
February 2017

McGraw-Hill Education
Response to EdReports Evaluation
***Wonders* Grades 3-6**

Summary

McGraw-Hill Education appreciates the opportunity to provide a response to the EdReports review of our *Wonders* program (Grades 3-6). We are pleased to see that its reviewers recognize the program’s text quality, complexity, and strong alignment to Common Core expectations, as well as many facets of its overall quality. This is reflected in the scores the *Wonders* program received in what EdReports refers to as “Gateway 1.” However, we are disappointed not to have received equally strong scores in their “Gateway 2,” which appears to be a result of the subjective nature of the EdReports review process when considering programs that allow teacher flexibility around program implementation. We discuss this point in greater detail below.

Positive student outcomes are the primary measure to which McGraw-Hill Education holds its programs. In this regard, we are tremendously proud of the *Wonders* program and the research-based pedagogy which our authors and advisors have brought to bear in developing the country’s leading ELA program. We urge teachers and administrators to review the *Wonders* program for themselves. For more information regarding the program, its research basis, and its authorship team, please visit MHReadingWonders.com.

Gateway One

We are pleased to see strong marks for Gateway One. *Wonders* has been grounded in Common Core rigor from its very foundations, guided by an illustrious author team, including Dr. Douglas Fisher (current International Literacy Association vice president) and Dr. Timothy Shanahan (past International Reading Association president and coauthor of the Common Core State Standards for ELA). As the first program crafted specifically to meet the demands of CCSS for ELA, *Wonders* has been developed to raise standards in close reading, writing to sources, collaborative conversations, and critical thinking.

We are pleased to see EdReports’ perfect scores for:

- Quality of anchor texts
- Distribution of text types and genres

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- Qualitative and quantitative measures of text complexity
 - Text complexity analysis and rationale
 - Range and volume of reading
 - Questions and assignments grounded in the text
 - High-quality sequences building to a culminating task that integrates skills
 - Frequent opportunities and protocols for evidence-based discussion
 - Strong support for speaking and listening
 - On-demand and process writing, as well as short, focused projects
 - Opportunities for multiple text types of writing
 - Frequent opportunities for evidence-based writing
 - Explicit instruction for grammar
 - Foundational skills
 - Guidance for connecting foundational skills to making meaning
 - Frequent fluency practice

Gateway Two

We are similarly pleased to see the many areas of strength recognized in Gateway Two, including perfect scores for:

- Coherently sequenced sets of questions and tasks
- Cohesive yearlong plan for building academic vocabulary
- Focused research projects encouraging students to develop knowledge in a given area
- A design encouraging volume of independent reading both in and out of class

However, we are surprised and disappointed to see otherwise excellent ratings diminished by a range of subjective judgments. For example, in areas where *Wonders* was rated less than perfect, the reasons given included:

- “Unit themes are broad and *do not necessarily* build vocabulary and knowledge across weeks”
- “The amount of class time allotted to each text and question set *may not be* sufficient to provide the time needed for students to analyze texts.”
- “Students *may not be* able to adequately refine and reflect on their writings before moving to a new topic”

Wonders includes many tools within the program designed to support precisely the concerns raised in Gateway Two – including efficient time management while ensuring full mastery of standards. These tools, coupled with McGraw-Hill Education’s commitment to working with every district to customize program implementations, are what have led to *Wonders’* ongoing success – particularly in terms of improved student outcomes.

The Science of Learning Serving the Art of Teaching

More than just a tagline, the sentence above guides our principles of program development at McGraw-Hill Education. We provide rich resources in our *Wonders* programs, grounded in the best of learning science and educational research. But these resources are in service to the decisions great teachers are making every day. The *Wonders* implementation trainings, as well as the program’s embedded professional development resources, provide guidance to teachers that can augment their own thinking around what tools to use or where to provide additional time and focus with a student or during class – the very heart of excellence in teaching.

Our position is that no teacher teaches the same program to two successive classes in precisely the same way. The depth of resources within *Wonders* gives teachers flexibility to choose exactly what is needed – supported by powerful tools such as:

- Ready-to-go presentations with space to incorporate the teacher’s own resources
- Drag-and-drop planners for easy customization of recommended lessons
- Data Dashboard, providing teachers and administrators immediate feedback on *each* student’s mastery of *every* tested skill and standard – which allows teachers to compress instruction, target re-teaching, and move ahead in confidence

Easy to use in the first years of implementation, *Wonders* is designed to grow and adapt as teachers’ and districts’ needs (both instructional and technological) evolve over the years. While we appreciate EdReports giving us the opportunity to respond to their review, we encourage you to review the *Wonders* program for yourself. For more information regarding the program, its research basis, and our authorship team, please visit MHReadingWonders.com.

Attachments:

- Letter from Dr. Douglas Fisher
- Letter from Dr. Timothy Shanahan

February 22, 2017

Dear Educators:

I was heartened to read the recent EdReports review of *Wonders*. That review reminded me of why I have such great pride in my association with this program. It was pleasing to see that the reviewers were able to recognize how thoroughly and completely aligned *Wonders* is with the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). My own opinion is that it is just the kind of program that we envisioned when we developed the CCSS.

The review itself, of course, is a bit uneven. This I attribute to the fact that some of the criteria are more objective and measurable, while others tend to be more dependent on reviewers' subjective opinions. (My point isn't that the opinion items should be ignored, only that one would usually expect those particular ratings to be relatively lower.) I note that *Wonders* received its highest ratings on the relatively objective measures (those items most relevant to evaluating the alignment of the program with CCSS and to delivering a truly "research-based" program), and its lower ratings came on those more subjective opinion-oriented items.

Obviously, I'm pleased that the review recognized the high quality of *Wonders'* literary and informational texts; the challenge levels of the texts and the extensive support aimed at guiding students to read such text successfully; the range of text types that students are exposed to and taught to read through the program; its rigorous and thoughtful close reading routines; its extensive writing to sources curriculum; and its demanding research projects. We must continue to develop and improve on these features, to ensure that America's children receive the best literacy education possible.

Sincerely yours,



Timothy Shanahan
Distinguished Professor Emeritus
shanahan@uic.edu

www.shanahanonliteracy.com

Dear Educators:

One of the great strengths of the Common Core ELA standards is the emphasis it places on close reading, guided by discussion of text-dependent questions. When practices such as close reading are consistently implemented, students become better equipped to handle increasingly complex texts. Over time, and with practice, they apply the approaches used in close readings to the extended readings that they do independently.

One of the great strengths of *Wonders* is its deep focus on purposeful close reading, driven by a consistent read-reread-integrate routine. Beginning at the youngest grades, students are asked every day to master close reading, citing text evidence, engaging in collaborative conversation, and writing across sources. And as their abilities progress, they are prepared to delve ever deeper into ever more complex texts.

As I visit classrooms in California and across the nation, I am heartened to see thousands of students turning academic best practices into everyday excellence. First as a class, then in pairs, then independently, students rise to the challenge, analyzing texts in depth and building their body of knowledge. I hear regularly from their teachers that their students are making even more progress, more quickly, than initially anticipated. I am delighted to see the role *Wonders* instruction plays in their success and I look forward to seeing these students graduate, ready to tackle college texts with ease.

Doug Fisher

Professor of Educational Leadership
School of Teacher Education
San Diego State University
San Diego, CA 92182
DFisher@mail.sdsu.edu

www.fisherandfrey.com