EdReady Accessibility Statement

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EdReady, an initiative of the non-profit NROC Project, is a personalized learning platform for math and English with special emphasis on the skills and knowledge required for students to succeed in college-level studies.

It is core to the NROC Project's mission to ensure that EdReady enables personalized learning approaches supportive of all learners, including those with documented learning disabilities and other accessibility challenges. The NROC Project adheres to best practices in software development and WCAG 2.0 guidelines to the degree that it can to build in accessibility by design; however, EdReady is a complex, multimedia-rich platform that cannot provide a truly equivalent learning experience for all users, especially those who are visually impaired.

In August 2018, we received the results of an accessibility audit by a third-party specialist (WebSavvy). That audit revealed that there were still a few accessibility shortcomings that had to be addressed. Since that time, all of the identified issues have been resolved and we believe EdReady meets ADA requirements and WCAG 2.0 A and AA guidelines. Note that accessibility bugs may still be found, just as non-accessibility-related bugs may still be found. NROC staff will address any reported issues ASAP upon discovery. Furthermore, at NROC we view accessibility improvements as an ongoing process, and we will continue to work toward providing the best experience possible for all students based on feedback from our users and any changes to the criteria themselves.

Our mission-based interest is in meeting the full range of learner needs and preferences, whether those needs are documented or not. For the NROC Project, "accessibility" is a fairly broad construct, encompassing the idea that we should be able to accommodate the unique learning needs of every learner somehow, whether linguistic, motile, auditory, visual, or otherwise. This aspiration is not easily achieved, but together with our members and partners, we will continue to improve EdReady's accessibility on multiple fronts.

With that purpose in mind, this document describes some of the specific aspects of the EdReady platform as they pertain to accessibility. EdReady is a platform for diagnosing personal learning needs, as well as a referral engine for learning resources that are personally relevant to each user. The accessibility criteria for the EdReady platform differ from accessibility criteria that might accrue to the learning resources; thus, these two facets of EdReady's structure are treated separately.

The EdReady platform (personalized diagnostic and study path)

The EdReady platform has no audio requirements, so there are no issues for the audio impaired. EdReady also utilizes a lot of visual redundancy, so as long as someone is not actually blind, there should be few issues for people who are partially visually impaired (e.g., color-blind). And since EdReady should work on any Internet-enabled device, most forms of motile-impairment should be resolvable if they are using a device that is designed to enable web accessibility. And EdReady includes some of the accessibility tools published in the FLOE Project to better support learner preferences, such as real-time alterations of the contrast ratios, automated tables of contents, etc. We will continue to expand that toolset as we can.

EdReady is demonstrably compatible with most screen readers, however *NROC strongly recommends using the Chrome browser from Google and installing the ChromeVox extension with "Google US English" voice enabled.* This is what we use as our testing standard for screen readers and we have confidence in this configuration. Every program and device presents certain challenges, and the NROC Project is committed to responding to known accessibility issues as quickly as possible. Our standard support system, coupled with our collaborative development approach, ensures that we can meet the

identified needs of specific individuals and programs in a timely manner. Improvements to various types of accessibility criteria are ongoing, and there are no known barriers to their eventual implementation.

It is not possible to create a truly equivalent learning experience for someone who is fully visually impaired (i.e., blind). However, the fundamental functionality of EdReady is to leverage an initial diagnostic to identify strengths and weaknesses across a scope of expectations (e.g., Algebra 1). The results of this diagnostic are then used to reference appropriate learning resources as part of a personalized study path. EdReady now offers an optional suite of special protocols specifically for supporting accessibility needs (available under "my account" once someone logs in). These protocols build on the substantial investments made by NROC over the past two years to update and upgrade all of the embedded learning resources and assessment items to make nearly all of them fully accessible. We are continuing this expansion of the accessible item and resource pools indefinitely.

The NROC Project will work with our members as needed to find a way to support the needs of each learner, including possible software updates as necessary. The NROC Project is also available on demand to work with a member institution's disability support office to develop a contingency plan to put on file for known or predicted accessibility needs.

The EdReady Resource Library (learning resources and assessment items)

After EdReady users generate a personalized study path (via the diagnostic tools built into the platform), they are directed to one or more learning resources that meet their personalized learning needs. These resources are part of the EdReady Resource Library, but they are not actually built into the EdReady platform itself. Most of the included resources are created and hosted by third parties, so the NROC Project has limited control over their accessibility status.

Currently, the resources in the EdReady Resources Library include a mixture of text-based, video-based, interactive, and multimedia materials. Some of these materials have built-in captioning, text-based alternatives, and other elements that increase accessibility, while some do not. All of the materials built and provided by the NROC Project itself are rendered in HTML5, and those resources enjoy the full accessibility benefits that accrue to that standard. Those resources are also comprehensive to every learning objective in the EdReady platform, so we have complete coverage for users with accessibility needs. We will continue to add to this library over time, including collections purpose-built for greater accessibility, especially for audio-impaired users.

EdReady also utilizes external collections of assessment items to perform the diagnostic tests required by the platform. Most of these items, and all of the core set provided directly by The NROC Project, are rendered in HTML5 with Mathjax support and are therefore accessible to screen readers, but some (especially if they contain graphs) are not. We are working with our members to identify and/or build new collections of assessment items that are fully accessible. We completed a substantial effort to incorporate alt-text descriptions for complex mathematical images (e.g., charts and graphs) in all of our materials, so we now have complete coverage of every learning objective with accessible assessment items. We will continue to invest in both the existing assessment items as well as new assessment items for the foreseeable future.

The EdReady platform can further support the accessibility requirements of the learning resources in two important ways. First, the platform can host references to materials on a case-by-case basis for specific programs and institutions. This option means that organizations which have access to special materials (that are available online), such as audiobooks or alternative formats for enhanced accessibility, will be able to incorporate those materials into their own versions of EdReady for the students who need them. Second, the EdReady platform can now optionally identify users with specific learning preferences and needs and then focus referrals for those students to materials that best meet those needs. This approach goes well beyond compliance expectations and instead brings a new level of sophistication to the functions for supporting each learner – in all their diversity – individually.

<u>Ongoing work and the EdReady accessibility advisory group</u>

The NROC Project works with a group of accessibility experts and associated institutions to help brainstorm solutions and set priorities for ongoing accessibility improvements. This advisory group includes representatives from leading accessibility-focused organizations such as the Inclusive Design Research Center (IDRC – at OCAD University in Toronto, Canada, and host of the FLOE Project), Benetech (host of MathML Cloud, Bookshare, and many other accessibility initiatives), CAST (a leading advocacy and solutions center for universal design for learning), and representatives from accessibility support and compliance offices for major universities and systems around the United States. With these and other partners, we look forward to leading the way to a more inclusive and effective educational future for everyone.