



DEDICATED TO TEACHERS

November 2019

**Heinemann Response to EdReports Evaluation  
Fountas & Pinnell *Phonics, Spelling, and Word Study System*  
Grades K-2**

**INTRODUCTION**

*The development of the Phonics, Spelling, and Word Study System (PWS) from Fountas & Pinnell Classroom™ (FPC) rests on more than 25 years of the authors' own classroom teaching and research on how literacy develops in children over time, and it incorporates leading thinking related to effective literacy instruction.*

*Heinemann is confident in the rigor and efficacy of the PWS System. There is strong agreement amongst educators that phonics skills are essential for effective reading. There are, however, varied perspectives on how to achieve the goal. Curriculum evaluation tools, such as those used in this review, are based on a discrete rubric informed by subjective criteria on pedagogy and instruction. Allow us to shed light on the strength of the instructional framework of the PWS System and the characteristics of the instructional framework that EdReports dismissed in their analysis.*

**AUTHOR PEDAGOGY**

*Through their studies of literature, experience in classrooms, and research, Fountas and Pinnell conclude that all children need daily systematic, explicit phonics, spelling, and word study instruction so that they flexibly, efficiently, and rapidly solve, spell, and derive the meaning of words as they read with fluency and comprehension. In addition to lessons focused on learning principles using out-of-text application, PWS makes intentional links to in-text application opportunities in reading and writing across instructional contexts.*

**ONE CONTEXT OF FOUNTAS & PINNELL CLASSROOM™**

*PWS is a stand-alone system, and it can also be used as one critical component of FPC. PWS includes explicit, systematic teaching of phonics, spelling, and word study through lessons taught outside of continuous text; in addition, you will find suggestions for explicit, systematic teaching as children read and write within a cohesive literacy system (FPC). It is in the processing of continuous text that readers and writers apply their learning. This was not considered as part of this evaluation.*

*As an essential instructional context of FPC, PWS aligns with the [FPC research base](#). After a thorough examination of the research on literacy learning, Fountas and Pinnell identified six underpinning principles for effective classroom literacy instruction for students in grades PreK-6. These essential principles are: instructional coherence, responsive teaching, using a rich multi-text approach, student inquiry, language-based learning, and teacher expertise.*

*Below are references to essential resources that EdReports dismissed in their analysis.*

## **Gateway One: Alignment to Standards and Research-Based Practices for Foundational Skills Instruction**

### **APPLYING PRINCIPLES TO CONTINUOUS TEXT**

#### **1B, 1C, 1G, 1H, 1N, 1O, 1P, 1Q, 2G.V**

*During each PWS lesson, the principle is practiced in both “Teach” and “Apply” in an out-of-text learning experience (sorting, building, taking apart, making connections between words, letters, and/or sounds).*

*Specific recommendations are provided in the “Connect Learning Across Contexts” portion of each lesson in order to repeatedly demonstrate and practice the principles within continuous text. Suggestions are provided for teachers to apply the principle to in-text learning.*

- *In shared reading, after reading a shared text during a whole group experience, children use highlighter tape to identify words with specific letter combinations (e.g., LSR 22, Grade 2).*
- *During interactive writing, students develop phonological awareness skills as they listen and clap the syllables of words before writing them (e.g., WS 1, Grade 1).*
- *During independent writing, when needed, students are prompted by the teacher to say words slowly and to represent the beginning, middle, and ending sounds with letters before supporting the child with the use of sound or letter boxes (e.g., WSA 2, Grade 2).*

*Sing a Song of Poetry (a collection of 100 poems provided with PWS) is filled with robust opportunities and detailed suggestions for applying the principles of foundational skills taught during lessons.*

*Co-created anchor charts (like the ones listed below) along with students’ word study notebooks, become references that students can use to review key concepts and principles that have been previously taught. These resources support confident and independent word solving within reading and writing.*

- *alphabet charts*
- *charts of poems and songs with illustrations*
- *word charts of various kinds (phonograms, words sorted by letter)*
- *word study charts with principles*
- *a class name chart*
- *word wall*

*For a full description of the design for responsive literacy teaching in which phonics, spelling, word study, and fluency instruction is most effectively situated, read pages 9-17 in the Kindergarten and Grade 1 lesson books and pages 6-15 in the Grade 2 lesson book.*

### **WRITING OPPORTUNITIES**

#### **1J**

*Shared and interactive writing are powerful tools because they engage children in the writing process in a very explicit way and provide opportunities to apply their knowledge of words, sounds, and letters as they co-construct a meaningful text. Children:*

- *say words slowly and make connections to sounds and letters;*
- *learn to write word parts and phonogram patterns quickly;*
- *use the high-frequency (and other) words they have just learned.*

*During shared and interactive writing, the teacher demonstrates the writing process by thinking about what to write, writing word-by-word, and rereading. During interactive writing, the teacher invites children to share the marker to write specific words, letters, letter combinations, or word parts. During independent writing, students practice the principle independently.*

*The following instructional procedures are used within the PWS lessons and provide encoding opportunities for phonetically-based words:*

- *Hear, Say, And Write: Sound And Letter Boxes*
- *Notice Parts*
- *Make Words*

## **HIGH-FREQUENCY WORDS**

### **1K, 1L**

*The High-Frequency Words assessments provide an inventory of high-frequency words that children spell accurately. Writing these words with accuracy demonstrates that students:*

- *know the words that they write correctly;*
- *have learned the process of learning a word.*

*The writing assessment demonstrates evidence of letter and sound knowledge and visual features of words students control. "Open" writing of known words provides further evidence of each child's understanding.*

*In order to guide the teacher's word selection, The Comprehensive Phonics, Spelling, and Word Study Guide details the difficulty of high-frequency words.*

*Shared and independent reading of poems from Sing a Song of Poetry, books from FPC, and independent writing tasks provide teachers the opportunity to observe how students apply their HFW knowledge to authentic, continuous texts.*

## **Gateway Two: Implementation, Support Materials & Assessment**

### **RESEARCH**

#### **2D**

*PWS is grounded in solid [academic research](#), including The National Reading Panel. It reflects the panel's recommendations for phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Lessons reflect practical, classroom-based research on how children learn. These practices have been reconfirmed by teachers as they field-tested PWS. References in each lesson book provide the methodology behind the development of the lessons. The lesson sequence is aligned to The Comprehensive Phonics, Spelling, and Word Study Guide, which is derived from The Literacy Continuum, a work comprising over 25 years of professional classroom research.*

### **DECODING IN RUNNING TEXT**

#### **2F-2F.II**

*Connecting phonics principles with authentic books is foundational to PWS. Each lesson includes direct connections to other contexts that form a literacy framework for application through authentic, continuous texts. These teaching connections also help teachers know what to look for in books from their own collections.*

*A gradient of text helps young readers notice and use phonogram patterns and both decodable and high-frequency words. FPC includes carefully constructed and controlled texts for beginning readers. Unlike “decodable readers” that make it difficult for readers to maintain comprehension, use what they know about language, and become engaged, the FPC books at the earliest levels also include natural language and meaningful story structure to support comprehension. This approach is supported by the National Reading Panel findings which reported no evidence that decodable readers with contrived language were more effective than programs that do not include them.*

## **ASSESSMENT OPPORTUNITIES**

### **2G.I, 2G.II, 2G.III, 2G.IV**

*Teachers use the extensive collection of PWS assessments to build an inventory of the word-solving competencies students have mastered or nearly mastered. As the lesson principles are taught and applied, teachers use their expertise and informal observation to respond with instruction tailored to specific children.*

## **COMMON CORE ALIGNMENT**

### **2H**

*In October 2019, Heinemann published an “Alignment of Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and FPC” for grades K-3. It identifies specific examples from FPC and PWS that align with the standards. (To request a copy, email [FPC@Heinemann.com](mailto:FPC@Heinemann.com)).*

## **DIRECTION FOR EXCELLING OR STRUGGLING STUDENTS**

### **2I.II, 2I.III**

*The guidance provided in “Consider Your Children,” “Working with English Language Learners,” and “Assess” sections of each PWS lesson help teachers reflect on their understandings of students’ strengths and areas of need and adjust their teaching in response.*

*Teachers can:*

- *repeat the lesson with different examples for a small group or a whole class of learners;*
- *skip a lesson;*
- *differentiate the application task when necessary.*

*As teachers engage in responsive teaching, they use formal assessments and their observations to reflect on how effectively the modifications impacted the learner.*

*Heinemann proudly places PWS in the hands of millions of teachers and students. We strive to amplify the voice of those who share our respect for the professionalism and compassion of educators’ efforts to help children become literate, empathetic, knowledgeable citizens.*