

Professional development

The Amplify ELA curriculum contains supports for the teacher preparing for a lesson, teaching a lesson, and assessing student work after a lesson.

Each grade of Amplify ELA is divided into seven units. Each unit includes a series of 15 to 25 lessons during which students practice reading a text or texts that have features or topics in common, and tackle a few challenges in writing about that sort of text.

For example, in the early units on personal narrative, students practice reading to discern the writer's emotions based on how he or she acts and what he or she says, and write about just one moment in the text. In later units on science, students practice reading for accuracy and to correct misconceptions, and write to explain scientific concepts across more than one text. While it might seem that it's a big leap from the early narrative unit to the later science unit; in fact, the program sequences units and lessons to build the skills that enable students to move confidently from one challenge to the next. The teacher does not need to figure out the required prerequisite skills for a unit; those skills are built into the previous units.

The best way to understand how the units and lessons build on one another is to read the briefs written for the teachers at three levels.

1. Unit briefs

- Introduce texts and why they were chosen.
- Describe the overall approach to these texts and the instructional strategies employed.
- Explain the instructional goals of the unit and how students will meet them.
- Point out the repeated activities that students will use across the unit to practice particular skills.
- Describe any new technology or media that teachers and students will use.

2. Sub-unit or text briefs

- Provide more information on a particular text or a sub-grouping of lessons within a unit.
- Explain why this grouping of lessons has been subdivided.

3. Lesson briefs

- Overview: calls out the main activity of the lesson, key moments in the text, and a few crucial instructional points that make the lesson work.
- Materials: lists and provides links teachers can use to view or download the most important digital texts and images before teaching the class.
- Prep: lists any atypical steps to prepare for the lesson.
- Differentiation: lists particular activities and how a teacher might adjust for ELs or struggling students (including which activities have alternate versions available in the software).

- Words to Use: lists the words that students have encountered in the text and then again in their vocabulary activities that teachers should try to reinforce during the lesson.
- Unplugged: gives direction for the teacher whose students do not have access to technology for that lesson.

Support during planning

Lesson brief: The first step in planning, the lesson brief provides teachers with logistical details about lesson preparation as well as notes about critical moments in the lesson, how students may respond and possibly struggle in an activity, and key moments in the text or texts. This excerpt from the lesson brief for Lesson 3 in “The Tell-Tale Heart” sub-unit demonstrates both pre- and in-class guidance:

This time, as students use the Tell-Tale Art app, encourage them to focus on what they, as readers, think the narrator is thinking, what the police are thinking, and especially on what sounds are in the room. If you see students who are placing heartbeats in the room, be sure to ask whether they, as readers, believe the dead man’s heart is actually beating. If you see them move the heartbeats into the narrator’s thought bubble, then you know they are on track.

Before the Next Lesson (BNL) icon: This orange teacher-only icon appears at the very end of many lessons and is an alert to the teacher that they need to do something in advance of an upcoming lesson. Often this task is around feedback—writing comments on student work, creating a Spotlight wall, or highlighting a place for revision. In addition to alerting the teacher, the BNL page also gives teachers guidance. For example, in Lesson 2 of the *Boy: Tales of Childhood* sub-unit, the teacher needs to create a Spotlight wall before Lesson 5 and is given the following support:

Before Lesson 5, read your students’ responses to the prompt from this lesson and prepare Spotlights using the Spotlight app:

- Each Spotlight should be 1–3 sentences that show where your students use details from the passage to describe why the candy is appealing or repulsive.
- For example: “Chloroform is used to saw peoples’ legs off, which makes me feel sick.”
- For example: “In the description of Sherbet Suckers, Dahl says that ‘you could make white froth come out of your nostrils and pretend you were throwing a fit’. If I could look like I was having a fit, I wouldn’t have to do my homework!”
- Make sure to correct the spelling, grammar, and punctuation of each Spotlight before you post them.
- Remember, a less-than-perfect example from your students is more engaging than a great example from someone they don’t know.

Flex Days: Starting in Unit B every sub-unit will include Flex Days. These days are built into the pacing of the curriculum. The teachers and students have access to blank work spaces. During a Flex Day the teacher could work with the whole class, divide the class into small groups and have each work on a different activity, and/or ask some students to work independently. The teacher could ask students who are struggling with the text to reread a section of the text and write to a new prompt, give students a revision assignment for focus or evidence, or teach a grammar lesson from the *Mastering Conventions* resource.

Support during instruction

Instructional guide: Each activity has a brief instructional guide for the teacher near the top of the page, which can include:

- Talking points for a class discussion.
- Suggested language for direct instruction.
- Steps for the activity.
- Models of over-the-shoulder conferences.
- Tips for differentiation for ell students.

Discussion questions: In addition to talking points for a class discussion about students' understanding of a text, the teacher also receives guidance on possible reasons for a wrong answer. This knowledge gives the teachers insight into a student's comprehension of a text, which they can use to add to the class discussion. The instructional guide for Lesson 6 in the Phineas Gage sub-unit is an example.

Discussion points:

- Where in the text can you find the information for the right answer?
- What did you see in the text that led you to the wrong answers?
- Did anyone have a conversation with a partner that led them to change from a wrong to a right answer? Can you describe that conversation?
- Did anyone have a conversation with a partner that led them to change from a right to a wrong answer? Can you describe that conversation?

Possible reasons for wrong answers:

- Students may have forgotten that they are looking for what *doctors knew* in 1848. *Not* what we know to be true today.
- Doctors had seen microorganisms (they called them animalcules), but did not know that some of those microorganisms were bacteria that caused infection.
- They knew that infection (they called it sepsis) was bad—but didn't know that bacteria caused it.

Over-the-shoulder conferences (OTSCs): OTSCs allow the teacher to provide in-the-moment feedback to students as they work through a challenging activity or complete a Writing Prompt. These quick check-ins are differentiated to meet the varying needs of students and to keep each one headed in the right direction. The instructional guide provides teachers with sample OTSCs tailored for that writing prompt.

Alternative activities and writing prompts: Alternative activities and writing prompts provide support for struggling students. These students are doing the same activity and writing to the same prompt as the others, but with more scaffolding. Alternative activities and prompts are at the end of the lesson map and are indicated by a plus sign. The instructional guide suggests the students who would benefit from the alternative activity or prompt.

Support after class

Reports: The lessons in the Amplify ELA curriculum vary, but students work on key reading and writing skills in a systematic way across these varied lessons. With a Daily Class Report generated for them, teachers do not have to worry about collecting data on student performance: the program's reports clearly reveal performance patterns and show how students' skills are building. Teachers are then free to simply enjoy the spontaneity and variety of Amplify's lessons and focus on helping their students do the same.

The reports distill key metrics of student performance daily, helping teachers notice when their instruction is working and when it is not working, so they can respond quickly and adjust their practice to fit students' needs. The metrics that are repeated include:

- Solo completion.
- Classwork.
- Productivity in writing.
- Number of vocabulary activities answered.
- Number of vocabulary activities correct.

Formative assessment: Formative assessments allow the teacher to keep close track of student performance and use his or her teaching time strategically to maximize progress for each student. The daily curriculum provides a foundation and a set of routines so the teacher can spend as much time as possible reading student writing. The key to the success of the curriculum is the teacher's commitment to reading and regularly assessing student writing. The teacher uses the results of these assessments to make strategic modifications to his or her instruction, which maximizes the growth of each student. The teacher uses assessment results to adjust the following:

- Over-the-shoulder conferences (OTSCs).
- Written comments.
- Spotlight selection.
- Student grouping.
- Drill repetition.
- Revision Assignments (RAs).
- Action plans.

Additional offerings

Amplify can also provide in-person and remote professional development and coaching.