Heinemann Response to EdReports Evaluation
Fountas & Pinnell Classroom™ (*FPC*), Grades K-5

INTRODUCTION

The development of [*Fountas & Pinnell Classroom*](#)™ (*FPC*) rests on 30+ years of the authors' classroom experience and research on how literacy develops in children over time and incorporates leading thinking and research on effective literacy instruction.

While there is strong agreement among educators that a comprehensive literacy system is essential for effective reading, writing and language competencies, all curriculum evaluation tools, including EdReports, are based on discrete rubrics informed by subjective criteria on pedagogy and instruction.

The EdReports rubric is not a great fit for evaluating a curriculum like *FPC* that prioritizes the research-proven contexts of independent reading and differentiated small group instruction. *FPC* greatly values the importance of responsive teaching and the teacher agency required to adjust, extend, and enrich learning based on individual student needs. The EdReports rubric provides no way to measure these deeply valuable components of an effective literacy system.

The instructional design of *FPC* stands in contrast to CCSS-driven, standardized textbook curriculums in its commitment to the following:
1. Instructional coherence
2. Responsive teaching
3. Multi-text approach
4. Student inquiry
5. Language-based teaching and learning
6. Teacher expertise

OVERLOOKED EVIDENCE AND LIMITED SAMPLE

There were several aspects of the *FPC* system that EdReports did not consider in their criteria and in their analysis, including lessons and texts outside of whole group instruction. As such, EdReports only purchased a subset of the grade level system, thus omitting three of seven key components from this review.

CHALLENGES TO THE FINDINGS

Finding #1: EdReports definition of "anchor/core texts" and text complexity are aligned with a traditional basal reading textbook design, not the innovative, multi-text design of *FPC*. The review states, while *FPC* "*may include texts at the appropriate level of complexity for the grade level… students may never grapple with grade-level text during the year as the design of the program does not provide for appropriately complex grade-level anchor texts that assure students see a progression in text complexity with appropriate scaffolds over the course of the year*."

Response: *FPC* includes thousands of high-quality books across five instructional contexts. Within *FPC*, students read, listen to, talk about, and write about a wide range of text types, text complexities, and genres to meet standards identified for the grade-level.

The review of "anchor texts" was limited to a small sample of just two contexts: Interactive Read Aloud picture books and Shared Reading big and small books. However, "anchor texts" in *FPC* extend beyond these two

contexts to include Guided Reading, Independent Reading, and Book Clubs. Each of these *FPC* collections are comprised of engaging, authentic, relevant, grade- and age-appropriate fiction and nonfiction titles, amounting to hundreds of books per grade level. Books have been written or curated to support each context with careful attention to including a balance of genres, topics, and diverse perspectives.

It's hard to imagine how these rich collections could be evaluated as lacking in text complexity.

Finding #2: EdReports definition of text complexity is determined exclusively by Lexile levels. From their limited evaluation, the reviewers narrowly conclude that some texts in *FPC* are of moderate to high complexity and "*materials have their own leveling system and anchor texts are not accompanied by an accurate text complexity analysis and a rationale for educational purpose and placement in the grade level*."

Response: According to documented [research](#), several factors contribute to students' literacy learning. Each is highly related to the selection and use of texts in classrooms, including books for whole-group instruction, small-group instruction, and individual teaching. Texts may be analyzed quantitatively (using computer software, as in the case of Lexile), but researchers suggest that qualitative analyses conducted by humans are also critical to understanding text complexity. While semantic difficulty (word frequency) and syntactic difficulty (sentence length) are the sole factors that determine Lexile levels, text complexity in *FPC* is based on a much more complex analysis that should not be disregarded.

The EdReports rubric relies exclusively on Lexile levels which offer a strictly quantitative measure. It does not account for the widely recognized and used [F&P Text Level Gradient™](#) (A-Z) which considers both quantitative and qualitative measures (vocabulary, sentence complexity, genre, text structure, content, themes and ideas, book and print features) in determining a text's complexity, challenges and supports for use in guided reading instruction. By not considering this tool, the review disregards this small-group practice in *FPC* that enables teachers to scaffold and differentiate instruction utilizing hundreds of leveled texts and lessons per grade.

The Literacy Continuum serves as the nucleus of *FPC.* It is the instructional anchor for every lesson and book in *FPC* and ensures that students engage with increasingly complex texts as they move through each grade. *The Continuum* provides guidelines for determining text complexity using the same three factors as noted in the [CCSS](#) (quantitative, qualitative, task).

The "Goals," "About This Book," and "Important Text Characteristics" sections of every lesson/card in *FPC* provide the rationale, purpose, and placement of the text in each collection. Furthermore, the "Selecting Texts" section for each grade level in *The Continuum* describes how the specific supports and demands of texts grow across grades for each instructional context. Beyond the consideration of anchor texts, assigned reading, and Lexile levels, *FPC* creates opportunities to stretch thinking and expand vocabulary and content knowledge [while also meeting or exceeding the CCSS](#).

Finding #3: EdReports concludes that at the time of the review, *FPC* did not "*provide adequate opportunities for rich and rigorous evidence-based discussions or writing about texts/process writing tasks to build strong literacy skills*." Again, this was based on a limited sample of materials.

Response: Throughout *FPC,* scaffolded support provides frequent opportunities for students to write about reading in a meaningful, purposeful, and rigorous way. *FPC* includes guidance for writing demonstrations, explicit instruction in writing about reading (with text evidence), and daily independent writing opportunities. Here are a few examples:

- Writing about reading goals are multifaceted and range from writing to demonstrate understanding, to clarifying/composing thinking, to exploring new ideas, to making connections.

- Structured opportunities are provided for using modeled, shared, and interactive writing to demonstrate the writing process. These opportunities support students in transferring their understandings to their own writing.
- Opportunities for evidence-based writing are part of every *FPC* lessons to support understanding of text-based information (within, beyond and about the text).
- *Reading Minilessons* provide explicit instruction in writing about reading, including using a Reader's Notebook, as well as instruction for various writing genres: narrative, informational, persuasive writing, and revision.

When EdReports conducted its review, only [*The Writing Minilessons Books*](#) for PreK–1 had been published. The grades 2–3 books will be available summer 2022 and grades 4–6 in summer 2023. Despite a request to postpone the review, EdReports proceeded without evaluating the process writing portion of *FPC*. Each of the subsequent grades of *Writing Minilessons* will be submitted to EdReports upon publication.

Within *FPC*, talk is a critical learning tool for children to refine their ideas, reveal their understandings and perspectives, and make meaning from texts and experiences. *FPC* is rich with robust opportunities for varied talk structures and includes support for teachers to facilitate evidence-based discussions.

Initially the review missed the evidence-based discussion opportunities and protocols. Upon reviewing Heinemann's counterevidence, the review acknowledged evidence of protocols for students to engage in evidence-based discussions of texts with peers.

Finding #4: EdReports states that *FPC* "*does not provide adequate teacher guidance or opportunity to interact with and build academic vocabulary in and across texts*."

Response: Powerful vocabulary instruction happens throughout *FPC* in several ways including in the process of reading continuous texts. Oral language and vocabulary contribute to and benefit from daily, authentic, language-based literacy experiences. Vocabulary expansion is supported with numerous opportunities to hear language read aloud, to read independently, talk, and write daily in a variety of genres.

Phonics, Spelling and Word Study K-6 provides explicit, systematic vocabulary lessons in Word Meaning/Vocabulary (WMV) and Word Structure (WS). These lessons support development of academic vocabulary *and* provide experience with understanding the rules for using contractions, plurals and affixes, compound words, prefixes, possessives, and abbreviations.

Intentional vocabulary support is embedded into the instructional routines of each context. Lessons provide vocabulary goals from *The Continuum* (the yearly plan for vocabulary development) and specific guidance for teaching vocabulary throughout the year.

Academic language and vocabulary learning is also highlighted in *RML*. "Academic Language and Important Vocabulary" that children need to understand to access the learning is highlighted on page 1 of every minilesson and addressed in the assessment section of each *RML* umbrella.

CONCLUSION
We believe the EdReports rubric and final review do not capture the scope and impact that our third-party spotlight testimonials and data reviews have proven. To ensure high literacy achievement, we must be certain that our classrooms offer the richest learning opportunities possible, which includes both a responsive, research-based curriculum and the expertise of teachers. To consider anything less than this does a disservice to students and teachers.