

SpringBoard English Language Arts Grade 6-8, 2018 Edition

SpringBoard's Response to EdReports Common Core Program Review

Program Description

SpringBoard® is a unique instructional program for grades 6–12 in English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics. The 2018 Edition of SpringBoard English Language Arts is a research-based, comprehensive program developed by the College Board specifically to meet the demands of state standards and prepare *all* students for AP, SAT, and college-level work. SpringBoard integrates high-quality instructional materials with formative and summative assessments, along with world-class professional development and coaching services.

SpringBoard ELA, Grades 6-8 is a carefully-scaffolded, sequenced program consisting of rich, engaging, integrated activities that built a pathway toward performance-based embedded assessments. SpringBoard makes rigorous standards accessible to all students and helps to prepare them for success throughout high school and in postsecondary opportunities.

SpringBoard, unlike other published ELA program, has been written by teachers for teachers and built from the ground up using the Understanding by Design model of curriculum design. All students work with challenging texts, and tasks are deliberately and purposefully aligned to grade-level standards-based performance tasks that measure students' learning. In addition to the program materials, teachers and students have access to additional supports in reading, writing, and vocabulary development through our partnerships with Zinc Learning Labs and Turnitin Revision Assistant.

To support our continuous improvement model, SpringBoard has submitted the 2018 SpringBoard ELA for grades 6-8 for review and evaluation. We see this review as information about our product, but also as part of our constructive cycle that allows us to meet the needs students, teachers, and administrators who use SpringBoard.

Gateway One: Text Quality and Alignment to the Standards

EdReports recognizes how SpringBoard **meets expectations** in **Gateway 1, indicators a-f**, by including high-quality and complex texts that represent a wide range of types and genres, engage students and are worthy of careful reading, and increase literacy skills. According to the review, SpringBoard **partially meets expectations** in **Gateway 1, indicators g-n**, specifically **indicators 1h, 1i, & 1j**.

Indicator 1h. Materials contain sets of high-quality sequences of text-dependent questions and activities that build to a culminating task that integrates skills to demonstrate understanding. The review states that SpringBoard's "skills development, particularly in writing, is strong" and "culminating tasks connect texts consistently." However, the reviewers felt that focus of the tasks "does not always privilege the learning within the texts." After careful reading of the comments, we feel our materials provide a balance of knowledge and skill building. In addition to the assessments named, we include other assessment and writing opportunities that

depend on knowledge gained through discussion, reading, and writing within the unit. Assessments that do not name a text depend upon the topics and themes explored in the unit. As in grade 6, students must choose a prompt in response to the novel *Walk Two Moons*. While each prompt asks them to consider elements of plot or literary elements, they cannot answer any without applying all they have learned about the text through discussion, text-dependent questions, classroom work, and thoughtful analysis of the text.

Additionally, SpringBoard includes series of writing prompts called “Writing to Sources.” These prompts task students with writing in direct response to a text they have read multiple times and analyzed in class. Before writing to a source, students read a text multiple times and closely analyze the text through discussion and/or written response to text-dependent questions and evidence-based tasks. Students move from comprehension of a text to analysis, and then to the application of integrated skills in the Working from the Text section, which often culminates in a Writing to Sources prompt.

Indicator 1i. Materials provide frequent opportunities and protocols for evidence-based discussions that encourage the modeling and use of academic vocabulary and syntax. Indicator j. Materials support students' listening and speaking about what they are reading and researching with relevant follow-up questions and supports. Despite listing numerous examples of opportunities for discussion, the review states for **indicator 1i** “discussion protocol and clear teacher guidance is not evident.” However, the evidence provided for **indicator 1j** shows ample support regarding evidence-based discussions and protocols: “During the lesson norms and roles for Discussion Groups are set for speakers and listeners”; “various leveled questions from the story and the Teacher Wrap provides support and differentiated instructional strategies”; “scoring rubric provided”; “teacher assigns roles and places students in Literature Circle groups, and supports struggling students by giving them a shorter, more accessible story to practice their roles.” Further, our Scaffolding Text-Dependent Questions (TDQ) boxes in the Teacher Wrap are designed to support teachers in guiding students with analytic steps to get to the depth of the TDQs. The concern raised regarding academic vocabulary in **1i** is one we address through our Vocabulary notebooks, Word Connections, unit vocabulary, and Word Walls. Additionally, Zinc uses research-based practices with recurring and frequent exposure to vocabulary terms taken directly from our units. This is discussed further in the response to Gateway 2.

Indicator1j places significant weight on the connection of questions and tasks to theme. We will work to more clearly and explicitly call out these connections in the future, but it should be noted that our themes are referenced in multiple areas and are implicit within many of our tasks and text-dependent questions. Every course and unit is designed around a central theme, Essential Questions, and embedded assessments. In Grade 6 students explore the concept of Changes, Grade 7: Choices, Grade 8: Challenges. Within each unit, texts are carefully selected to support and connect to the themes within the units, and text-dependent questions and tasks further this work.

Gateway Two: Building Knowledge with Texts, Vocabulary, and Tasks.

EdReports evaluators recognize the strength and depth of the SpringBoard writing program as shown in the comments and examples for **Indicators of Gateways 1 & 2**, but rated areas for growth that suggest Springboard

partially meets expectations for building knowledge with texts, vocabulary, and tasks. The review consistently commends strong writing, research, and grammar components as well as the robust independent reading program, but in **indicators 2c and 2d** the review suggests that knowledge and content building is secondary to a study of text structure and “reading strategy work.” We do not see these as mutually exclusive.

Indicator 2c. Materials contain a coherently sequenced set of text-dependent questions and tasks that require students to analyze the integration of knowledge and ideas across both individual and multiple texts. Because we approach our texts with an integration of skills, we devote time to both comprehension with knowledge building and skill-building through model texts. Our approach to writing relies on texts as models while also building knowledge around a theme or topic. The review suggests we have a strong program built around “rich texts,” but that there are missed opportunities to engage in “critical thinking about the texts themselves.” The knowledge built around texts in Second Read (TDQs) and Working from the Text is the foundation for the work we do that goes beyond the text into application and depth of knowledge.

Indicator 2d. The questions and tasks support students’ ability to complete culminating tasks in which they demonstrate their knowledge of a topic (or, for grades 6–8, a theme) through integrated skills. EdReports agrees that our “structure and focus does support students’ development in writing to prompts and preparing materials while accessing reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language skills” but not always “building of students’ knowledge.” As mentioned in 1h, we include a variety of assessments that provide students with the opportunity to demonstrate understanding of a theme and the skills needed to complete the task. For example, in Grade 8, when students are asked to define a hero, it is after they have spent the entire unit studying representations and examples of heroes in literature, history, and present day. They draw on everything they have read and discussed to form their own supported definition of a hero in an explanatory essay.

Indicator 2e. Materials include a cohesive, year-long plan for students to interact with key academic vocabulary words in and across texts. Our materials provide robust support for literary terms as the review suggests, and to create a more comprehensive approach to academic (Tier II) vocabulary, we offer Zinc as an additional support for vocabulary instruction. We know that students need repeated exposure to a word over time to acquire it, so we provide teacher support for vocabulary instruction that focuses on introducing and revisiting at key moments in the unit, Reader/Writer notebooks, Word Maps, Word Walls, glossed vocabulary, Diffusing, Word Connections, and Zinc as a comprehensive model for how to support vocabulary acquisition.

Gateway Three: NOT EVALUATED

In summary, SpringBoard English Language Arts provides students with the high-quality materials needed to foster a dynamic learning experience and ensure academic success. SpringBoard materials promote greater participation and opportunities for students to take more responsibility for what they learn by understanding why the skills they’re developing matter, putting them more on track to meet expectations of AP® and SAT®, college, and careers.