

Rigorous instruction for all students

Universal Design in Amplify ELA

Universal Design is at the center of the Amplify ELA approach to ELA instruction. This is because the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is essential for the teacher to provide equity and access to every student, but also because reading, writing, language, speaking, and listening skills are taught best in a community of learners in which participants are developing and comparing ideas about shared content.

The Amplify ELA curriculum and instruction are designed so that when at all possible, one very rich activity for the whole class serves the needs of every student, providing appropriate challenge and access. This section on Universal Design discusses how to use these common activities to reach the varying needs of students. Below this section on Universal Design, you will find a section on differentiation that explains how to use the alternate versions provided in the lessons (useful in times when the common activities prove inaccessible to students), and, when students experience considerable difficulty, how to provide interventions in the foundational skills they need to access the grade-level work. More information about how to provide deeper work on foundational skills is found in the section above on Skills, particularly in the sections on Vocabulary and Grammar.

There are two parts to the Amplify ELA implementation of Universal Design:

1. The structure of the curriculum establishes habits and routines that make it possible for the teacher to teach students at varying skill levels during the same activity, acquire data from formative assessments, and adjust instruction accordingly without having to provide different activities for different students. See below for a more detailed explanation for how to use this structure to serve the needs of all learners.
2. The particular Learning Experiences (described in Section II.A), which are repeated throughout the Amplify ELA Program, have been designed, as UDL suggests, to provide students with multiple means of acquiring skills and knowledge, multiple means of expressing their understandings, and multiple means of engaging with the content. See below for a more detailed explanation for how to use these Learning Experiences to serve the needs of all learners.

On the following pages find more in-depth descriptions of each of these parts of the Amplify ELA approach to Universal Design:

1. The structure of the curriculum

A. Routines and mindset established in the Get Started sub-unit:


The 10-day series of lessons that begin every year help every participant in the Amplify program develop the same expectations and assumptions about what is required for success in the program. The program takes nothing for granted—assuming that in each middle school student, at the beginning of every school year, there may be questions of motivation, beliefs in his or her capacity for success, how he or she will contribute to a community of learners, whether he or she has a growth mindset and can literally produce the work products necessary for success. So, these 10 days of lessons, in addition to actually beginning the teaching of some of the academic standards, work on the social and emotional skills essential to success in an ELA classroom. By the end of the Get Started sub-unit, the teacher has some very concrete measures about whether or not all students are on their way to achieving the social and emotional capacities they need. For example, there is a protocol for sharing and responding to work—and each student is expected to be able to participate in a certain way. Successful participation in the sharing protocol sets up a student for successful participation in whole-class and smaller-group discussions in later lessons. The structure of the sharing protocol makes it possible for the teacher to note who is not successful and to intervene to help those students achieve success.

Another key measure of success in the Get Started sub-unit is the productivity formative assessment. More information can be found on this in the Assessment section that precedes this section. This key metric enables teachers to measure students' engagement in the common curriculum, and ability to work independently. The program provides clear expectations about how and when students' should develop this capacity. The skill is measured daily with an automated report, and teachers have truly functional and effective responses that can be implemented within the reality of their class structure and school day.

B. Instruction designed to facilitate the teacher’s ability to do strategic over-the-shoulder conferencing

Over-the-shoulder conferences are a staple of the Amplify ELA program and enable teachers to provide nuanced feedback and subtle individualized direction while every student works on a common activity. Activities that facilitate teachers’ ability to do over-the-shoulder conferences have certain characteristics in common. These are all activities in which:

- Students can follow the directions without intervention from the teacher, either because the activity is intuitive, has been carefully modeled by the teacher, or, in many cases, is part of a series of activities that builds gradually in complexity.
- Students’ motivation to do the activity has been carefully considered—and each student thoroughly understands what he or she is gaining from doing the activity.
- Students’ social capacities are scaffolded to either purposefully develop a social skill necessary to complete the activity or to provide necessary support for students without those social skills (for example, sentence frames, or a structure for taking turns.)
- Students have practiced the activity multiple times and know what range of performances are acceptable (for example, when mistakes are part of the process), when they should ask for help, and when it is perfectly okay to struggle.

Over-the-shoulder conferencing is such a key part of the Amplify lessons that a technical feature to support it has been built into the digital lesson structure. When teachers see the symbol  and click on it, they see 3-4 squares that describe characteristics of student behavior or student work, specific to this activity that teachers should look for. When teachers click on one of these squares, the system provides direction to the teacher about how to support students approaching the activity in different ways. These context-specific over-the-shoulder conferences always include an “on-track” example and a way to push the “on-track” student further.

2. The Learning Experiences, repeated throughout the cycle of Amplify ELA lessons, have been designed with UDL principles in mind to provide students with multiple means of acquiring skills and knowledge, multiple means of expressing their understandings, and multiple means of engaging with the content. These activities are described above in the section on pedagogy in much more detail in terms of how they show up in the lessons, and how they work to meet the five themes of ELA instruction as described in the CA ELA/ELD Framework. Here, we revisit them again, to remind the teacher of the ways in which teachers can understand these Learning Experiences as a key element of Amplify's Universal Design and thus, through teaching them, reach all students. As teachers work with the particular activities in each of these categories, they will notice for themselves, the ways in which they can use the activities' richness to reach all students. Below are some suggestions to get started with certain groups such as students with disabilities, readers below grade level, English Learners (ELs) and advanced students.

Working With Text Out Loud

Many lessons begin by working with the text out loud—either through dramatic video presentations of a text or audio readings done by actors and actresses. Students watch or listen and follow along while a professional actor reads out loud expressively to them, uncovering the meaning behind the words. For any student who has trouble accessing the text, because he or she is either a student with disabilities, a reader below grade level or an English Learner, this is an essential activity to make sure that these students can access some part of the text that will be the basis for the class activity. But more important, this experience of listening to an expert reader while following along word for word is foundational fluency training, appropriate for both readers below grade level and for students with disabilities around reading. For advanced students, listening to an expert reader is an opportunity to consider alternate interpretations of the text — often a discussion that all students are brought into will follow from this early activity. Importantly, all students are supported while they confront the text on their own, without this scaffold, through their Solo assignments so that they can continue to make progress in their ability to access complex text independently.

Working Visually

These activities are opportunities for all readers to show their interpretation of a text without being held back entirely by language. Any student, such as a student who is reading below grade level and is not fully accessing the text independently, once he or she has had some insight into the text, or in order to have an insight into the text, can use these activities in which he or she is working visually, to fully express his or her insights on equal grounds with every other student in the class. Advanced students use these activities to find patterns in the text that they could never see without reorganizing the material this way.

Working with Text as Theater

Activities in which students have to practice particular lines over and over again in order to present them or act them out embed another element of foundational fluency practice in Amplify ELA's regular lesson activities. For students reading below grade level, and for students with particular reading disabilities, this regular fluency practice is essential practice necessary to become grade-level readers. For other students, the practice of speaking the lines of text out loud enables them to refine their interpretations of a given text and to build confidence as presenters and actors in front of their peers.

Choosing the Best Evidence

Students often compare the evidence that they found with their peers in class—wondering whether one example is more convincing, more telling or maybe just more beautiful than another. By having these structured opportunities to compare their choices of evidence, students who have had different levels of success in understanding a particular passage have another chance to clarify what the author meant. Such opportunities are as rich for an advanced student as they are for a student reading below grade level.

Using the Text as Referee

Amplify lessons frame activities like paraphrasing or locating the correct piece of data in the text as a chance to go up against a partner in a game refereed by the text. Of course, once each partner weighs in with a paraphrase or with an opinion about the correct piece of data, the partners then have to come together to help the text referee; the text isn't animate, after all. So, what are so often exercises that students' dread because they are so easy to get incorrect become exercises in which the challenge is as much to help figure out whether or not one's answer and a partner's answers are correct, according to a neutral referee: the text. This structure brings students, who are inclined to see the text in a wide variety of ways because of a variety of capacities and backgrounds, together into intensely purposeful and dynamic discussions about what the author really means.

Writing for an Authentic Audience

Much has been written above about how the lessons are structured so that all students are successful during the time when students have to produce writing—or, when a student is not successful, it is easy for a teacher to intervene with over-the-shoulder conferencing in the moment, as well as with written feedback, Revision Assignments, and other longer term action plans after the fact. It is also a key point that every session in which students produce a piece of writing is followed by a short session in which students share their work—reading it aloud and calling on two students to say specifically which part of the piece got their attention and how that particular piece of writing had an impact on them. So, when students are writing for an authentic audience, they don't have to use their imaginations. They really are writing for a real audience.

Revising

In most middle school classes, there is nothing like a lesson in which students are revising their work to expose the differences in students' capacities, and often make teachers' throw their hands up in frustration. The Amplify ELA curriculum solves this problem by carefully building students' revising skills, giving everyone enough practice in small chunks so that when they come to the challenge of actually revising an essay, they are able to manage the multistep process independently. Like when students participate in other Amplify instructional activities, teachers can observe students working and strategically perform over-the-shoulder conferences to push each one to his or her potential. This scaffolded revision process is described above in the feedback section.

Debating

Amplify engages students in formal debating only after they have had the opportunity to participate in the other activities described above and thus become fully familiar with the language and content of the texts on which the debate depends. There is plenty of discussion and airing of opinions leading up to the debate, but, by the time students actually get into a situation in which they are trying to “prove” something, they can all feel they are on solid ground when supporting their claim, regardless of reading level.

Universal Design with English Learners

EL experts offer yet another way for the ELA teacher to make use of the Amplify ELA UDL, by focusing on Universal Access Strategies, defining nine high-leverage strategies and explaining how teachers can use these strategies to give ELs access to mainstream content:

- Universal Access Strategy 1: Modeling
- Universal Access Strategy 2: Formative assessment practices
- Universal Access Strategy 3: Language production supports
- Universal Access Strategy 4: Background knowledge
- Universal Access Strategy 5: Visual supports
- Universal Access Strategy 6: Oral language development
- Universal Access Strategy 7: Attention to language forms
- Universal Access Strategy 8: Working with text out loud
- Universal Access Strategy 9: Working from routines

Universal Access Strategy 1: Modeling

Teachers (1) demonstrate how to perform particular tasks, (2) provide exemplars of student work, and (3) model thinking processes aloud.

Some students may only need to hear an explanation or read an assignment to understand exactly what they must do. However, for many students, reading or hearing directions is not enough: They need to see expert demonstrations of how to perform the task. This is particularly important for ELs, who may rely on seeing what good work looks like in order to understand how to make their own work strong.

Example 1: Tom & Sherlock: *Tom Sawyer*, Lesson 1, Activity 4, Card 2.

In Lesson 1 on *Tom Sawyer*, students begin to use an app called Character Matrix, which helps them analyze Tom's likeability and trickiness. They must place quotations from the text on different parts of the matrix to show how they characterize Tom. Before asking students to do this on their own, the teacher physically demonstrates how to appropriately place evidence in the matrix.

Example 2: Biography & Literature: *Benjamin Franklin*, Lesson 1, Activity 8.

Students are asked to complete a chart that contrasts Benjamin Franklin with the other Founding Fathers. Before they begin, the teacher projects the chart and shows students the purpose of the two columns by sorting some evidence for them. The teacher engages them in a discussion of *why* certain pieces of evidence belong in one column over another, which ensures that all students begin independent work understanding not just what the assignment is, but how and why to use evidence to correctly complete it.

Example 3: Poetry & Poe: “*The Tell-Tale Heart*,” Lesson 2, Activity 2.

The teacher demonstrates how to create a storyboard of events from the text. As the teacher models how to complete the storyboard, he or she also thinks aloud about the decisions he or she is making, and explains why he or she chooses to create the project a certain way. This gives students access not just to the physical motions of the assignment, but also to the underlying thought processes that are required to do this assignment well.

Example 4: Rubrics and Exemplars, Seventh Grade, Personal Narrative

At the start of the writing assignment, students are given a rubric with a detailed description of criteria for a strong assignment. The teacher also explicitly shows what scores of 1, 2, 3, and 4 look like through student writing samples. Providing exemplars of the final product lessens students’ anxiety about what is expected of them and clearly shows how their work will be assessed. It offers students a checklist, or guide, to follow in completing the assignment and sets all students on the same path to success. This is especially true for ELs, who need to focus their efforts both on meeting language demands and on ELA content, and may have missed critical directions in the assignment question.

Universal Access Strategy 2: Formative assessment practices

Teachers (1) frequently monitor students’ understanding and progress through “Understanding Checkpoints” and (2) provide explicit feedback at regular intervals.

Teachers always need to know how their students are doing, and all students need timely information about their progress. This need is even more urgent for ELs, who may not fully understand whole-class explanations, and who need additional support with the language demands of their independent work. Teachers regularly check in with their ELs to verify that they are on the right track, and they provide their ELs with specific and frequent feedback on what they are doing well and how they can improve.

Example 1: (Solo Multiple Choice Questions) Red Scarf Girl & Narrative: Lesson 1, Activity 9.

In Lesson 1, students read and annotate a text passage from a memoir. Students then complete five multiple choice questions that require them to recall details and summarize the text. Students “hand in” their answers to the questions for the teacher to review electronically. This quick learning checkpoint provides a snapshot of whether students “got it” and are ready to proceed with the lesson, or need more scaffolding and a review of important concepts.

Example 2: (Short Answer Questions) Character & Conflict: *A Raisin in the Sun*, Lesson 1, Activity 3.

In this lesson, students read the introductory stage directions for Scene 1 closely in order to get more information to use when they act out the scene again. They highlight words from the text that tell them details about the setting or characters that they did not already know. Using this information, students formulate short answers to the learning checkpoint questions, such as “What tells us that the Youngers’ home feels crowded?” The teacher can quickly assess which students have or have not found the relevant text to answer the question correctly. The teacher can then provide immediate feedback and support based on the instant assessment.

Example 3: (Writing Prompts) Dahl & Narrative: *Boy: Tales of Childhood*, Lesson 3, Activity 2.

In this lesson, students identify specific details that Dahl uses to describe a character, and formulate their own ideas about the character using evidence from the text. Students are asked a short answer question: What is one idea you have about the type of person Mrs. Pratchett is when you read this part? How would you describe her to someone else? Students then craft a short response, citing evidence from the text, and hand in their writing electronically. The teacher can immediately assess if a student is using evidence from Dahl's text correctly or not, and provide scaffolding if necessary. Students may express a wide range of ideas, from concrete to abstract.

Example 4: Character & Conflict: *A Raisin in the Sun*, Lesson 3 Activity 4: Writing

As students work independently, teachers circle and examine students' work, stopping for over-the-shoulder conferences where needed. In this lesson, students are asked to find quotations from the text that cause them to draw an inference about a character, and explain the connection between the evidence and the idea. As in all lessons, the teacher materials include a list of Look Fors, mistakes or problems they might see in student work, along with prompts to offer help to struggling students to get them unstuck.

In this lesson, teachers are asked to look for students who “don't describe what idea the detail from the text gives them. Teachers are then given two samples of how they might respond to students having this problem:

- “You noticed that Beneatha talks about wanting to be a doctor in more than one place. What does that show you about the kind of person Beneatha is? Write a sentence here that explains what you learn about Beneatha from these quotes.”
- “You included the quote that Travis wants to carry groceries. That's right. He does ask Ruth if he can carry groceries more than once. But, why does he want to carry groceries? Write one sentence here that explains what this shows you about what Travis really wants.”

Universal Access Strategy 3: Language production supports

Teachers provide sentence frames and word banks to enable all students to produce academic 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. Middle-schoolers are no different: they may comprehend texts written in formal language but be unable to produce that language in their own writing, or they may know how to offer opinions in colloquial discussions but be unsure of how to share their ideas in an academic context. Word banks and sentence frames help scaffold students' use of formal, academic language, enabling them to gain increasing control over and independence with this important linguistic register. Production supports can also work the other way, making ideas and content easy to remember so that students can focus on crafting language instead of recalling facts. These kinds of supports are especially important for ELs, who are trying to acquire social and academic English simultaneously, as they also cope with demanding content.

Example 1: The Greeks: Prometheus, Lesson 2: Should Humans Have Fire? Discussion: Characteristics of Fire

In this lesson, students brainstorm the characteristics or capabilities of fire. These terms/phrases are compiled into a class chart, to be left on display. This list of characteristics supports students, particularly ELs, as they return to complete the graphic organizer they began earlier in the unit. Completing this particular section of the graphic organizer requires students to make the jump from literal/concrete to figurative/symbolic understandings. The word bank supports students, as it provides appropriate language students can draw on to describe their understandings and successfully complete the graphic organizer. This lowers cognitive and linguistic demands. The class-generated word bank essentially remembers details *for* the students, so they can focus their cognitive resources on crafting their explanations.

Example 2: The Greeks: Write an Essay, Lesson 1: Making a Claim and Gathering Evidence, Independent Work: Making a Claim

In this activity, students are asked to write a claim to support their argument, an element that contributes to their final essay for this unit. Students' written language production is supported with an interactive language frame which allows students to select the characters they've chosen to write about:

(Character 1) and (Character 2) are characters who (are/are not) destroyed by their pride because....

Although ELs may have information they want to convey in writing, they can sometimes struggle with a starting point. Not only do language frames provide ELs with a starting point, but they can also help to focus and guide their writing. In this example, the language frame is structured so as to guide students to continue the sentence with their specific claims.

Example 3: The Frida & Diego Collection: Write an Essay, Lesson 5: Finishing and Editing the Essay, Sharing (Card 4)

Throughout this lesson sequence, students research a topic and write a five-paragraph research essay on this topic. In this particular activity, students have completed a draft of their essays and are provided an opportunity to orally share one moment in their essay. In order to support an oral exchange of ideas and encourage peer feedback, the teacher provides response starters to students:

1. You created a clear picture in my mind when you wrote _____.
2. I liked when you used the word _____ because _____.
3. I saw what you meant about _____ when you wrote _____.

Response starters such as these provide students with a variety of formal, academic, and grammatically correct options for offering opinions and ideas in the classroom. These frames support peer engagement and language development. This is especially helpful for ELs, who may be unsure about grammatical structures or feel nervous about engaging with peers in class-wide discussions.

Universal Access Strategy 4: Background knowledge

Teachers (1) connect new learning to students' experiences and prior learning and (2) ensure ELs in particular have the information necessary to access texts.

When preparing students to read a complex text, teachers must weigh the necessity of building background knowledge with the potential pitfall of “giving away” too much of the text. All students must learn to grapple with texts that are inherently challenging. At the same time, new knowledge is created when learners can connect novel information to what they already understand about the world, so it is important to help students situate texts in familiar contexts. This technique helps ELs, in particular, to ground their learning and orient themselves to new ideas.

Additionally, all authors presume that they and their readers share some common ground; as students from different cultures, ELs are less likely to already possess what might seem to the teacher like “common knowledge.” For this reason, it is sometimes essential to provide your ELs with background knowledge that will get them ready to grapple with new texts. This may happen simply by having ELs listen to their English-proficient peers share their prior knowledge about a topic.

Example 1: Benjamin Franklin: Lesson 1, Activity 1

Students see a photograph of Benjamin Franklin and write what they know about him or what they think he may have done. For those students who already know about Benjamin Franklin, this activity gets them ready to connect the reading to their prior knowledge and understanding. For students who are mostly or entirely unfamiliar with Benjamin Franklin, this activity allows them to gain some essential information by listening to their peers' responses. This way, all students begin the unit on more or less equal footing, with the same sense of who Franklin was or what he might have done.

Example 2: Red Scarf Girl & Narrative: *Red Scarf Girl: A Memoir of the Cultural Revolution*, Lesson 1

This unit begins with students analyzing pictures of Chairman Mao and discussing how the artist wanted people to feel about Chairman Mao from the picture. Notice that in this case, no student (EL or English-proficient) is expected to already know a great deal about Mao or what he did. Rather, this activity helps all students get a general impression of the man, which primes them to read and learn about him through this unit's text.

Example 3: Brain Science: *Phineas Gage*, Lesson 1, Activity 1

This begins with students viewing a photograph of Phineas Gage's skull and the tamping iron. They discuss what would happen if this tamping iron went through someone's skull. This is a case where nearly all students, regardless of cultural background or prior education, can likely bring some knowledge to the table to make this prediction. By giving ELs the opportunity to activate their existing knowledge about the world, the teacher enables them to place Phineas Gage in a familiar context, which will make the text more interesting, sensible, and memorable.

Example 4: Poetry & Poe: Poetry, Lesson 1: Seeing Silence

Often, building background knowledge focuses on building content knowledge. However, it is equally important for teachers to build skill and strategy background knowledge. It is essential that teachers avoid assuming all students have the background knowledge around the many skills and strategies strong readers and writers utilize. Opportunities to develop skill and strategy background knowledge are particularly important for ELs, who may not have developed these skills in their prior schooling experience.

In this lesson, the teacher engages students in a series of whole-class activities aimed at developing the strategy of “visualizing” text, a technique that is a prerequisite to their success in later lessons. This sequence of activities provides students multiple guided opportunities to learn about, develop, and practice visualizing, thus helping students develop new knowledge of this reading comprehension strategy that can be used as a tool to access texts across the curriculum.

Universal Access Strategy 5: Visual supports**Teachers use visuals to guide all students’ language and content learning.**

Visual supports are meant to guide language and content learning because they can make the meaning of challenging language more transparent. Graphic organizers show the relationships among different parts of new concepts, or between new and known concepts. Graphs, anchor charts, pictures, realia, and tables can communicate ideas with little or no spoken or written language. This connection between verbal and visual information is especially useful for ELs. The layout of such visual aids should be clear and uncluttered.

Example 1: Character & Conflict: “Sucker” Lesson

In this lesson, the teacher prepares three charts on paper or a whiteboard before the start of the lesson. While reading the text, students continually add to the chart, using emoticons and short phrases to describe the characteristics of the three story characters. These charts stay up for the entire unit, forming an “anchor” that students can always refer to. This visual organization is essential to ELs because it captures information in a clear and concise way, so they need not fully depend on recall of a long written text.

Example 2: *Red Scarf Girl* & Narrative: Get Started Lessons 1 and 2

In these two lessons, the teacher introduces and displays three commonly used reference charts: the Rules for Writing, the Rules for Sharing, and Response Starters. These “anchor charts” are provided by Amplify ELA and can be either printed out or recopied onto larger paper and tailored to classroom needs. The two lessons teach students routines for using the anchor charts in their speaking and writing. The charts help ELs to know how to produce an appropriate answer, whether written or spoken, and add to each student’s toolbelt of discourse skills.

Example 3: Dahl & Narrative: Get Started Lessons 2 and 3

In this lesson, students are asked to write stories that take place in their own school. To support them, the teacher creates a simple map of the school on chart paper so students can keep track of the places they have written about. The teacher also posts commonly used reference charts, such as the Rules for Writing, the Rules for Sharing, and Response Starters. These “anchor charts” help ELs in particular to remember how to produce high-quality responses in a variety of contexts. In Lesson 3, the teacher shares 2-4 examples of student writing with the class that exemplify using precise details. ELs can view a model of what their writing should contain, and follow this pattern to ensure they include the essentials.

Example 4: The Greeks: Prometheus, Lesson 1: Zeus vs. Prometheus, Discussion Activity

This lesson continues the unit focus on character traits and their consequences. In preparation for this lesson, teachers are asked to prepare chart paper with the labels “More Interesting” and “More Dangerous” and to post these in a highly visible area in the classroom. The charts are used during the “Discussion” activity to record student responses as they provide evidence to support answers to previously posed comprehension questions.

Charts such as these are an important support for ELs, as they provide a visual supplement to oral responses, further assisting ELs’ processing of information and language. In this way, charts support student learning and serve as a reference for ELs who may need additional language and content scaffolds to fully access the concepts under study.

Example 5: The Frida & Diego Collection: Write an Essay, Lesson 2: Making a Claim and Writing a Body Paragraph, Present: Body Paragraphs (Card 3)

In this lesson, students will start writing research essays by making a claim and supporting that claim with textual evidence. Before they begin, the teacher reviews the elements of a research essay by referring to and explaining a written list of all the necessary components. The written words visually complement the teacher’s explanations. This list is in the online sequence of activities, so students can repeatedly return to it for help as they compose.

Visual supports like this list of the elements of a research essay are particularly helpful for ELs. Visual supports free up cognitive space, allowing ELs to focus on the content of the assignment without getting overwhelmed by trying to memorize the steps in the task or the components of the final product.

Universal Access Strategy 6: Oral language development**Teachers provide opportunities for all students to practice academic discourse frequently.**

We learn language by using language. Discussion and interaction strengthen all students' academic language skills, but are especially important for ELs. ELs need daily opportunities to learn and practice oral English for their literacy skills to flourish. With time and many opportunities to listen, observe, participate, and interact, ELs progress in understanding and are able to produce language that is increasingly complex and complete. ELs learn English by interacting with more-proficient peers; however, even if all the students in a class are ELs, talking is helpful for language and literacy development. Some activities within the classroom that promote oral interaction include whole-class discussions, Think-Pair-Share (TPS), peer questioning in groups, and partner talk.

Example 1: Brain Science: *Phineas Gage*, Lesson 5

In this lesson, students Think-Pair-Share. First, they consider a question, generate an answer, and write it down. Then, they find a partner with a different answer and discuss how they arrived at these different ideas. They revisit the text, as necessary, to support their answer. This is effective because ELs may feel nervous about talking in a large group with their limited English proficiency, but in sharing with one person, they can practice in a lower-stakes environment and develop confidence in addressing a larger audience later. Also, when paired with an English-proficient speaker, an EL has a model of oral production to follow.

Example 2: Poetry & Poe: *"The Tell-Tale Heart"*, Lesson 5

In this lesson, students work in groups of 3-4 to argue that the narrator of the story is either legally sane or insane. Students work together to orally discuss their observations and thoughts, while finding evidence in the text and recording it on their Evidence Sheet. This is effective for ELs because they can share their thoughts within a smaller audience and practice their language before sharing out with the whole group. Talking is also a scaffold for writing: by getting their ideas out orally first, ELs will have an easier time writing them down.

Example 3: Tom & Sherlock: *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, Lesson 4

In this lesson, students compare their completed character matrix with a partner's matrix. Students discuss their ideas and defend their choices with evidence from the text. This is effective for ELs because it provides an opportunity to practice citing evidence from the text and orally debating why they chose an answer. Students with limited oral English proficiency can imitate how their English-proficient partners support their own arguments.

Universal Access Strategy 7: Attention to language forms**Teachers foster discussions of how to effectively use words and conventions to convey meaning in context.**

In the Amplify classroom, all students are learning new vocabulary, conventions, and structures every day. This focus on form is essential for all students as they expand their mastery of academic English, but is especially helpful for ELs, and the program seamlessly weaves in opportunities for students at a range of proficiency levels to expand their English skills. All students practice vocabulary daily, but teachers can have their students work either on the mainstream vocabulary lessons or on the alternative vocabulary activities for ELs. Flex Days, built into each unit, give teachers the opportunity to give these students distinct assignments focusing on their individual needs. The *Mastering Conventions* book guides teachers to deliver appropriate form-focused lessons to their students, from learning about parts of speech to conveying a formal tone in their writing. At all times, teachers emphasize that learning vocabulary and grammar are not just ends in themselves, but rather means to effective communication. All discussions of conventions center around how they help us construct meaning.

Example 1: Character & Conflict: “Sucker”, Lesson 1

In every Amplify ELA text, certain words that may present challenges to students are lightly highlighted. When clicked, these words reveal simpler or more common synonyms, instantly clarifying the unfamiliar term without interrupting the flow of reading or taking students out of the text. For example, in their first Solo reading of Carson McCullers’ text “Sucker,” students can click on *tacked*, *swell*, and *meddling* and see the respective synonyms *nailed*, *great*, and *interfering*. The Reveal Words have been chosen because they are essential to gleaning the meaning of a passage, or common across many academic texts, or both.

Reveal Words give students control over the amount of support they use to access a text, so that students with broad vocabularies may ignore them completely, while students who are just beginning to master English can click on each one. Even students who are relatively proficient in English may use the reveal words to refresh or deepen their knowledge of a word.

Example 2: Reading the Novel: *M.C. Higgins, The Great* Vocabulary, Lesson 1

Before every Amplify ELA lesson, students work on vocabulary terms essential to understanding the lesson’s focal passage. For example, in this lesson students study the words *ponderous*, *lithe*, *gingerly*, and *endured*. These four words, which also appear as Reveal Words in the text, are either important for understanding the text, or found across many academic contexts, or both. Students are guided to infer the meaning of the words by repeatedly seeing them in sentences full of context clues. They then receive immediate feedback to keep them on track as they develop understanding of the words. In some lessons, students may see pictures, definitions, and examples of each word used in context. In some exercises, instead of choosing synonyms, students judge whether a new word is used correctly in context. Amplify ELA also provides differentiated vocabulary activities for ELs, which are explained in the Differentiated Access Strategies document.

Example 3: Red Scarf Girl & Narrative: *Red Scarf Girl: A Memoir of the Cultural Revolution*, Lesson 6

In this lesson, titled “Getting the Right Verb,” students are guided to discover the importance of word choice in their writing. By highlighting strong student writing, the teacher helps all students consider how to choose descriptive terms like “dashed” or “dawdled” rather than plain-old “walked.” This kind of lesson helps students understand that vocabulary is not just words to be memorized, but is rather a powerful tool for influencing how their audience experiences their writing. ELs, in particular, benefit from this attention to how English works to construct meaning.

Example 4: Dahl & Narrative: Get Started, Lesson 10

Learning to communicate effectively is at the core of language arts study. Although conventions may seem like a series of isolated rules, they can also be viewed as an agreed-upon system that facilitates communication. If we put no punctuation or capital letters in our sentences and spelled however we wanted, we would be harder to understand. Conventions can impact how readers experience text.

In the last lesson of every Get Started lesson series (in each unit), you will find links to the Amplify ELA Mastering Conventions guide, a 1,000-page book that covers grammar and conventions topics relevant to Grades 3-8. Mastering Conventions lessons empower all students to control the techniques necessary to have the greatest impact on their audience. The key lessons for each grade have been sequenced and placed into each of the first ten Flex Days, following the grammar pacing schedule which can be found in the Grammar section of this guide. However, Amplify encourages teachers to use this book strategically to meet the needs of their classes: Some topics might be appropriate for the whole group, while others may only need to be taught to a small group or individuals. Still other lessons can be skipped altogether. Use this guide to meet ELs where they are in their English development, and to take them one step further.

Universal Access Strategy 8: Working With Text Out Loud

Students (1) perform theater exercises with text, (2) view and listen to dramatic readings of text, and (3) may hear audio versions of every required reading as they need them.

Students benefit from reading texts in a variety of ways, not just alone in their heads. Dramatic readings and oral performances of written texts can make complex texts more enjoyable, but they can also enhance students' comprehension of what they read. The option to work with text out loud is especially important for ELs, who may be able to understand more through listening than they can through independent reading. Throughout the Amplify ELA units, students are exposed to a variety of experiences with texts, including optional audio versions that they can activate for every reading.

Example 1: Red Scarf Girl & Narrative: *Red Scarf Girl: A Memoir of the Cultural Revolution*, Lesson 2

In this lesson, students are first “treated” to a monotonous read-aloud of the key moment in Cinderella when she meets the Prince at the ball. Students discuss what made the reading ineffective, and a student volunteer then models a skilled oral reading. Next, select students act out a scene from the chapter they read the night before, emphasizing with their voices the range of feelings the narrator, Ji-li, moves through in just a few minutes. This theater exercise helps all students connect printed text to spoken language, and is especially helpful for ELs, who are able to experience this crucial scene through two modalities: once through reading, and once through viewing and listening (or acting and speaking).

Example 2: Tom & Sherlock: *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, Lesson 1

At the beginning of many units, students are treated to dramatic read-alouds of the focal text, performed on video by skilled actors. In this lesson, actor Jeffrey Tambor reads aloud the introductory chapter of *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, a performance that brings the archaic language to life and makes the text far more accessible. All students benefit from experiencing texts in multiple modalities, but ELs in particular are likely to experience greater comprehension of this passage after seeing it come alive on video.

Example 3: Red Scarf Girl & Narrative: *Red Scarf Girl: A Memoir of the Cultural Revolution*, Lesson 1

When students come to the Solo reading in this lesson, “The Liberation Army Dancer,” they may activate the text-to-audio feature. Students come to middle school with a range of skills in decoding texts. ELs, in particular, may understand a lot more when listening than they can when reading, especially if they are new to English literacy. No student should be denied access to the challenging and enriching texts in the Amplify ELA program, which is why every passage is accompanied by an audio reading that students may use. At the top of each passage is a small loudspeaker icon. When clicked, it launches an audio version of the text, recorded by a skilled reader who models accurate pronunciation and good prosody.

Universal Access Strategy 9: Working from routines

All students benefit from a clear, structured routine where they know what to expect. When teachers demonstrate and consistently use instructional routines, students are able to focus less on figuring out what is expected of them and more on the content of the lessons. This is especially true for ELs, because writing and oral discussion routines put students at ease and free up cognitive space, allowing them to take their language production and comprehension further.

Example 1: Red Scarf Girl & Narrative: Get Started, Lesson 2, Activity 2

In this lesson, the teacher projects a chart for the “Rules of Writing” to discuss with students as they embark on their writing assignment. Criteria on this list include: write the entire time, don’t distract your classmates, ask for help when needed and then return to writing, and no breaks for water or Internet surfing. Students then brainstorm for a few minutes about the things that usually keep them from getting their work done. With these criteria in mind, students practice staying on task for 10 minutes and writing about one moment, a time when they were finally able to do something that they had not been able to do before. Students will return to this routine regularly throughout the year. Setting up a solid writing routine where students stay on task and persevere, ensures that students can use the time well within a lesson to generate quality, thoughtful writing. The Rules for Writing are frequently referenced and utilized throughout many Amplify ELA writing activities.

Example 2: Red Scarf Girl & Narrative: Get Started, Lesson 5, Activity 6

In this lesson, students give their classmates feedback about a specific place in the writing that made an impact on them. Students are given a specific list of response starters to use in addressing their peers’ written work, such as, “I saw what you meant about _____ when you wrote _____.” Providing conversation sentence frames to refer to and establishing a structured discussion forum enables all learners to use the same language and lowers inhibitions in sharing aloud. The routine also makes the student whose writing is being shared feel more at ease. He or she knows what kinds of comments to expect. This creates a safe place to share personal beliefs, challenge the thoughts of others, and learn from different points of view. The Response Starters chart is referred to and utilized frequently in many Amplify ELA lessons. While beneficial to all learners, this is particularly helpful to ELs who may rely on the sentence starters to share their thoughts, or who may be especially unsure about sharing their work with peers.

Example 3: Red Scarf Girl & Narrative: Get Started, Lesson 1

In this lesson, students are asked to think of a disgusting food they ate and a face they made when eating it. They then share this work with a partner. Amplify ELA realizes that it can be difficult to share your work with other people—especially when you’re writing about things you care about. Therefore, it’s important for classmates to let the person sharing know that they are paying close, respectful attention to their work. The teacher shares a list of criteria for students to adhere to if they are either the reader or the listener. Many students in middle school are hesitant to share their personal feelings or work, especially ELs, who may not have the language confidence to accomplish the task. However, setting a routine of how to read and how to listen encourages a climate of fairness, respect, and optimal learning within a classroom.

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?

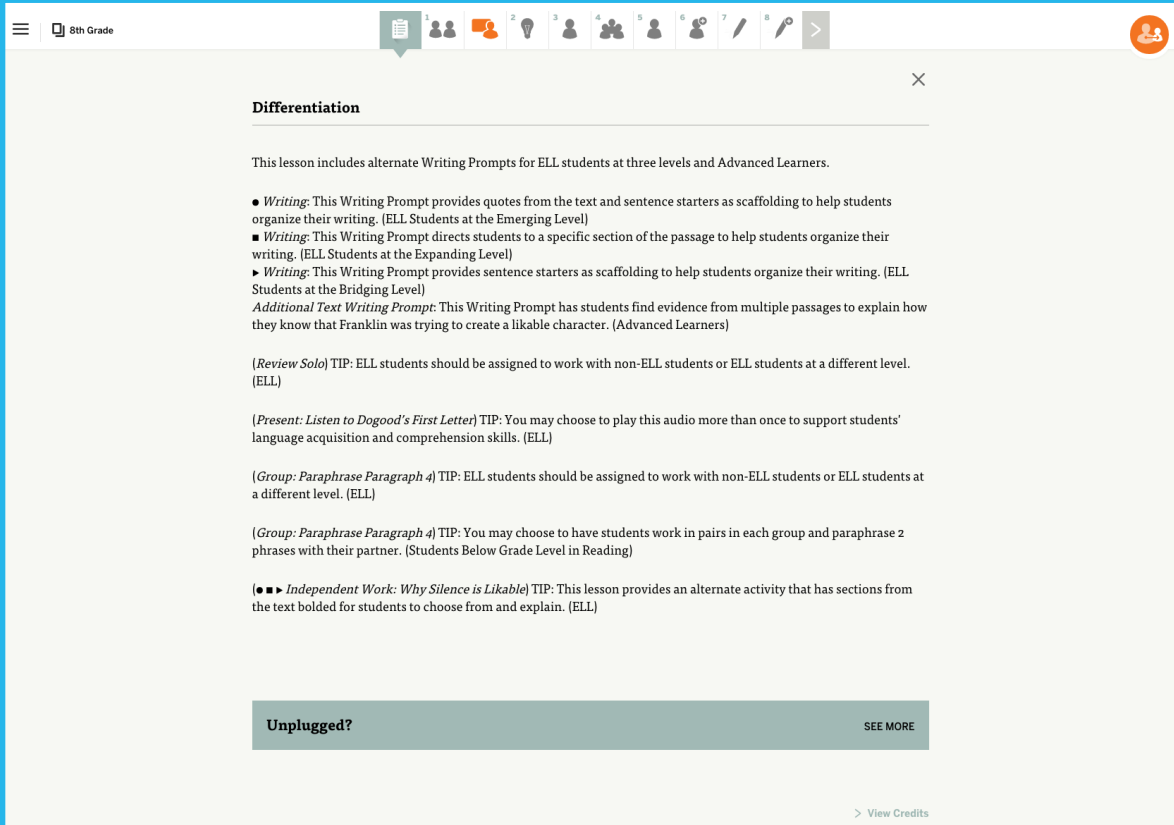
Every lesson brief has a section called, "Differentiation." When the teacher scrolls down in the lesson brief, he or she will see that section, collapsed, and it looks like this:

The screenshot shows 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 bar is a horizontal toolbar with icons for a checklist, a group of people, a speech bubble, a lightbulb, a group of people, a person, a group of people, a person, 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 contains the text: '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?** (partially visible)

The 'Differentiation' section is currently collapsed, and the expanded view shown in the blue box below it provides the detailed text for that section.

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 tips and instructions for differentiating instruction for ELL students. At the bottom of the content area, there is a dark green button labeled 'Unplugged?' and a 'SEE MORE' link. A 'View Credits' link is located at the bottom right of the interface.

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)

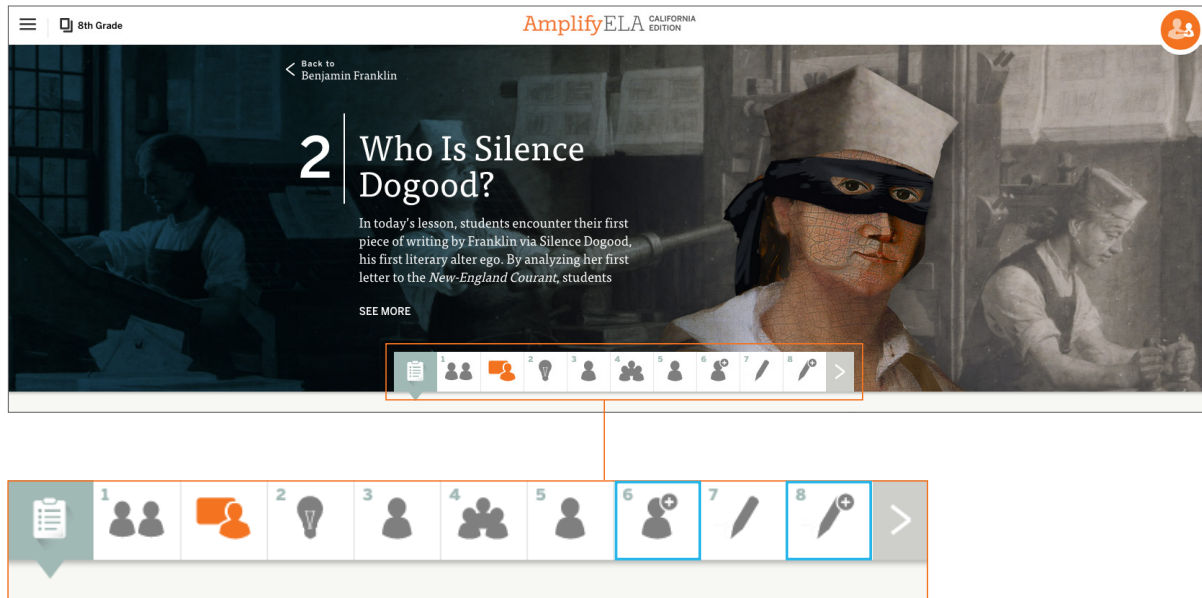
(Group: Paraphrase Paragraph 4) TIP: You may choose to have students work in pairs in each group and paraphrase 2 phrases with their partner. (Students Below Grade Level in Reading)

● ■ *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.

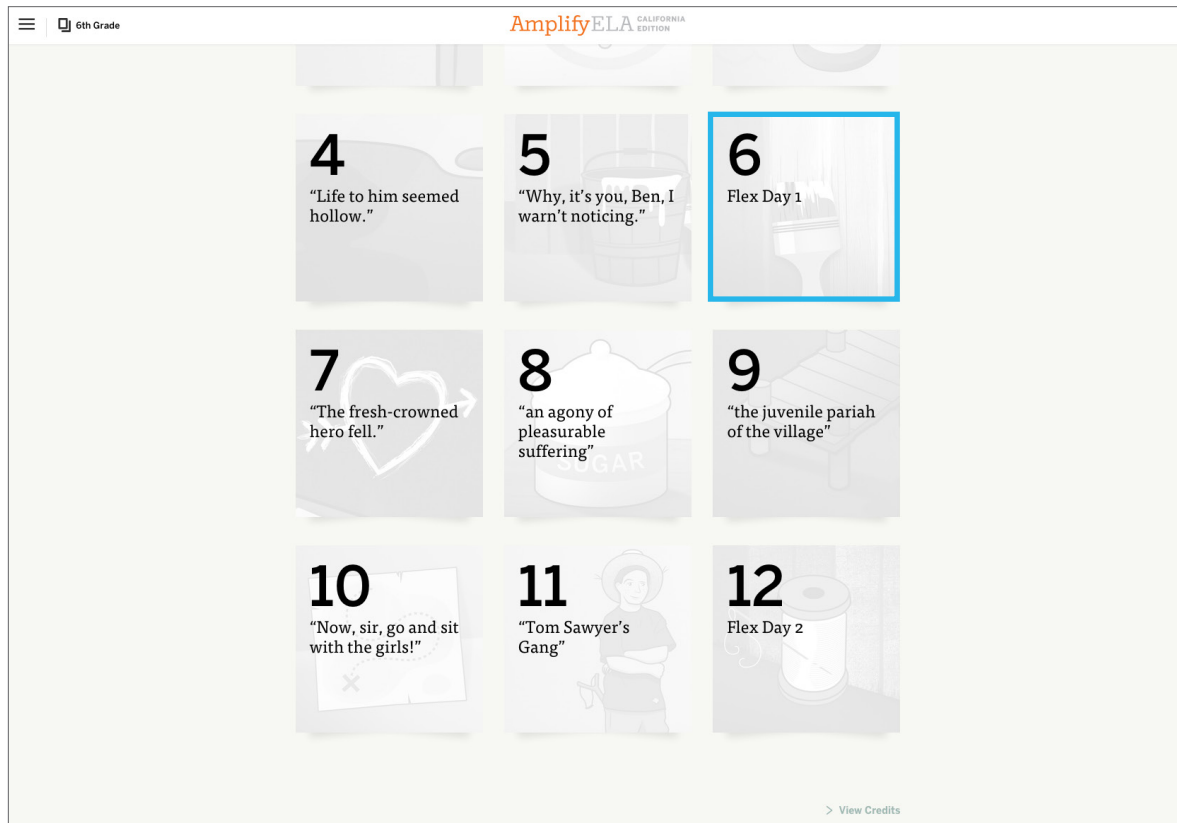
The square ■ indicates an activity at the Expanding level.

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.

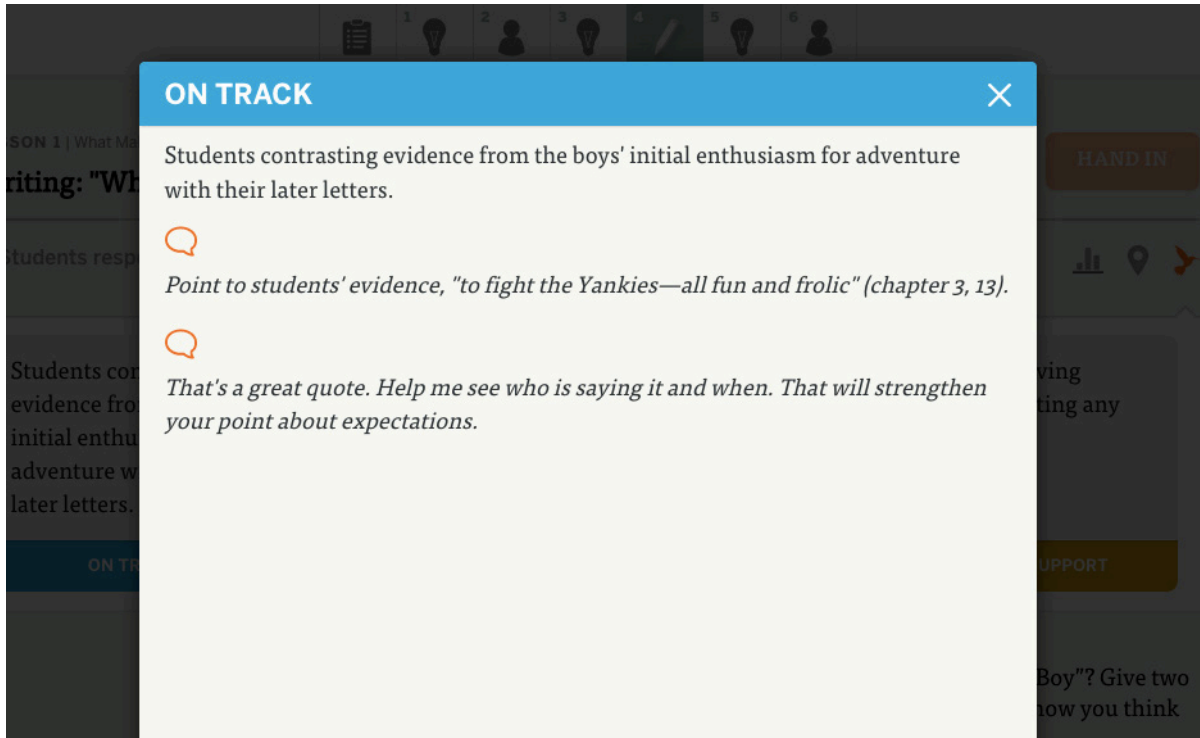
The Amplify program knows how hard it is for teachers to find time to do this differentiated instruction and so builds in Flex Days in the section on the UDL structure of the Amplify ELA lesson, described above, for teachers to work with small groups or individuals on these varied needs for foundational 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 asks: "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: "When you are finished, copy and paste your writing into the first pencil icon, the one without the plus sign." 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.

Integrated instruction for English Learners

The core ELA teacher is responsible for ensuring the success of English Learners by sensitively scaffolding their learning as their needs change across language domains. Collaborating with the ELD teacher is a key part of this work. But, the core teacher will be operating independently in his or her own classroom, and so Amplify offers the core ELA teacher the following guidance to help choose which level of scaffolding to offer his or her ELs.

Following this guidance, the teacher will find a guide for collaborating with the ELD teacher on meeting the needs of ELs—and through this collaboration, the core teacher will learn much more about the learning needs of each of his or her English Learners.

In the core lessons, vocabulary, reading, writing, and speaking activities are differentiated for students working at the Emerging, Expanding, and Bridging levels in the following ways:

- Students working at the Emerging level need substantial support, therefore scaffolded activities provide them with sentence starters and sentence frames. Many of the sentence frames are fill-in-the-blank activities or short answers to support them when they respond to a writing prompt or a short-answer question. These supports help build understanding and effective use of the language. For writing about the text, students working at the Emerging level are often given direct quotes to use so that they can focus on their writing and not on having to identify what to write about. During vocabulary activities, students working at the Emerging level should work with the interactive Word Match activities that provide images, simple definitions, Spanish translations, and contextual sentences.
- Students working at the Expanding level are provided with the same or slightly modified speaking and writing prompts, with three sentence frames for support. These supports provide guiding questions and sentence starters as scaffolding to help students organize their speaking and writing. Once students working at the Emerging level work with these sentence frames, these students should be encouraged to produce writing more freely, based on this structured beginning.
- Students working at the Bridging level are provided with the same ELA prompts as their fully English-proficient classmates, but they are provided with two sentence starters or sentence frames as optional scaffolding to help them organize their speaking and writing, as they see fit.

ELA guide for communication and collaboration

Amplify has created the Amplify ELD curriculum to support core Amplify ELA lessons so that ELs across all levels of proficiency can access and fully engage in rigorous grade-level content. These lessons consistently interact with and influence each other. It is imperative that an ELD teacher and an ELA teacher collaborate to provide a rich learning experience for English Learners, allowing them to learn content while simultaneously developing language skills. ELA and ELD teachers each bring unique talents, viewpoints, and expertise to the education venue. *Collaboration is the key to success.* There are several ways in which this collaboration can be achieved.

One approach to collaboration is to use the Same Lesson Pacing. In this type of pacing, the ELA and ELD teacher teach the same lesson on the same day, with the ELA teacher teaching the core lesson and the ELD teacher teaching the ELD version of the lesson. For example, if students read the ELA *Red Scarf Girl*, Lesson 1: “The World of *Red Scarf Girl*” on Monday in the ELA class, they should then be working on the same text in the ELD *Red Scarf Girl*, Lesson 1: “The Happiest Girl in the World” in the ELD classroom. Teaching the same lesson serves as a reteaching opportunity of critical language skills needed to better engage with the content. Students would, in essence, be “double-dipping” by practicing the same content twice in one day, and in turn build confidence in academic language. In some ELA units, there may not be a corresponding ELD lesson that fits the same text. On these days, the ELD teacher has the flexibility to focus on extension activities from previous ELA lessons to amplify students’ oral discourse and writing skills.

An alternate approach to keeping the same pacing of lessons between the ELA and ELD classrooms is to implement Staggered Pacing. In this pacing, lessons are staggered by 1-2 days, where the ELD teacher is continually 1-2 days ahead of the ELA classroom pacing of lessons. The ELD teacher could pre-teach a selected text, focusing on difficult vocabulary, practicing oral sentence starters, building background, and making text-to-self connections with the students. This “jump-start” to language demands featured in upcoming lessons would allow all students to equally access the core content. For example, in collaborative planning, if an ELD teacher knows that the ELA teacher is currently teaching Lesson 6: “Revisiting to Go Deeper” of the *Red Scarf Girl*, he or she can teach Lesson 8: “The Teachers Were Nowhere to Be Seen” of the *Red Scarf Girl*. The students would then be practicing the skills of finding text evidence to reveal a character’s feelings and sharing orally with peers two days prior to engaging with these language demands in the ELA classroom. The advanced exposure to unknown vocabulary, fluency practice, oral discourse about the content, and modeled think-alouds in their ELD classroom days before will benefit all ELs and set students up for success in their ELA classroom lesson. This approach would equally build students’ confidence in academic language.

Ideally, an ELA and an ELD teacher would meet one time per week for a 20-30 minute formal conversation regarding students’ individual progress and overall lesson pacing. It is suggested that this meeting take place mid-week, on a Wednesday or Thursday, so that the two teachers could discuss what has been taught in Lessons 1 and 2 of the 6-Lesson Cycle pacing of the ELD curriculum. Timing is crucial; the ELD teacher will want to follow closely which text has been taught by the ELA teacher, whether the two teachers are following the Same Lesson Pacing or a Staggered Pacing. For example, in a Same Lesson Pacing scenario, the ELD teacher may need to use the adapted ELA text for students working at the Emerging level, or focus on different vocabulary (highlighted within Amplify’s ELD lessons) for further discussion within the Expanding or Bridging levels.

While looking back at what has been taught in Lessons 1 and 2, the ELA teacher can relay individual student needs or strengths that have appeared, so that the ELD teacher can better support each individual learner in the following days' ELD lessons. For example, In the ELA Red Scarf Girl, Lesson 1: "The Happiest Girl in the World", students read a passage of text about a character, Ji-li. If the ELA teacher noticed that Student Z was having difficulty comprehending the text and making a personal connection orally, the ELD teacher could then set a priority to go through the text at a slower pace or use the adapted version of the text (in Amplify's Emerging level activity) with Student Z, as well as use sentence frames to support language production. The ELA and ELD teacher should also collaborate during this time to look ahead at lesson pacing. Are the lessons accurately on track, taking into account any holidays, assemblies, or the need to review/reteach content? Will the upcoming text mirror the 6-Lesson Cycle? Together, the teachers can co-plan the following week of pacing. A general agenda and timeline for a collaboration meeting may look like this:

- **Review:** Review the previous three days of lessons, specifically the text featured and major learning activities and objectives (5-7 minutes).
- **Reflect and Analyze:** Discuss individual students' strengths and needs that have developed in relation to accessing and engaging with the content (10 minutes).
- **Plan:** Project a pacing guideline of the next week's lessons, including the text featured and possible language demands (10 minutes).

In addition to weekly meetings, Amplify strongly encourages frequent informal communication via email to collaborate and monitor student progress between the ELA and ELD classroom. Email communication may include samples of student writing that has been "handed in" electronically by the student, or observational notes of a student's interaction within the classroom. This communication should be a two-way street; the ELA teacher should share work samples and data, and the ELD teacher should similarly share progress in meeting language goals previously established in a weekly collaboration meeting. The emails may be brief since both teachers are preoccupied with their teaching duties, however they are rich in importance. Depending on a school's policies, the school could choose to let both the ELD and ELA teacher access the Amplify ELA Gradebook scores of each other's classroom assignments to track student growth and analyze areas of need. By working together, this communication will paint a clear picture of where a student needs more or less scaffolding to better access the content and meet the CA CCSS. It will ensure that ELs are developing their language skills and making steady progress toward closing the academic language gap.