

## Who We Are & What We Do

AI Labs Curriculum Associates, formerly known as SoapBox Labs, began developing the world's leading voice AI tool for children—the SoapBox speech engine—in 2013. We built it from the ground up to understand children's speech and support reading fluency and foundational literacy skills.

Recognized globally for its privacy, accuracy, and fairness, the SoapBox voice engine has powered more than 130 million voice-enabled literacy and language learning experiences for students worldwide.

In 2022, the SoapBox speech engine earned the first-ever Digital Promise certification for mitigating bias in an AI system. In 2025, it was part of the inaugural group of products to receive the Responsibly Designed AI product certification, reaffirming our ongoing commitment to responsible AI in education.

As we prepare to integrate the SoapBox speech engine into Curriculum Associates' flagship *i-Ready*® program—serving 14 million students across the US—we are collaborating with educators to deliver voice experiences that truly support the needs of teachers and students. We will serve learners fairly and securely as they engage, practice, and demonstrate their skills using their voice, and deliver actionable insights to educators to help every student thrive.

## How We Think About Learner Centered in Our Design Process

Every learner deserves technology that works for them, serving them fairly and securely, and allowing them to fully engage, learn, and reach their full potential. The SoapBox speech engine embodies this commitment at its core.

### Built for Accuracy and Fairness

- **Built for young learners:** Children's voices differ from those of adults, and they change as children grow. The SoapBox speech engine is designed specifically to understand children's developing speech patterns – from ages two and up – down to the phoneme level, in real-world classroom settings.
- **Proactive representation:** We train our speech engine on millions of speech samples ethically collected from children across the US and the world, intentionally building in representation across ages, genders, dialects, speaking styles, and English learners.

### How We Safeguard Student Privacy

- **Proprietary and Secure:** The speech engine is proprietary to Curriculum Associates, safeguarding student voice data within a secure, closed system.
- **Privacy by Design:** Student voice data is protected from the earliest design stage to the students' end-user experience.
- **Transparency and Trust:** We are open with districts, teachers, and families about how voice data is collected, used, deleted, and protected.
  - We collect only the minimum audio needed to provide instructional insights.

- o We use voice data solely for educational purposes, and with permission, we may use anonymized data to improve the performance of our speech engine.
- o We support data deletion and adhere to COPPA, FERPA, GDPR, and child-specific privacy regulations.

The SoapBox speech engine removes barriers, honors learner variability, and amplifies learner agency—grounded in strong principles of privacy and accessibility.

## Why **Learner Centered** is Important in Our Product

*“If AI technology doesn’t work for every student equally, then it doesn’t work,”— Dr. Amelia Kelly, VP Data Science, Curriculum Associates*

Voice AI is a powerful tool for learning, but only when it works for every child. By prioritizing learners in our approach, we remove barriers to engagement and give students the confidence to use their own voices in learning. Our speech engine supports fairness by accurately recognizing varied speech patterns, enabling fair assessment and personalized feedback.

For young learners and their families, safeguarding privacy is essential. Responsible design means that every student’s experience is protected, and every parent and educator understands exactly how. Our closed system and privacy-by-design approach ensure student data is secure, while transparency builds agency and confidence.

Keeping learners at the heart of our design allows us to create a voice engine that not only measures progress but also actively supports growth, engagement, privacy, and fairness for all students.

*“Linguistic equity. That's huge for us with a very large EL population from all over the world and not just a singular multilingual population. We're not just Spanish speaking. And so having that authenticity in it [a voice-enabled product] is very important.”*

— Educator, UX design research