

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.