

***Into Reading* Publisher’s Response** **Grades K–2**

Houghton Mifflin Harcourt is very pleased with EdReports’ “All Green” evaluation for all levels of our *Into Reading* program. *Into Reading* K–6 is a comprehensive English language arts solution for a new generation of readers and writers. All aspects of *Into Reading* are based on solid research evidence for how literacy (reading and writing), speaking, and listening develop over the elementary school span and how high-quality instruction supports that development.

We would like to provide some specific comments on the following indicators in the Grades K–2 reviews.

- 1. INDICATOR 1H** “Materials contain sets of high-quality sequences of text-based questions with activities that build to a culminating task which integrates skills to demonstrate understanding (as appropriate, may be drawing, dictating, writing, speaking, or a combination).”

Grades 1–2

HMH believes that *Into Reading* fully meets the requirements of this indicator and that the offering of a choice of culminating tasks to teachers unfairly influenced the score.

At the selection level, sequences of questions in the Teaching Pal are carefully planned to build deep understanding over multiple readings. The first reading, labeled Read for Understanding, culminates with the Turn and Talk questions, which are discussion prompts about the text that students discuss with partners. The second reading, labeled Targeted Close Read, culminates with a write to respond prompt that integrates their overall understanding of the text.

At the end of each module, the program consistently prompts students to discuss the knowledge they acquired about a topic and then complete one of three culminating tasks, labeled *Let’s Wrap Up!* or *Performance Task*. Each of these synthesis activities requires students to integrate reading skills with either drawing, writing, and/or speaking skills and cite evidence from their readings from across the module.

- 2. INDICATOR 2B** “Materials contain sets of coherently sequenced questions and tasks that require students to analyze the language (words/phrases), key ideas, details, craft, and structure of individual texts in order to make meaning and build understanding of texts and topics.”

Grades K–2

Into Reading provides multiple sequences of questions for each text. In Kindergarten, each week’s reading begins with a Read Aloud Book. While the teacher reads aloud the book, he or she pauses to ask text-dependent questions in the Teacher’s Guide, specific to certain pages or page spans in the book. In the next encounter with the Read Aloud

Book, the teacher uses dialogic reading prompts as they move through the book and discuss it. Finally, they engage in a questioning sequence about a particular skill they apply through the book. Then they discuss how the text connects back to the module topic.

The Grades 1–2 Teaching Pal component demonstrates the publisher’s attention to developing high-quality sequences of questions about texts. The component contains color-coded notes that are designated for reading for different purposes, which are described at the beginning of each Teaching Pal volume, drawing students’ attention to language, key ideas, details, craft, and structure of texts.

The EdReports evaluation critiques the use of a reading strategy focus with each text as evidence of questions that do not support knowledge building. Direct instruction of reading strategies is a developmentally appropriate and research-based instructional practice to build understanding of texts (Shanahan, Callison, Carriere, Duke, Pearson, Schatschneider, & Torgeson, 2010). HMH maintains that direct instruction and application of reading strategies as one aspect of a complete questioning sequence directly supports meaning-making and knowledge-building.

- 3. INDICATOR 2D** “The questions and tasks support students’ ability to complete culminating tasks in which they demonstrate their knowledge of a topic (or, for grades 6-8, a theme) through integrated skills (e.g. combination of reading, writing, speaking, listening).”

Grade 1

HMH believes that Grade 1 was held to a different standard than Grades K and 2 in the evaluation of this indicator. The Grade 1 evaluation says, “At the end of each module, students complete a culminating task or a performance-based task, which is usually more rigorous and involves writing and synthesizing previously read texts; however, due [to] materials providing choice, students do not consistently complete tasks that require them to demonstrate knowledge of a topic they are learning.” This same choice is mentioned in the Grade 2 evaluation that received full credit for the indicator.

HMH is confident that all of the Grade 1 culminating tasks and performance tasks meet the letter and spirit of the indicator, and so choice should not be a factor in the score. As evidence of this, below are descriptions of the culminating task options not mentioned in the evaluation.

- In Module 3, students learn about animals and how their bodies help them survive. One of the culminating tasks asks students to choose an animal from the texts they read and discuss it with a partner, and then write about what the animal should and should not do to survive. This task integrates reading, speaking, listening, and writing. The performance task option asks students to consider all the texts they read in the module, recommend one of the texts, and give reasons for their choice. In all the performance tasks across the Modules 1–10, including the one in Module 3, teachers guide students through all the steps in the writing process. The last step in the process is “present,”

during which time students take turns sharing their writing while the rest of the class listens to them. This task also integrates reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

- In Module 7, students explore the essential question, “How do things in nature change?” In Lesson 15, students discuss similarities and differences between the texts they read and listened to from across the module. They also have a choice of culminating tasks, including writing about weather and seasons, drawing evidence from the module texts they read.
- In Module 8, students learn about the lessons that writers share through literature. In Lesson 15, they discuss what they learned about the module topic from each of the texts they read and listened to, and they complete a culminating task. One of these culminating task options has students drawing and writing about a lesson from the stories to create a badge. Students are encouraged to “share their badges in a small group and explain how their badges can be earned.” This task integrates reading, writing, speaking, and listening. The other culminating task has children thinking about a lesson a character from the texts learned and acting out something the character would do. This task integrates reading and speaking.

- 4. INDICATOR 3B** “The teacher and student can reasonably complete the content within a regular school year, and the pacing allows for maximum student understanding.”

Grades K–2

HMH believes the program organization provides the right balance of predictable structure and flexibility to entrust teachers as professionals to make the appropriate choices for their students, which includes making reasonable adjustments to planning and pacing based on a school or classroom’s unique situation. No publisher’s program can accurately accommodate for all the various disruptions that may occur in a school year.

The grade-level evaluations mention that the program “does not allow for teachers to introduce and practice routines and procedures” at the beginning of the year; however, this guidance is seamlessly integrated into Modules 1 and 2 of the Teacher’s Guide, where each routine first appears, in teacher support notes labeled *Getting Started*.

Reference

Shanahan, T., Callison, K., Carriere, C., Duke, N. K., Pearson, P. D., Schatschneider, C., & Torgesen, J. (2010). *Improving reading comprehension in kindergarten through 3rd grade: A practice guide* (NCEE 2010-4038). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved from whatworks.ed.gov/publications/practiceguides.