

Florida Center for Reading Research

Voyager Passport E, F, & G

What is Voyager Passport E, F, & G?

Voyager Passport E, F, & G is a reading intervention program for fourth, fifth, and sixth grade students. Level G can also be used with seventh or eighth grade students. The program is designed to supplement a school's core reading program with the goal of accelerating struggling readers to their reading grade level. Each level of *Voyager E, F, & G* includes three Modules (1-Targeted Word Study, 2-Comprehension and Vocabulary, 3- Fluency) with instruction delivered five days a week over 26 weeks. Also included is the Vital Indicators of Progress (VIP), an oral reading assessment system to monitor students' ability to read a grade-level passage. The Targeted Word Study is the most intensive module, designed to be used with students who are reading two or more years below grade level and is a pre-requisite to the other modules for qualifying students. Students eligible for this Module are assessed then placed at one of three entry points. The recommended amount of time for instruction varies with each module: Targeted Word Study Module is 30 minutes; Comprehension and Vocabulary Module is 30 minutes; Fluency Module is 15 minutes.

Voyager Passport can be taught by degreed professionals or trained paraprofessionals. Implementation formats range from one instructor working with a group of six, to one instructor teaching an entire class of struggling readers. Regardless of the implementation model chosen, each level of instruction should include the following components: 26 weeks of instruction from either the Targeted Word Study Module or the Vocabulary and Comprehension Module in conjunction with the Fluency Module, three benchmark assessments using the VIP system, and ongoing progress monitoring.

A Passport Training Kit including booklets and a video provide: a general overview of the curriculum, an explanation of the assessment component (including how to use the measures to group students and monitor progress), instructions on how to administer and score the fluency and retell assessments, and a skills trace. Each grade level offers a teacher's guide, student books, plus separate teacher's guides and student books for assessment purposes. There is a placement assessment, called Vital Indicators of Progress (VIP), with the Advanced Word Study Module that identifies where a student should be placed in the program. VIP is a series of oral reading assessments that parallel the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS), developed by Dr. Roland Good. Benchmarks assessments in Levels E, F, and G include Reading Connected Text and Retell Fluency (optional) in the Fall, Winter, and Spring.

The program presentation is consistent in all three of the Modules. Lessons are divided into thirteen Adventures (Concept Themes) with ten lessons in each Adventure for a total of 130 lessons. One-minute fluency measures are administered after every fifth lesson. The Skills Trace provides a broad outline of the categories of skills (comprehension strategies, test-taking strategies, concept development, advanced word study, and reading passages) presented in each Module. However, there is no scope and sequence to indicate the specific instructional components of each lesson, and objectives are not stated for any of the lessons.



How is Voyager Passport E, F, & G aligned with Current Reading Research?

Each of the Modules in *Voyager Passport E, F, G* addresses phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension in varying degrees. Phonemic Awareness is not addressed in any of the modules. The targeted student population for this intervention (4th, 5th, and 6th) means those reading two years below grade level would be reading at 2nd, 3rd, or 4th grade level. Whether or not systematic instruction in oral language phonemic awareness activities needs to be part of remedial instruction for struggling readers at these ages has not been firmly established in research. However, we do know that both conscious awareness of the phonemes in words *and* the ability to accurately identify them within words are necessary in learning to phonemically decode words in print (Ehri, 2002; Ehri, et al., 2001; Wagner et al., 1997).

The Targeted Word Study Module is a prerequisite to the other two Modules for struggling readers who are two or more years below grade level. Curriculum materials for the Targeted Word Study Module are the same for levels E, F, and G and an entry placement assessment is given to determine students' entry level. Each lesson begins with a Word Study activity that includes: letter/sound combinations, affixes, rule-based words, or flexible strategies for decoding multi-syllabic words. Targeted word study begins with the assumption that students have knowledge of single letter sound correspondences and a decoding strategy for regular words. The concern is that most students who are struggling with reading need individual letter sound instruction taught to mastery and an explicit strategy to decode words. Additionally, even though the lesson targets specific letter sounds in the introductory activity, the follow-up activities in the lesson do not build on the introductory concept. Each lesson includes a passage that students are asked to read independently, although the text offered is not decodable text. Both Foorman et al. (1998) and Juel and Minden-Cupp (2000) found that explicit instruction and opportunities for extended practice with phonemically decodable texts were particularly beneficial for children at risk for reading failure. Students are asked to re-read the story independently or with a partner to improve fluency, but supported reading with the teacher is not offered. A Checkpoint is administered in every fifth lesson providing ongoing assessment of the skills taught in each series of lessons.

Instruction in the Comprehension and Vocabulary Modules for levels E, F, and G begins with word analysis skills where students are taught affixes and morphemes, the strategy taught to help them decode multi-syllabic words and understand word meanings. Before students read they are introduced to the passage content and encouraged to make predictions, build on prior knowledge, and generate questions. Next, students are introduced to the vocabulary words that are critical to understanding the passage they will be reading. Teachers are guided to monitor students' understanding of the text as they read the passages with a partner, independently or chorally. Critical comprehension strategies are modeled and taught through the text including identifying story elements, retelling, predicting, identifying the main idea, sequencing, comparing and contrasting, building on prior knowledge, graphic organizers, predicting, and identifying the type of text. Students are presented with two reading passages per week. The number of words in the passages and the readability levels (Flesh-Kincaid) increase gradually with each Adventure. High-frequency science and social studies words are taught and reviewed in isolation, then used in text to increase word understanding and recognition. Test Taking strategies taught include eliminating obviously wrong answers, finding key words, eliminating

answers that are too general, previewing the questions, looking for clues, making notes as you read, and focusing on headings.

The Fluency Modules for *Voyager Passport E, F, and G* address each of the three indicators of fluency: rate, accuracy, and prosody. Students are stimulated to increase their reading rate with choral readings, oral readings, partner readings, and frequent timed readings. Teachers are advised to have students read the passage independently on the first read but to intervene by modeling if the students are struggling. Accuracy is the focus as vocabulary and unfamiliar words are decoded and defined before students read the passage. Later these same words are reviewed to encourage automatic word recognition. Comprehension questions are presented between readings to ensure understanding. Fast Read Cards (flash cards) are used in several lessons for reviewing vocabulary to help build automaticity and further develop understanding of word meaning. Prosody is modeled as teachers read aloud with students to demonstrate expression, rate, phrasing, and intonation.

Professional development for *Voyager Passport E, F, and G* is comprised of a three hour training session for district leaders, school literacy coaches and teachers. The Passport Training Kit is used for the training and includes a video tape, three tutorial booklets, and a practice manual. Follow-up and support can be provided by the literacy coaches as well as by the video and a set of tutorial books.

Research Support for Voyager Passport E, F, & G

Voyager Passport E, F, and G addresses phonics, vocabulary, comprehension, and fluency in varying degrees. It was first published in August, 2004 and thus far there are no empirical data to support the efficacy of the program.

Strengths & Weaknesses

Strengths of *Voyager Passport E, F, & G*:

- High-frequency science and social studies words are taught first in isolation, and then used in text to increase comprehension and fluency.

Weaknesses of *Voyager Passport E, F, & G*:

- Materials may be cumbersome for teachers to coordinate: Estimated times for lessons are insufficient; transparencies for vocabulary words and their definitions are not provided (requiring the teacher to write these on the board); each Module has its own Teacher's Guide and separate sets of student materials and the lessons across each Module do not overlap, requiring two to three separate preparations to fully implement the program.

Which Florida districts have schools that implement Voyager Passport E, F, & G?

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| Holmes | 850-547-9341 |
| Dade | 305-995-1430 |
| Okaloosa | 850-833-3109 |

For More Information

<http://www.voyagerlearning.com/>

References

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Important Note: FCRR Reports are prepared in response to requests from Florida school districts for review of specific reading programs. The reports are intended to be a source of information about programs that will help teachers, principals, and district personnel in their choice of materials that can be used by skilled teachers to provide effective instruction. Whether or not a program has been reviewed does **not** constitute endorsement or lack of endorsement by the FCRR.

For more information about FCRR go to: www.fcrr.org