

Florida Center for Reading Research

Voyager Passport

What is Voyager Passport?

Voyager Passport is a K-3 reading intervention for students who encounter reading difficulty and are performing below grade level. The goal of *Voyager Passport* is to accelerate students' reading growth to be commensurate with grade-level expectations. Designed as a supplement to a school's core reading program, the *Voyager Passport* intervention provides intensive, explicit instruction that can be delivered by a teacher, reading specialist, trained paraprofessional as well as other school professionals and student teachers. The program consists of 130 lessons taught daily in small groups of 3-6 students over a 26-week time frame. There are 13 thematic units within each grade level of *Voyager Passport* consisting of 10 lessons per unit. Materials for each grade include a Passport Training Kit; a Teacher's Resource Kit with 2 curriculum guides, a teacher's card pack and vocabulary cards for grades K-1, and the Vital Indicators of Progress Guide (VIP) for assessment; and a Student Reading Pack consisting of student lesson books, fluency readers, assessment books, and take-home readers for grades K-1. The K-3 curriculum guides are organized and easy to follow with an estimated time and list of necessary materials for the various portions of the lesson.

Each day's lesson of the *Voyager Passport* intervention is comprised of two modules: a 20-30-minute module and a 10-minute module. To provide flexibility for school implementation, the two modules may be taught in either order, at different times of the day, and in a variety of settings. Various combinations of word study, fluency development and vocabulary and comprehension strategies are distributed throughout the two modules. Lessons are highly structured and use clear, succinct language. Consistent throughout the program are instructional strategies that contribute to a student's ability to learn skills to mastery such as teacher modeling, guided and independent practice, and immediate corrective feedback. The instructional design of *Voyager Passport* emphasizes the following features: skills that increase gradually in difficulty, the use of high utility letters or words, logical sequences of letters, letter combinations and word parts, and cumulative review. Every 5th lesson offers the possibility of review and progress monitoring.

The lessons of the 20-30-minute module in K-1 introduce and develop knowledge of letter sound correspondences through exercises that focus on phonemic awareness, alphabetic understanding, and practice with letter formation. Fluency is developed by rapid letter naming, reading regular and irregular words, and a limited amount of decodable text. The oral reading of narrative and expository passages by the teacher during the 10-minute module serves as the springboard for vocabulary and comprehension development.

Beginning lessons for Grade 2 quickly reintroduce several consonants and all vowels; remaining lessons continue with a systematic sequence of consonant and vowel digraphs, word endings, and common word rules. Students then apply the skills they learn by reading regular words, irregular words, and connected text. In contrast to grades K-1, students read orally for the vocabulary and comprehension component of the lesson, and a stronger emphasis is placed on fluency development.



A feature of the 3rd grade portion of *Voyager Passport* is the explicit teaching of advanced word analysis and comprehension strategies. Students study multisyllabic words as well as prefixes and suffixes to facilitate the decoding and comprehension of vocabulary words and passages. Similar to the 2nd grade intervention, there is an increased emphasis on fluency. For students in need of additional support in word study, an optional component to the 3rd grade intervention is Targeted Word Study. Daily 30-minute lessons consist of explicit instruction in phonic elements such as letter sounds, letter combinations, and some advanced word analysis, as well as fluency building, passage reading and comprehension strategies. Voyager Learning recommends teaching the 60 lessons of Targeted Word Study and then introducing the students to the 3rd grade intervention described above. They also recommend teaching 2 lessons daily from Targeted Word Study for extremely low achieving students.

Vital Indicators of Progress (VIP) are quick and easy measures used throughout the program to identify struggling readers, to monitor their skills across lessons, and to make informed instructional decisions. An online data management system allows teachers to access reports that summarize student progress. The VIP assessment is based on and virtually equivalent to the Dynamic Indicators of Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) measures developed and validated by Dr. Roland Good and colleagues from the University of Oregon (2002).

How is *Voyager Passport* aligned with Reading First?

Voyager Passport is consistent with Reading First guidelines by its inclusion of instruction in phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension strategies. These five components exist in varying degrees depending on the grade level.

Activities in phonemic awareness for K-1 increase gradually in difficulty beginning with sound isolation for initial and final sounds, continuing to the segmenting and blending of phonemes, and finally the overt manipulation of sounds and letters. Phonemic awareness activities are then discontinued halfway through the program for Kindergarten. To reinforce understanding of the alphabetic principle, individual sounds are associated with their corresponding letters followed by writing of the target letter. As soon as students have learned a few of the common consonants and vowels, they are introduced to the reading and spelling of regular words that contain the previously taught letters. Phonic understanding is increased with strategies that facilitate the decoding of regular words, such as the segmenting and blending of words and the analysis of word parts. Advanced word analysis strategies begin in 2nd grade and are prevalent in the 3rd grade intervention. *Voyager Passport* explicitly teaches the most common letter sound correspondences but does not address the variant spellings of consonants and vowels. So that students can apply the skills they are learning, completely decodable text is used in grades K-1 and slightly less controlled text in grades 2-3. The strategy for teaching high utility irregular words is consistent across all grades. Students are told that they are not able to use the sounds they already know to read irregular words; they are then taught to spell and read the word. A possible concern for struggling readers in 2nd and 3rd grade is that *Voyager Passport* does not teach students a strategy for being flexible when decoding words that they do not recognize automatically.

Voyager Passport uses multiple strategies to develop fluency. A goal of the program is the ability to automatically recognize and say individual sounds, their

corresponding letters, word parts, and words. This is achieved by choral and individual repeated readings and a variety of game-like activities. Rapid letter naming and writing are emphasized in grades K-1. As a means of developing fluency in text reading, students engage in repeated readings, both chorally and with partners. For the first reading of the story, the teacher always reads with the students. Additionally in grades 2-3, every lesson provides students with the opportunity to read two different passages, one in each module. Students are taught the prosodic features of text as well as appropriate speed by listening to the teacher demonstrate expressive reading. Lessons frequently include timed 1-minute readings to increase fluency in word and text reading and to give students the chance to monitor their own progress. Controlled text is carefully scaffolded in first grade, beginning with sentences of 2-3 words and building to daily passages of 80-100 words by the end of the program. Given the limited amount of decodable text in much of the 1st grade program however, it would be important for students to receive more practice with decodable text at the appropriate level.

The explicit instruction of vocabulary and comprehension strategies is a strength of the *Voyager Passport* intervention. Daily, students learn 3 new vocabulary words taken from the passage read by the teacher, or, the passage the students will read. The words are introduced before reading, defined, and used in different contexts throughout the week. Through questioning and discussion, the teacher activates prior knowledge to build and reinforce understanding of the new words. Strategies to increase understanding are woven throughout both modules. Listening and reading comprehension are the focus of K-1 while the focal point of 2-3 is reading comprehension. Teachers demonstrate their thinking process by overt modeling as they teach students to make predictions, confirm their predictions, retell events, recognize story elements, and find the main idea. Both literal and inferential questions are prevalent throughout all grade levels.

Voyager Passport provides three professional development models. 1) The Self-guided Model using the Passport Training Kit is included in the cost of the product. 2) In the Coach Model for large implementations, Voyager trains building coaches at an additional cost. 3) In the Coach and Teacher Model, Voyager trains participating staff for an additional cost. Options 2 and 3 also provide four site visits. Website and telephone support are available to all customers.

Research Support for Voyager Passport

Voyager Passport is a relatively new program, completed early in 2003, and does not have any research that is specific to the intervention. Many of the strategies are based on the struggling reader component of the Voyager Universal Literacy System. A review of the Voyager Universal Literacy System and its research may be found at <http://www.fcrr.org/FCRRReports/reportslist.htm>. Presently, however, many intervention studies are underway for *Voyager Passport*. The content, strategies, and instructional design of *Voyager Passport* are consistent with scientifically based reading research.

Strengths & Weaknesses

Strengths of *Voyager Passport*:

- Manipulatives are used to reinforce understanding of the alphabetic principle.
- Overt modeling of the thinking process or of a particular strategy is consistently present throughout all lessons in all grade levels.

- So that lessons are meaningful and understanding is increased, students are always taught why they are participating in a particular activity.
- Sequences in letter sound correspondence, word reading, and advanced word analysis are structured to avoid confusion.
- Materials are easy to follow and will aid in the facility of this intervention's implementation by teachers and paraprofessionals alike.
- Explicit strategies to read multisyllabic words by using prefixes and suffixes are helpful for students in grades 2 and 3.
- Small group instruction is implemented on a daily basis.
- Narrative and expository text are used in all grades.

Weaknesses of *Voyager Passport*:

- Voyager Passport may not be sufficient to close the gap for students lagging 2-3 years behind grade level.

Which Florida districts have schools that implement Voyager Passport?

Dade 305-995-1428

Orange 407-317-3202

For More Information

<http://www.voyagerlearning.com/curricula/passport/index.jsp>

References

Good, R. H. & Kaminski, R. A. (Eds.) (2002). *Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills* (6th ed.). Eugene, OR: Institute for the Development of Educational Achievement.



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