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To: Lucy Calkins <lucy@tcrwp.org>

Subject: Sensitive & Timely Information re: TCRWP

Dear Leaders of TCRWP Schools,

I am writing to give you a heads up. Sue Pimentel, one of the authors of the CCSS and a founder of Student Achievement Partners, has issued a report on TCRWP that may receive far more press than would have happened had it not been for the maelstrom around the science of reading and the Ed Week articles. I want you to know this will be coming out today. I just learned of this earlier today, so I'm sorry you haven't gotten more of a heads up. I anticipate that this could create problems for some of you, as well as for those of us at TCRWP central, and I couldn't be more sorry. We don't yet know what kind of attention this will receive. If the report happens to go under the radar, let's let it stay there—be forewarned, but don't amplify it by sharing.

I believe their intent was to review one balanced literacy curriculum, one basal, and two other programs in all, in a way that suggests that perhaps they think their reviews of selected representative programs will have broader implications. I do believe that a good deal of what they question about Units of Study are questions that could be raised about any sister/brother balanced literacy program.

The report is attached. It's long, detailed, and not pretty. They seem to have reviewed Units of Study in Reading and Phonics, and not writing. They have mostly focused on the younger grades, not reviewing our work on critical and interpretive reading, writing development, higher level comprehension, etc. I'll issue a formal response as soon as I can. Here are some early responses.

First, it's important to say that the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project has always been a learning community. We'll learn from these reviews as we have learned from everything else. I've been very intent on learning from any air between TCRWP and the science of reading, as I think that research needs to be brought to schools. I believe we have already been doing that, and we need to continue to do that work. This new review also examines us with new lenses and I'll need to think about the assumptions that are baked into those perspectives.

When you read the Student Achievement Partners review, you'll see that running through it are concerns that the Units of Study do not support growth in reading and writing for below benchmark students. Their fear seems based especially on the belief that too much is left to choice. A major way that Paige (in critiquing K-2 phonics and workshop) and Shanahan (in critiquing access to complex texts) critique Units of Study is that the curriculum leaves too much choice to teachers (to select the relevant small group work and extensions that their students need) and to kids (to choose books that will gradually become more challenging). The idea that kids are reading self-selected books instead of working with teacher support on a whole-class text is prevalent. I'm not entirely sure how to talk back to these portions of the critique. It is true we believe in teacher and student autonomy, and in communities that develop growth mindsets, where adults and children strive to continuously improve. We have found that choice leads to agency and independence, and that both are

important to achievement.

And, of course, our data shows that our faith in our teachers and in what they have taught their children is well-placed. I am pleased that our students outperform their peers. In 2019, students in core TCRWP schools (schools that have been with us for an average of ten years) outperformed those in non TCRWP schools in New York by over 30 percentage points in proficiency. Language learners in core TCRWP schools out-performed other language learners in the City by 13.5 percentage points. Students in all TCRWP schools—including those working with us for just a year—outperformed other students by almost 5 percentage points—and these numbers have continued to improve every year.

This data is important because the Student Achievement Partners review suggests they are most worried that language learners won't move forward. Yet language learners in TCRWP schools out-perform language learners in non-TCRWP schools—so our faith in teachers making deliberate and intelligent choices about small group work, extensions, and helping students move up levels of text complexity is well-placed.

I also need to say that we strive to teach beyond the criterion that are critiqued in the Student Achievement Partners. Teachers in our schools work to help students become passionate, critical, life-long readers, and writers who develop confident voices. We applaud our schools for creating communities that increase equity as well as achievement.

Again, my heartfelt apologies for problems this will cause you. Please let me know ways we can help. What is that saying, "When it is dark enough, we see the stars?" I'm looking into the night sky...

With care,

Lucy