

SpringBoard ELA Response to Texas Resource Review of English I & II

The new Texas Edition of SpringBoard English Language Arts is a research-based, comprehensive instructional program developed by the College Board specifically to meet the expectations of the TEKS, while also preparing students for AP®, SAT®, and college-level work.

We appreciate the detailed and positive review of English I and II conducted by the Texas Resource Review team as they have worked to implement a process for identifying high quality materials to support districts, schools, and teachers in selecting quality instructional materials. We at SpringBoard value reviews of this nature because they spotlight the countless ways our program delivers on the vision of quality teaching and learning that Texas educators value, as well as the ways we can strive for continuous improvement. We appreciate the level of detail that went into conducting the review, and we are especially glad to see that TRR recognizes the strength of our integrated literacy instruction; however, we would like to note that there are limitations that come with reviewing materials that are developed before the rubric or review process is established—full insight and transparency into the expectations of the rubric in advance of the development of our materials may have resulted in even stronger evaluations for SpringBoard and other quality programs. While the review generally reflects an accurate and evidence-based view of our program, we wish to take this opportunity to clarify and address a few areas where reviewers indicated that our program did not fully align with the expectations of the rubric.

In Section 2.3 the review seems to suggest that our texts are not of the appropriate level of complexity to support students, but when examining the review more closely, it is the absence of an *analysis* for all texts that prevented the full point value. The review states that our texts are at an appropriate level of complexity; however, SpringBoard received partial points for this criterion because we provide text complexity analyses for all prose texts but not for non-prose texts. We appreciate that the TRR team recognizes the high quality of the texts in our program, each of which is carefully selected based on multiple factors including complexity, strength of writing, likely reader engagement, relevance, author demographics, and alignment to the lesson's instructional purpose. But we feel it is important to acknowledge that our approach to text complexity analysis is carefully considered, even if it is a bit different from the expectations of the TRR team. When evaluating and selecting prose texts for grade level complexity, we examine quantitative (Lexile), qualitative, reader, and task to determine an overall complexity, and we provide a detailed summary of this analysis for each prose text. We approach our analysis of non-prose texts with similar rigor, but with a greater focus on qualitative elements of the text, since quantitative measures for texts of this nature are less valid. While it is appropriate to provide detailed text complexity analyses for every prose text included within our materials, we believe it would be misguided to provide such an analysis for every non-prose text, given that the quantitative measures do not reveal helpful information about a poem's or drama's appropriateness for a specific grade level. Further, because there was not a consistent method that was endorsed or requested by the Texas Resource Review, we followed a practice we have used in other editions of SpringBoard ELA. Teachers can see an abbreviated analysis in the Teacher Wrap that accompanies each prose text, as well as a downloadable, detailed analyses of all prose texts in the Teacher Resources section of our digital platform.

Section 5.1 of the review indicates SpringBoard partially meets the criterion for students who demonstrate proficiency above grade level. As a program back mapped from Advanced Placement®, SAT®, and the TEKS, we believe all students should be given rigorous opportunities with grade level materials. Our program is built on the same rigorous strategies and skills: critical thinking, problem solving, and deep contextual understanding. SpringBoard makes rigorous standards accessible to all students and helps to prepare them for success throughout high school and in postsecondary opportunities. All students work with challenging texts, and tasks are deliberately and purposefully aligned to standards-based performance tasks that measure students' learning in relation to grade-level standards. 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. This focus on college-level preparedness results in instructional materials that are often very challenging for students, even those who perform above grade level.

Because of this, SpringBoard has been criticized for being “too difficult” or “too challenging” for students, so this edition provides a wealth of support and opportunity for students performing below grade level, as they are the students least often given grade level work. While there are fewer explicit supports for students above level, as our review indicates, they are not absent. We have designed our Close Reading and Writing Workshops to be challenging and flexible enough that teachers can make strategic decisions for a wide range of students.

In Section 6, we are pleased to know that the thoughtfully developed instructional supports, lesson design, and performance-based tasks are recognized by the TRR team as supporting high quality instruction. We want to emphasize that SpringBoard teachers are encouraged and supported to actively guide student reading, writing, and understanding of text. This guidance, as well as formative assessment tools such as writing prompts, text-dependent questions, double-entry journals, graphic organizers, and analytical strategies such as SOAPStone, take students beyond the surface level and give teachers ample opportunities to monitor students' work to help them build independence in critical thinking and analysis. This provides teachers with opportunities to assess not only understanding of texts, but also writing skills. The teacher edition points to important formative checks available in every activity and names important “look-fors” in student responses. We provide additional support in identifying expectations and progress for English language learners and specific suggestions to differentiate for all learners in the classroom.

Despite a wealth of supports for monitoring student progress, the review suggests there is little guidance for how to interpret and act on data yielded from our digital assessments (6.1). An important element of our professional learning focuses on empowering teachers to use the data and information they gather to make instructional decisions for their students. We believe that authentic differentiation must come from the teacher, who is best positioned to see patterns in student performance, to understand individual learner needs, and to purposefully plan based on the unique qualities of her students. Other programs provide scenarios that dictate specific moves or paths but make assumptions about the teacher and the students using the materials. We provide a wealth of information about how the instructional materials connect to standards and skills, and in combination with our scope and sequence, student performance in class, and assessment reporting, teachers are able to make decisions about where and how to focus instruction. In addition to the digital assessments and reporting available in our

program, teachers have full access to Zinc Learning Labs, which also provides detailed reporting on skills, standards, and reading levels that can be filtered by student, class, or school. We believe that teachers need access to a variety of tools and information about their students, but they should be empowered to use their expertise to make the instructional decisions that support their students, not just follow a dictated or generalized path.

Additionally in Section 6, reviewers examined implementation support for administrators; it is important to note that the Texas Resource Review team had limitations on the content of their review. They reviewed only that which was provided for the requirements of the adoption, which does not provide free and open access to our digital Teacher Community; therefore, they had limited insight into all resources we provide to support implementation. As a program, we believe deeply in the power of professional learning—authentic professional learning that focuses on practice, not product—for both teachers and administrators. That is why our Professional Learning Institutes, SpringBoard Digital Community, and teacher dashboard provide a wealth of support through face-to-face learning, videos, User Guides, and Professional Learning Modules for both classroom teachers and administrators. We offer professional learning for teachers and administrators for every stage of implementation, not just year one.

In closing, we extend our deep appreciation to the Texas Resource Review team for their attention to detail, professionalism, and consistency that went into the review process. We are grateful for the many ways the review highlights how well SpringBoard English Language Arts delivers on the TRR’s vision for quality instructional materials, and we are equally grateful for the chance to examine a few ways in which we may continue to improve our program. We believe this process will continue to grow and improve as all parties develop clarity and common understanding of the rubric, the process, and the expectations.