

Summative assessments

Amplify summative assessments ask students to integrate several skills and ensure that students are making adequate progress at key points in the year and that all parties are kept informed about their status. Amplify offers two kinds of summative assessments:

1. Reading and writing benchmark assessments that help the teacher evaluate where students are in their learning progress with key reading and writing skills, and determine whether they are on track to performing well on annual state summative assessments. These tests are administered outside of the Amplify ELA platform, under testing conditions.
2. End-of-unit essays in which students integrate all of the reading and writing skills they have developed up until that point, apply some new skills having to do with writing longer pieces with multiple drafts, and produce a polished, edited piece of work over several lessons.

Each kind of summative assessment is explained in full below:

Benchmark assessments by Amplify mCLASS Beacon

The two types of assessments per grade are each designed to be completed in 45 minutes and are administered in the early fall (around week 3) and mid-winter (around week 20).

Reading comprehension assessment: measures students' comprehension of texts in literature and non-fiction across a wide range of standards.

Writing assessment: measures students' ability to write an argument or an informative extended response that synthesizes evidence from two texts.

Assessments are delivered through the Amplify mCLASS Beacon web-based platform, and all necessary assessment materials can also be downloaded as PDFs to be administered in a paper-pencil format. mClass Beacon can report results to schools with information on individual student performance or class performance.

Teachers and administrators compare a student's first and second benchmarks to determine whether the student is making progress. The assessments will also help teachers reflect on upcoming instruction to plan effectively and readjust priorities and resources.

Reading comprehension assessment

Overview

The mClass Beacon reading comprehension assessment is designed to show progress toward comprehension of texts that students will read on annual state summative assessments. Specifically, this assessment shows whether students comprehend text of a certain type and complexity, as expressed by quantitative (Lexile) and qualitative measures. Through the reading comprehension assessments, students become familiar with the range of language and types of questions used in the year-end assessments. Each assessment includes three types of authentic text from the 6-to-8 Lexile band: fiction, narrative non-fiction, and informational non-fiction. Each assessment will have one short constructed response question and one extended constructed response question, in order to assess students' ability to respond to and analyze a text using writing skills.

Administering the test

The reading assessment is designed to be completed during a 45-minute class period. Amplify suggests that the teacher administer Reading Assessment 1 after students have completed three weeks of the Amplify ELA lessons (approximately 15 lessons). Reading Assessment 2 should be administered after students have completed about 20 weeks of the Amplify ELA lessons. This time frame allows the teacher time to evaluate students' performance and plan additional support before the state summative assessments.

Scoring

The Amplify mCLASS Beacon Web-based platform will contain the correct answers needed to score selected responses and the rubrics used to score constructed responses. If students are entering answers directly onto the platform, most item types are auto-scored, but constructed and extended responses need to be scored by the teacher using an online scoring tool or by bubbles in rubric scores on an answer sheet.

Each correct answer and rubric is aligned with specific CCSS standards, and, overall, the items represent a balance of all the standards. For this reason, the composite score is the best indicator whether students comprehend text of the type and complexity they will encounter on future state summative assessments.

Working with assessment results

A student's composite score on the reading assessment is an important but not solely predictive indicator of whether that student is on track to perform well on future state summative assessments. The teacher should not expect the majority of students to exhibit mastery with each reading assessment; they are implemented early enough in the year that teachers have plenty of time to respond. For students who score below proficient, teachers should keep careful track of their performance on the regular formative reading assessments. In the section above on formative assessments, a teacher will find suggestions for how to respond when a student is not making progress in reading comprehension.

Writing assessment

Overview

The mCLASS Beacon writing assessments are designed to show progress with the type of writing tasks that students will encounter on annual state summative assessments. Each writing assessment includes one extended response question focused on two non-fiction passages, in order to assess students' ability to analyze and synthesize two texts. Specifically, this assessment shows whether students can write using clear focus, developed evidence, logical structure, and maintain control over conventions. These are four skills students will practice using the Amplify lessons and that align to the major writing strands evaluated on the summative state assessments. Through the writing assessments, students become familiar with the range of texts and types of questions used in the year-end assessments.

Administering the assessment

Each writing assessment is designed to be completed during a 45 minute class period. Amplify suggests that the teacher administer Writing Assessment 1 after students have completed three weeks of the Amplify ELA lessons (approximately 15 lessons). Writing Assessment 2 should be administered after students have completed about 20 weeks of the Amplify ELA lessons. This time frame allows the teacher time to evaluate students' performance and plan additional support before the state summative assessments.

Scoring

Each writing assessment can be scored for Focus, Use of Evidence, Logical Structure, and Conventions. The teacher scores each skill separately, and can score between 1-4 on these skills. The Amplify ELA mCLASS Beacon web-based platform contains the four rubrics used to score the writing of extended responses. The student writing responses need to be scored by the teacher using an online scoring tool or by bubbles in rubric scores on an answer sheet.

Each of the four rubrics is aligned with specific CCSS standards, and, overall, the items represent a balance of all the standards measured by the state summative assessments. In this case, however, look at the score for each of the four skills as a distinct entity; this will provide the most accurate information about how students are progressing and which students may need extra support.

Working with assessment results

A student's scores on the writing assessment is an important but not solely predictive indicator of whether that student is on track to perform well on state summative assessments. The teacher should not expect the majority of students to exhibit proficiency with each skill on Assessment 1, and in fact, even by Assessment 2, teachers should rest assured that they still have significant time to make progress with these students before the state assessment. Use the rubric scores from these assessments in conjunction with the rubric scores you see on the students' formative writing assessments to decide which skill to target next for each student. See more information about how to target each of these writing skills in the section on that formative writing assessment.

Essay writing

The essays are an opportunity for teachers to assess whether students can integrate the understanding and skills they have built throughout a unit into the production of one extended piece of writing. In each unit, the teacher will find a sub-unit containing lessons dedicated to the instruction, production, and assessment of this essay. Amplify recognizes that essay writing is the most complex expression of ELA skills and thus carefully breaks down each part of the process into its component parts and teaches it in a logical order—both within the lessons in each of the sub-units and also by carefully building the essay sub-units so that they build on one another. Because students are integrating so many skills in the essay units, and managing a multiday project, the essay units are particularly careful about controlling the amount of new information presented to the students by helping students find explicit connections back to the points in the unit where they have originally learned about a topic or skill necessary to complete the essay.

The essays vary from unit to unit because they each point students to finding the unique insights and energy of the texts in that unit; however, there are many common elements so that students can practice essay writing skills and systematically build towards a real comfort with the form.

These essay lessons are different from the lessons in the other sub-units in that each day's work builds toward one complete, polished piece of writing that students will complete by the end of the essay sub-unit. Thus, the lessons keep returning to the work of the previous days. The digital tools go a long way toward helping middle school students maintain organization throughout this process. The revision process in these lessons uses the same steps students have previously followed in Revision Assignments (see more about Revision Assignments in the Feedback section). However, during essay lessons, students are not just doing exercises to practice a skill; instead, they are trying to actually improve the final piece, as in traditional revising.

The essay lessons early in the year start simply so that students can focus on integrating what they have learned in the unit while completing this multiday task. Over time, as they write many essays and work on writing in other ways, students develop the organizational skills and effective revision habits that result in better, more polished essays.

By the end of the year, students are writing essays that flow from their internalized understanding of argumentative structure, rather than adhering to the rules of a formula. The Lesson Brief for the first essay lesson in the sequence explains the logic behind its sequencing of elements and provides details about writing an essay on each unit's text(s).

Writing skills in essays

For the essay writing skills, Amplify has chosen a summative approach to make sure to capture the broad range of writing skills that students need to perform. This longer list of skills that Amplify assesses in the essay contrasts with the short focused list of just three skills that the formative assessments focus on in every single writing prompt, twice a week. The formative assessments enable the teacher to see patterns weekly and adjust daily lessons, while the summative assessments check more thoroughly and make sure students' skills are developing across the whole range of standards.

Each essay sub-unit focuses on particular skills, building the students' capacity to master the whole essay by the middle of each grade. The rubrics and the specific skills that each essay focuses on is included in the lesson materials for that essay. Below you will find a list of the skills addressed in the essay units and the rubrics provided for scoring. Notice that the skills of Use of Evidence and Logical Structure are broken out into sub-skills. These two skills are particularly important when writing an essay and by assessing the sub-skills separately, the teacher can provide an overall grade that is weighted toward a student's ability to craft an argument or present information and also understand the extent to which the student is having either trouble sourcing the evidence or connecting it logically.

Focus

1 Needs Improvement	2 Developing Proficiency	3 Proficient	4 Exceeds Expectations
Almost none of the sentences develop one overall idea	Some sentences develop one overall idea.	Most sentences develop one overall idea.	All sentences develop one overall idea.

Use of Evidence: Describing

1 Needs Improvement	2 Developing Proficiency	3 Proficient	4 Exceeds Expectations
The student does not describe what s/he notices in textual evidence.	The student describes what s/he notices in some pieces of textual evidence.	The student describes what s/he notices in most pieces of textual evidence.	The student describes what s/he notices in all pieces of textual evidence.

Use of Evidence: Explaining

1 Needs Improvement	2 Developing Proficiency	3 Proficient	4 Exceeds Expectations
The student does not explain the connection between the evidence and the overall ideas.	The student explains the connection between some of the evidence and the overall ideas.	The student explains the connection between most of the evidence and the overall ideas.	The student explains the connection between all of the evidence and the overall ideas.

Logical Structure: Paragraphs

1 Needs Improvement	2 Developing Proficiency	3 Proficient	4 Exceeds Expectations
Almost none of the paragraphs focus on a clearly defined topic or idea.	Some paragraphs focus on a clearly defined topic or idea.	All paragraphs focus on a clearly defined topic or idea.	All paragraphs focus on a clearly defined topic or idea and build on or refer to the idea in other paragraphs.

Logical Structure: Introduction

1 Needs Improvement	2 Developing Proficiency	3 Proficient	4 Exceeds Expectations
Does not include an engaging lead that is connected to the overall idea. Student has not written a claim statement that articulates one overall idea.	Includes a lead that is somewhat connected to the overall idea. Student has not written a claim statement that somewhat articulates one overall idea.	Includes a lead that is connected to the overall idea. Student has not written a claim statement that articulates one overall idea.	Includes an engaging lead that is closely connected to the overall idea. Student has written a claim statement that skillfully articulates one overall idea.

Logical Structure: Conclusion

1 Needs Improvement	2 Developing Proficiency	3 Proficient	4 Exceeds Expectations
Does not follow from the overall idea. Does not include a final thought.	Somewhat follows from the overall idea and includes a final thought.	Follows from the overall idea and includes a final thought.	Clearly follows from the overall idea and includes a final thought.

Conventions: Sentence Completion and Punctuation

1 Needs Improvement	2 Developing Proficiency	3 Proficient	4 Exceeds Expectations
There are many fragments and/or run-ons that prevent the reader from understanding the writing.	Most sentences are complete. Errors do impede the reader's ability to understand the writing.	Most sentences are complete and punctuated correctly. Errors might distract the reader but do not impede the readers ability to understand the writing.	Almost all sentences are complete and punctuated correctly.

Conventions: Punctuation and Citation of Direct Quotes

1 Needs Improvement	2 Developing Proficiency	3 Proficient	4 Exceeds Expectations
Quotes are not punctuated and cited according to the Guidelines for Punctuating and Citing a Direct Quote.	Some quotes are punctuated and cited according to the Guidelines for Punctuating and Citing a Direct Quote.	Most quotes are punctuated and cited according to the Guidelines for Punctuating and Citing a Direct Quote.	All quotes are punctuated and cited according to the Guidelines for Punctuating and Citing a Direct Quote.