Response to EdReports, May 2019

Like every curriculum evaluation tool, the EdReports rubric is based on subjective judgments about pedagogy, including what aspects of instruction to value and prioritize.

The foundation of the EdReport's rating system is their interpretation of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). However, their rubric includes many criteria that are not explicitly called for in CCSS, yet carry enormous weight in a curriculum's final score. In addition, EdReports appears to have pushed some advice found in the Publishers' Guide for CCSS to the extreme. Collaborative Classroom and EdReports have fundamental differences in pedagogy and curriculum goals. Our curricula have been demonstrated to be effective for students, teachers, and districts across the country. See our evidence base, for details.

The evidence base for Making Meaning and Being a Reader
https://www.collaborativeclassroom.org/resources/evidence-base-making-meaning-reader/

The evidence base for Being a Writer
https://www.collaborativeclassroom.org/resources/evidence-base-writer/

We believe fundamentally that:

- Social and emotional learning are inextricably linked with academic development. Students thrive in an inclusive classroom environment in which they and their thinking are valued and teachers have confidence in their ability to learn. Creating this inclusive community is necessary for deep learning to occur.

- Effective curriculum is designed to shift the cognitive capacity of thinking and work to the students. Teacher facilitation of student thinking gives all students opportunities to grapple with challenging lesson content.

The CCSS clearly state that the standards are designed to stipulate outcomes, not how to teach to reach those outcomes. The EdReports rubric is based almost entirely on how to teach. The rubric evaluates compliance with a narrow reading of the CCSS. It does not consider research into a curriculum's effectiveness and impact on learning. EdReports' stance with regard to how to teach is at odds with Collaborative Classroom's commitment to ensuring that students construct knowledge and build speaking, listening, and other social competencies as they develop deep literacy skills. Specific places in the EdReports' rubric where our pedagogy is in conflict with the EdReports criteria are shown in the following table.

EdReports Criteria	Collaborative Classroom Values
Complex grade-level texts should be presented to all students at **all times** regardless of the students' reading proficiency.	While we share the goal of all students reading at grade level and expect them to do so, we know that conflating the goal with the process will only increase instructional inequity, not narrow the reading gap. Asking students to read complex text is not an effective way to bring students' reading to grade level. Students who do not yet have the accuracy and automaticity to read a specific text are unable to attend sufficiently to comprehension to make meaning of that text (Snow et al, 1998). In this situation, teacher scaffolding is insufficient to increase students' ability to read and comprehend independently. Students who struggle with grade-level text need targeted decoding instruction in addition to comprehension instruction to quickly accelerate them to grade level. Different text types should be used for different reasons (Brown, 2000). Collaborative Classroom uses a two-component approach to developing independent readers. Shared and mentor texts **allow all students, regardless of individual reading level,** to do rigorous thinking and engage with and learn from grade-level appropriate texts. Class and partner discussions expand on initial thinking. Teachers coach students as they apply the instruction to independent reading at the student's appropriate level. This coaching allows students to consolidate the learning and accelerates students' orchestration of reading skills.
Working in collaboration with others undermines individual students' development.	Supportive classroom community and building understanding through class, partner, and small-group discussions are essential to students developing their thinking and reasoning. Oral interaction around challenging topics and texts increases sophistication of student thinking (Wray et al, 2000).

EdReports Criteria (cont.)	Collaborative Classroom Values (cont.)
All writing should be tied closely to a text and provide text evidence.	In addition to text-based writing, students need opportunities to write in a variety of genres, to edit and revise, and to present their writing to peers (Graham, Harris, & Chambers, 2016).
Content knowledge should be built around a few targeted topics.	While building content knowledge is critical, wide reading in a variety of genres and about various topics builds background knowledge in culture, science, and social studies. Schools should invest in focused science and social studies instruction, not expect ELA instruction to meet this need (Duke, 2019). An ELA curriculum should prepare students to construct their own content knowledge by reading texts from a variety of disciplines. Wide reading sparks students' interest and engagement in exploring content areas (Cervetti & Heibert, 2019).Our curriculum supports the transfer of core reading skills to content area reading in science and social studies.
Mastery should be demonstrated through culminating tasks.	The best way for students to demonstrate their learning is through authentic reading and writing activities, not artificially constructed projects. End-of-unit assessments should encompass all the work the students have done during that unit and be evaluated as a whole using a consistent rubric. Note that the criteria around culminating tasks was imposed by EdReports. They are not called for in the CCSS.
Students should read independently in a narrow Lexile band based on grade level.	Students benefit from reading a wide variety of texts at many levels, depending on purpose and students' interest level. The goal is to match students with books they are likely to comprehend, not label them with a letter or numerical "level." Students benefit from reading both above and below grade-level text if they are engaged in the topic or work (Guthrie, 2008).

References

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