust vocabulary and grammar program, and their integration into the core lessons, ensure that students have many opportunities to use new language for genuine purposes. Students are challenged to:

- Check the meanings of words while reading a text, with a feature that provides definitions alongside the text.
- Provide synonyms for words or to paraphrase blocks of text they are studying.
- Search for contextual clues to understand a word.
- Study the differences between explicit and figurative meaning.
- Learn about and integrate new sentence structures and grammar elements into their writing.

Effective expression

The ability to express oneself orally, visually, and in written forms is key to college and career success. Amplify ELA promotes this by cultivating a classroom community that invites the free and comfortable exchange of ideas. Students are frequently asked to relay their knowledge and interpretations of text through various forms of expression, which include:

- Writing for an authentic audience, in both short form and longer essays.
- Performing dramatizations of the texts.
- Developing graphical visualizations, such as storyboards, to express ideas and themes from the text.
- Building claims by using portions of the text as evidence.
- Debating opinions they have formed from the text with peers.
- Working in groups on shaping a shared message or a collaborative creative work.

Content knowledge

In order for students to develop a base of knowledge that spans a variety of subjects, they must be exposed to a wide range of literature and texts. Literacy opens the doors to content knowledge. Conversely, background and general knowledge opens the door to make advanced levels of literacy.

An ELA curriculum must systematically build students' knowledge about global bodies of literature, history, science, a variety of text genres, and word and world knowledge within a grade and as students move through grades.

With this in mind, Amplify has put careful consideration into its text selections, ensuring that they are sequenced appropriately so that students continue to build knowledge as they progress to the next grade. All texts, both fiction and informational, cover a wide range of subject areas, from classic literature to neuroscience to Greek mythology to modern poetry.

Foundational skills

The Learning Experiences within Amplify ELA jump-start a student's awareness of the patterns of language use within a particular text. The range of activities provide ample and varied opportunities to practice and grow key foundational skills, helping students engage with the text and continue to make meaning or express ideas.

Within its Learning Experiences, the Amplify program provides teachers various ways to track and target students' continuing growth with the foundational skills of literacy—print concepts, phonological awareness, phonics and word recognition, and fluency. And teachers are able to immediately identify the students who need more, using supports within the lessons and additional Amplify resources to provide critical help at the right time for students building these foundational skills.

A digital core curriculum built to meet the California standards

Amplify ELA is designed from the ground up to help each student meet the challenges of the California Common Core State Standards for ELA/Literacy, and to approach the years ahead with a joy of learning, a heightened sense of creativity, and a confidence in his or her ability to communicate, collaborate, solve problems, and think critically.

