EMC School™

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EMC School
Response to EdReports Evaluation - Counterevidence
Mirrors & Windows: Connecting with Literature **©2016**
Grades 9-12

Introduction

EMC appreciates the opportunity to provide a response to EdReports' review of *Mirrors & Windows: Connecting with Literature* ©2016, Grades 6-8. Instruction in *Mirrors & Windows* is based on decades of solid research and best practices in language arts education and EMC is confident that our comprehensive ELA curriculum fully meets all Common Core and College and Career Readiness Standards for English Language Arts. The *Mirrors & Windows* program has been adopted throughout the nation, in a wide range of school settings, with favorable evaluations of the program and resulting teacher practices that have had a positive impact on student achievement.

We are pleased that the report recognizes the program's text quality and complexity and alignment to standards components as reflected in our strong scores in Gateway 1. However, we were disappointed to have received some conflicting scores, mostly in Gateway 2, in which the review comments often cited detailed examples that clearly demonstrate how the program does meet the criteria, while qualifying comments may go unsubstantiated. *Mirrors & Windows* builds knowledge through the gradual release of responsibility model, which provides scaffolded close reading support in each unit to build students' ability to read and comprehend complex texts independently and proficiently, thus allowing teacher flexibility around program implementation to meet the abilities of all students. We offer the following responses as further support for indicators scored below fully meeting the criteria.

GATEWAY ONE: Text Quality and Alignment to the Standards

1g: As noted in the report, *Mirrors & Windows* provides a consistent format with text-dependent questions and tasks. The examples provided strongly support how questions are text-dependent and require students to engage directly with the text drawing on textual evidence to support explicit references from the text. The After Reading questions are scaffolded to allow students to demonstrate levels of comprehension. The levels of higher-order thinking skills for each paired set of questions align with Bloom's Taxonomy and Webb's Depth of Knowledge (DOK) cognitive complexity levels. Refer to Text questions asking students to recall facts from the text and are paired with Reason with Texts questions asking students to apply higher-level thinking skills. Extend the Text tasks require students to go beyond what they just read and apply new knowledge or reading skills through writing to sources, research, discussion, and collaboration.

1h: The report confirms that "After every text selection in the After Reading, Refer to Text, Reason with Text section, there are text-dependent questions, and throughout each reading, there are strategies and activities that build students' skills to complete the end of unit activities. Each unit includes three types of culminating activities: Speaking and Listening Workshop, Writing Workshop, and Test Practice Workshop. The performance tasks that the students are asked to complete in these culminating activities correspond to the questions, discussions, and writing prompts that students have completed throughout the unit as they read the various selections." In addition, the end-of-unit workshops actively integrate the strands of reading, writing, and speaking. The Writing Workshop goals and strategies tie directly to the skills and texts leading up to the assignment. The Speaking & Listening Workshops are integrated with writing and collaboration, and Test Practice Workshops build on the text types, genres, or themes in the unit, asking students to apply the skills and knowledge gained in a practice assessment format.

1j: *Mirrors & Windows* is credited in the report with applying speaking and listening instruction following each unit, as well as providing teachers with ample questions for engaging the students in thinking about and responding to text, and speaking and listening opportunities that require students to provide evidence from what they are reading and researching. The report also notes the evaluation forms for engaging in peer, small group, and large group discussions. Speaking & Listening is routinely emphasized, supported, and integrated through Extend the Text Collaborative Learning activities in which students practice speaking and listening skills, as well as in step-by-step instructions for each end-of-unit workshop provided in *Exceeding the Standards*. Differentiated Instruction and Teaching Note activities in the Teacher's Edition also provide consistent practice opportunities for relevant research, discussion, active listening, and explicit responses in context of an assignment.

1n: The report noted that *Mirrors & Windows* includes instruction of grammar and conventions in the form of several workshops in Grammar & Style, and Vocabulary & Spelling within each unit, as well as additional developmental lessons in the resource workbook *Exceeding the Standards*. The workshops in the textbook are tied to the texts that immediately precede them, use professional examples of the skills with which students have had prior experience, and require students to apply new knowledge to activities. Grammar Skills prompts are provided at point of use in the ATE, as are Differentiated Instruction prompts that provide additional grammar and conventions instruction or activity ideas. In addition, the Writing Workshops at the end of each unit provide grammar & writing style lessons provide both explicit instruction and the opportunity for students to apply the convention directly to their writing assignment.

GATEWAY TWO: Building Knowledge with Texts, Vocabulary, and Tasks

2a: *Mirrors & Windows* Levels IV-V for grades 9-10 provide five genre-based units including thematic independent readings, and a culminating multi-genre thematic independent reading unit. The genre focus provides a balanced approach that supports thorough instruction of literary elements, while pairing different genres of texts based on common topics or themes to

allow students to make connections across texts and genres. *Mirrors & Windows* Grade 11 American Tradition and Grade 12 British Tradition are designed around chronological units that follow a timeline; the structure is such that events and topics paramount to the historical events that led to the literary movements are thematically embedded. Additionally, each unit is subdivided into parts that further narrow the thematic focus and build on prior knowledge.

2b: The report states that *Mirrors & Windows* has targeted questions and series of questions for students that promote students' ability to build skills such as drawing conclusions and citing textual evidence, determining theme, and analyzing point of view. *Mirrors & Windows* After Reading questions are based on Bloom's Taxonomy and Webb's DOK, and organized sequentially to build understanding by progressing from text-based comprehension questions in the Refer to Text questions to higher level critical analysis and evaluative questions in the Reason with Text questions. In addition, language and structure are analyzed throughout the textbook in the Analyze Literature feature with questions that apply an author's choice of structure and language directly to the selection, in both Before Reading and After Reading.

2c: As noted in Indicator 2b, *Mirrors & Windows* After Reading questions are organized sequentially to build knowledge and understanding by progressing from text-based comprehension questions in the Refer to Text questions to higher level critical analysis and evaluative questions in the Reason with Text questions. The unit's progression includes skills that are built upon, questions that require deep analysis and comparison of texts, and the integration of knowledge and ideas across texts. In the Text Connections or Comparing Texts pairings, skills built on are introduced Before Reading in the Analyze Literature and Set Purpose features. These questions and skills are revisited in the Text-to-Text Connection or Comparing Texts questions and After Reading pages, and revisited and developed as the unit and textbook progresses.

Indicator 2d: At the end of every unit in *Mirrors & Windows*, students participate in integrated culminating workshops for sustained writing, speaking, and listening. Each unit includes three types of culminating activities: a Speaking & Listening Workshop, Writing Workshop, and Test Practice Workshop. The performance tasks students complete in these activities correspond to the unit questions, discussions, and writing prompts. Test Practice workshops assess unit-based writing, revision, editing, and reading skills and strategies via constructed response, text correction activities, and response questions for grammar and conventions, vocabulary, and reading comprehension.

2e: The report states that *Mirrors & Windows* includes vocabulary over the course of the school year and is repeated in contexts, as seen in the Vocabulary and Spelling lessons which are integrated with two of the literature selections in each unit. The report also notes that these lessons incorporate vocabulary words from the proceeding selection to provide context and repetition for students to increase understanding. The Vocabulary & Spelling workshops are integrated with the texts within the units, which allows students to extend their use of language skills across all the strands. In addition, the *Exceeding the Standards: Vocabulary & Spelling* resource includes comprehensive skills development lessons for acquisition of

vocabulary and includes Academic Vocabulary activities for each unit based on academic vocabulary words from the selections in the unit. In the ATE, unit Building Vocabulary pages provide an overview of all unit vocabulary words, academic vocabulary, and key terms (Tiers 1, 2, and 3). The teacher's *Program Planning Guide* provides detailed lessons plans that include all vocabulary activities in the program and cover a cohesive year-long curriculum.