

## **Publisher’s Response, Amplify CKLA Skills**

We wish to thank the team at EdReports for a thorough and insightful review of the Amplify Core Knowledge Language Arts (CKLA) Skills program for Grades K-2. For Amplify, it has been a labor of love to partner with the Core Knowledge Foundation to create and continuously improve the Amplify CKLA program, so it was gratifying to see such careful attention to, and appreciation for, what we have created. We find such rigorous feedback useful for making our program better, and we routinely adjust and improve the program based on such insights.

Amplify CKLA originated in response to the reading crisis in today’s schools. Too many students are not reading on grade level by the end of Grade 3—an indicator of future success. We knew that new approaches were necessary, because research demonstrates that the act of reading requires both decoding—that is, translating the written code to oral language—and comprehension, the act of using prior knowledge, language skills, and reasoning skills to form connections and make meaning (Gough & Tunmer, 1986; Graesser et al., 2011; Graesser et al., 1994).

We will not make any of our own comments on the review, except to say that Amplify fully appreciates the valuable feedback we received. We would also like to highlight that all Amplify CKLA Skills materials are available online for planning and instructional purposes. One very important addition to our components to enhance foundational skills instruction is the Sound Library. The Sound Library features audio files, songs, and short, animated videos that provide pronunciation guidance for every phoneme. These files can be projected directly from the Teacher Resource site or can be downloaded to devices. Amplify CKLA e-books of the decodable Readers and Reader audiobooks are also available on the site.

Thank you, EdReports, for the important work you do in helping educators discover high-quality programs and for the feedback you have given us. We will add your insights to the comments we receive from teachers and students using our program every day, providing the foundation for how we will keep improving Amplify CKLA Skills.

## References

Gough, P. B., & Tunmer, W. E. (1986). Decoding, reading, and reading disability. *Remedial and Special Education*, 7(1), 6–10.

Graesser, A. C., Millis, K., and Graesser, A. (2011). Discourse and cognition. *Discourse Studies: A Multidisciplinary Introduction* (Van Dijk, T. A. ed.), 126–142.

Graesser, A. C., Singer, M., and Trabasso, T. (1994). Constructing inferences during narrative text comprehension. *Psychological Review*, 101(3), 371.

## **Amplify Core Knowledge Language Arts (CKLA): Our Philosophy**

Our philosophy is that we can only close the reading gap and make students “college and career ready” by preparing students to encounter complex, written text beginning in Kindergarten (and earlier). That requires systematic exposure to knowledge-rich content, often above grade level, so that students can develop the necessary vocabulary and connections to understand new, unfamiliar texts.

To read, a person needs to be able to decode the words on the page and then make sense of those words. The first task is made possible by decoding skills and the second by language comprehension ability. If the person cannot decode the words on the page, they will not be able to achieve reading comprehension, no matter how much oral language they can understand. But decoding the words on the page is still no guarantee of reading

comprehension. If a person attempts to read sentences they could not understand if they were read aloud, then it is unlikely that they will understand them during independent reading either.

In Grades K–2, Amplify CKLA students receive strong foundational skills and language instruction, along with background knowledge, vocabulary, and analytical skills. By Grade 3, when students encounter increasingly complex text and are asked to grapple with those texts in more challenging ways, they will have received the base of content knowledge and foundational skills they need. In Grades 3–5, students move fluidly between reading, writing, speaking and listening, and language activities. Through these activities, students continue to build background knowledge, with an increasing emphasis on individual and small group interaction with complex text.

## **Our Research Basis**

Combining well-established findings from cognitive science with classroom-based feedback from hundreds of teachers, Amplify CKLA ensures that children will learn to listen, speak, read, and write well. Reading comprehension and critical thinking are only possible with relevant prior knowledge. Since students should be able to read and think about a wide variety of topics, their education must deliver broad knowledge of a wide variety of topics. But they shouldn't just jump from one topic to the next. Learning about an academic domain—and acquiring the vocabulary of that domain—depends on staying focused on a topic and progressing from basic to in-depth materials and activities over several weeks. This gives students time to digest new concepts and practice using new words. These basic findings from cognitive science form the research foundation for Amplify CKLA (and the Core Knowledge Sequence).

## Principles of Amplify CKLA Skills Instructional Design

### Explicit and Systematic Instruction is Critical to Building Efficient Word-Level Skills

It is not enough to ask whether a reading program has explicit phonics instruction. Research shows that phonics instruction is not simply present or absent but rather exists in degrees. What research suggests is that the degrees matter—substantially—to children’s outcomes. Effective phonics instruction includes: (1) systematic ordering of phonetic targets that progress in number and complexity over time; (2) systematic practice in which children have intentionally designed opportunities to apply and use the sound-spellings they are taught (DeGraaff et al., 2009); and (3) systematic instructional planning whereby methods of instruction are consistent and progress depending on students’ learning (Bodrova & Leong, 2006; DeGraaff et al., 2009). Amplify CKLA embodies these three dimensions of systematic instruction. Its emphasis on building in systematic, mastery-oriented practice distinguishes the program from many other explicit phonics instructional programs.

For more information about Amplify CKLA and its research base, please see *CKLA Curriculum: Links to Research on Teaching and Learning* by the Core Knowledge Foundation. For a PDF of the complete Amplify CKLA research basis, please contact us at 1-800-823-1969.

### References

- Bodrova, E., & Leong, D. J. (2006). Vygotskian Perspectives in Teaching and Learning Early Literacy. *Handbook of Early Literacy Research, Volume 2*, 243-256.
- DeGraaff, S., Bosman, A. M., Hasselman, F., & Verhoeven, L. (2009). Benefits of systematic phonics instruction. *Scientific Studies of Reading*, 13(4), 318–333.