

**A STUDY OF THE EFFECT THE VOYAGER PASSPORT READING  
JOURNEYS PROGRAM HAS ON 9<sup>th</sup> GRADE STUDENT READING  
ACHIEVEMENT BASED ON THE MEASURE OF ACADEMIC PROGRESS  
ASSESSMENT**

Michael Scott Wolgast  
B.S.E., Emporia State University, 1989  
M.S., Central Missouri State University, 1991

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of the School of Education of Baker University in  
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Clinical Research Committee:

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Major Advisor

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## ABSTRACT

This experimental study examined the Voyager Passport Reading Journeys program and its impact on 9<sup>th</sup> grade reading achievement. The 9<sup>th</sup> grade students selected for the program had performed at the basic or unsatisfactory level on the Kansas reading assessment, and/or performed below the fiftieth percentile on the Iowa Test of Educational Development, and/or received a Rasch Unit (RIT) score below 235 on the Measure of Academic Progress (MAP) assessment. The established score of 235 is considered by the test's authors to be below grade level. Ninety-five 9<sup>th</sup> grade students were recommended for the course. Of this number, 66 actually enrolled in the course with 29 selecting to not enroll. The students recommended and enrolled in the course were compared to those students recommended and not enrolled. In addition, a comparison was made between the students enrolled in the course and the students in 9<sup>th</sup> grade honors English and a separate comparison examined those in regular 9<sup>th</sup> grade English.

The 9<sup>th</sup> grade students took a pretest at the beginning of the school year and a posttest at the end of the school year. This study was quantitative and consisted of data collected from the Measure of Academic Progress reading assessment. The simple analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to analyze the reading scores. Within this analysis, the Bonferroni comparison provided the significant pair wise differences between the groups contributing to the overall significant difference between all four groups.

Data analyzed from this study gave appropriate feedback as to the overall impact of the Voyager Passport Reading Journeys program on 9<sup>th</sup> grade reading achievement.

While there was some improvement in the reading scores of those students participating in the program, the results were not significant.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract.....	i
Acknowledgements.....	iii
CHAPTER ONE	INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE.....1
	Background for the Study .....2
	Purpose of the Study .....9
	Significance of the Study .....12
	Definition of Key Terms.....12
	Objectives and Potential Outcomes .....14
	Hypothesis.....15
	Limitations and Delimitations.....15
	Assumptions.....15
CHAPTER TWO	REVIEW OF LITERATURE .....17
	Introduction.....17
	Historical Perspective .....19
	Approaches to Reading .....22
	The Reading Process.....32
	Reading Programs.....36
	Voyager Passport Reading Journeys.....50
	Measure of Academic Progress .....55
CHAPTER THREE	RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.....58
	Introduction.....58
	Research Hypothesis.....59
	Instrumentation .....59
	Population of the Study.....61
	Dependent and Independent Variables .....61
	Data Collection Procedures.....62
	Design and Analysis .....63
	Summary.....63
CHAPTER FOUR	FINDINGS OF THE STUDY.....65
	Introduction.....65
	Overview.....65
	The Data.....66
	Summary.....73

CHAPTER FIVE	SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATION .....	75
	Introduction.....	75
	Summary .....	75
	Conclusions.....	77
	Recommendations for Further Research.....	79
Works Cited .....		82
Tables and Charts Cited .....		95

LIST OF TABLES AND GRAPHS

Tables

1	Total Households in the SMSD .....	3
2	Average Household Size in the SMSD .....	3
3	Ethnicity and Gender in the SMSD .....	4
4	SMSD Enrollment History and Projections .....	5
5	SME Historic and Projected Enrollment by Grade .....	6
6	Key Aspects of Voyager Passport Reading Journeys .....	11
7	Reader’s Workshop Components .....	37
8	Pumped Up Grammar Activities .....	38
9	Voyager Passport Reading Journeys Assessment Components .....	53
10	Voyager Passport Reading Journeys Alignment with Reading Next .....	54
11	9 <sup>th</sup> Grade Students Recommended and Enrolled .....	67
12	9 <sup>th</sup> Grade Students Recommended and Not Enrolled .....	68
13	9 <sup>th</sup> Grade Students Not Recommended and Enrolled in English 9 Honors .....	69
14	9 <sup>th</sup> Grade Students Not Recommended and Enrolled in Regular English 9 .....	70
15	ANOVA .....	70
16	9 <sup>th</sup> Grade Students Recommended and Enrolled (9RE) Compared to 9 <sup>th</sup> Grade Students Recommended and Not Enrolled (9RNE) .....	71
17	9 <sup>th</sup> Grade Students Recommended and Enrolled (9RE) Compared to 9 <sup>th</sup> Grade Students Not Recommended and Enrolled in English 9 Honors (9H) .....	72



18	9 <sup>th</sup> Grade Students Recommended and Enrolled (9RE) Compared to 9 <sup>th</sup> Grade Students Not Recommended and Enrolled in Regular English 9 (9) .....	73
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Graphs

1	SMSD Enrollment History and Projections .....	4
2	SME Historic and Projected Enrollment.....	6
3	SME Kansas Reading Assessment Results.....	7
4	SME Iowa Test of Educational Development Results.....	8

## Chapter One

### Introduction and Rationale

#### Introduction

The No Child Left Behind legislation continues to raise the expectations, and quite honestly the stress levels, of school districts across the country. Schools continue to tweak and alter the curricular opportunities available to meet the goals set forth by the controversial act, and especially the rising expectation in the area of reading. The debate and decisions on appropriate and effective reading strategies originated in the mid 1800s when Horace Mann returned from a trip to Europe celebrating many features of their educational system. “In the decades following Mann’s pronouncement, the reading pendulum swung back and forth, and a variety of methods were used in American schools” (Willis 13). This continues even today. As a result, decisions are made and strategies implemented in an attempt to bring every student to the level of proficiency (later changed to meets standard) or higher by the mandated year of 2014. Educational leaders are continuously evaluating these decisions and strategies on an annual basis, often making changes every year with the intended purpose of raising student achievement. A Nation of Readers, an early reading initiative, stressed the importance of leadership as these decisions are made. The report stated that, “Almost without exception, an excellent school has an outstanding principal who is deeply committed to helping children learn to read” (Brinkley 85).

The Shawnee Mission School District (SMSD) is no different than any other district across the country when it comes to the expectations placed on schools to meet the requirements of No Child Left Behind. There are district and individual building

initiatives that have been implemented with countless hours spent analyzing the impact (positive or negative) of these efforts. In particular, individual buildings struggle with how to use personnel and finances to best meet the needs of the students labeled at-risk while still serving the needs of all children that make up the educational community. Finally, there is a major emphasis placed on the development of an Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) plan for each building that focuses the educational community on student achievement, especially in the areas of reading and mathematics.

### **Background For The Study**

The Shawnee Mission School District is located in Johnson County, Kansas. According to the Johnson County Manager's Office Annual Report, Johnson County consists of 447 square miles in the southwestern quadrant of the Kansas City metropolitan area. It consists of twenty-one incorporated cities with a population exceeding 450,000. Johnson County is nationally recognized for the quality of its six school districts and two colleges. Three of the county's school districts, Blue Valley, Olathe, and Shawnee Mission repeatedly are ranked among the top twenty-five in the country by Expansion Management magazine (Press). This magazine's goal is to educate its readers, most of whom run companies with less than 500 employees, about how best to evaluate and compare various communities throughout the country in order to determine which will best satisfy and enhance their long-term business requirements.

Within Johnson County, the Shawnee Mission School District is a district with declining enrollment. According to the County Economic Research Institute, (2005) the total number of households in the Shawnee Mission School District was estimated at 97,879 (see Table 1). Of this number there were 67,623 homeowners and 30,256 renters

with the growth in the number of households of 14%. The average household size in Shawnee Mission is 2.18 residents (see Table 2).

**Table 1 Total Households in the SMSD**

<b>Housing Type</b>	<b>2005</b>
Family Households	62,123
Single/Unrelated Adult Households	35,720
Homeowners	67,623
Renters	30,256
Total Households	97,879

Source: County Economic Research Institute, 2005

**Table 2 Average Household Size in the SMSD**

<b>Percentage of Households</b>	<b>2005</b>
Percentage of Family Households	63.6%
Percentage of Single/Unrelated Adult Households	36.4%
Percentage of Homeowners	69.2%
Percentage of Renters	30.8%
Average Annual Household Growth Rate	14%
Average Household Size	2.18

Source: County Economic Research Institute, 2005

The annual Shawnee Mission School District Superintendent's Report to the State Board of Education noted that Shawnee Mission had 28,450 students in grades K-12 in September of 2005. This figure included 9,510 high school students, 4,272 middle school students, and 13,884 elementary students. According to School District records (Table 3), approximately 52% of the students are male, with approximately 48% female. Additionally, 82.9% of all students in Shawnee Mission reported their ethnic background as White/Caucasian. About 3.1% of all Shawnee Mission students are of Asian/Pacific Islander descent, while 6.7% of the students are of African-American descent. Records also show 6.8% of the students are of Hispanic background, and 0.5% are of American Indian/Alaskan Native descent.

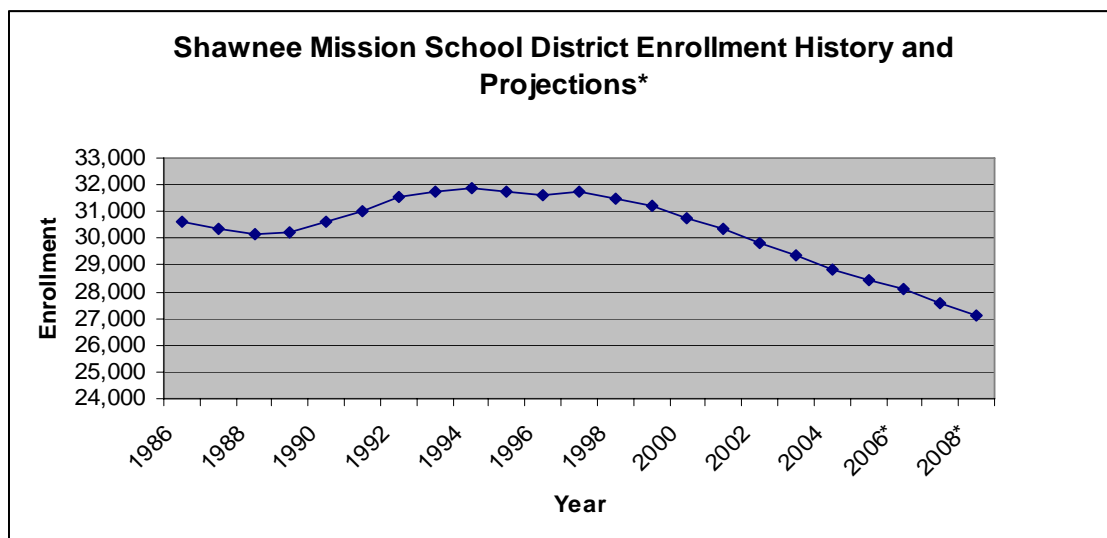
Table 3 Ethnicity and Gender in the SMSD

Category	Total	Difference	Change
White/Caucasian	82.9%		
Asian-American/Pacific Islander	3.1%		
African-American	6.7%		
Hispanic	6.8%		
Native American/Alaskan Native	.5%		
Males	52%		
Females	48%		

Source: Superintendent's Report, SMSD, 2005

As mentioned earlier, the enrollment history and trends for the Shawnee Mission School District reflects a district with declining enrollment. As shown in Table 4 and Graph 1, since 1986, the annual enrollment has ranged from 30,636 in the 1986-1987 school year to 28,450 in the 2005-2006 school year. Enrollment increased an average of 156 students per year from 1986-1987 to 1994-1995. Since that time the number of students has decreased by an average of 279 per year. This decrease is proportionately distributed across the elementary, middle, and high school levels.

Graph 1 SMSD Enrollment History and Projections\*



Source: SMSD Enrollment Records and Projections, 2005

1986	15,123	4,464	10,621	30,636		
1987	15,487	4,401	9,999	30,343	-293	-0.96%
1988	15,955	4,261	9,466	30,171	-172	-0.57%
1989	16,295	4,364	9,029	30,236	65	0.22%
1990	16,762	4,499	8,779	30,619	383	1.27%
1991	17,294	4,403	8,789	31,044	425	1.39%
1992	17,533	4,634	8,780	31,534	490	1.58%
1993	17,515	4,738	8,823	31,761	227	0.72%
1994	17,407	4,792	8,964	31,884	123	0.39%
1995	17,359	4,890	8,955	31,771	-113	-0.35%
1996	16,903	5,055	9,213	31,594	-177	-0.56%
1997	16,730	4,951	9,441	31,755	161	0.51%
1998	16,201	4,972	9,704	31,480	-275	-0.87%
1999	15,743	4,961	9,846	31,208	-272	-0.86%
2000	15,359	4,731	9,947	30,743	-465	-1.49%
2001	15,527	4,752	10,088	30,367	-376	-1.22%
2002	15,081	4,849	9,902	29,832	-535	-1.76%
2003	14,752	4,734	9,885	29,371	-461	-1.55%
2004	14,459	4,565	9,812	28,836	-535	-1.88%
2005	14,284	4,472	9,694	28,450	-386	-1.34%
2006*	14,179	4,418	9,350	28,087	-403	-1.42%
2007*	14,199	4,280	9,169	27,588	-459	-1.64%
2008*	14,093	4,224	8,723	27,140	-448	-1.62%

Table 4 **SMSD Enrollment History and Projections\***

Source: SMSD Enrollment Records and Projections, 2005

Shawnee Mission East High School (SME) is the setting for this experimental study. It is one of five high schools in the Shawnee Mission School District. Opening in 1958, it was the second high school constructed in the district. Parts of five cities – Fairway, Leawood, Mission Hills, Prairie Village, and Overland Park – are included in the SME attendance area. SME is located in a residential community comprised largely of middle- to upper middle-class families; the population base exceeds 50,000 with an average household income that exceeds \$103,000. The SME attendance area is made up of nine elementary and two middle schools that feed directly into the high school. Like the school district, SME has also experienced a decline in enrollment. Table 5 and

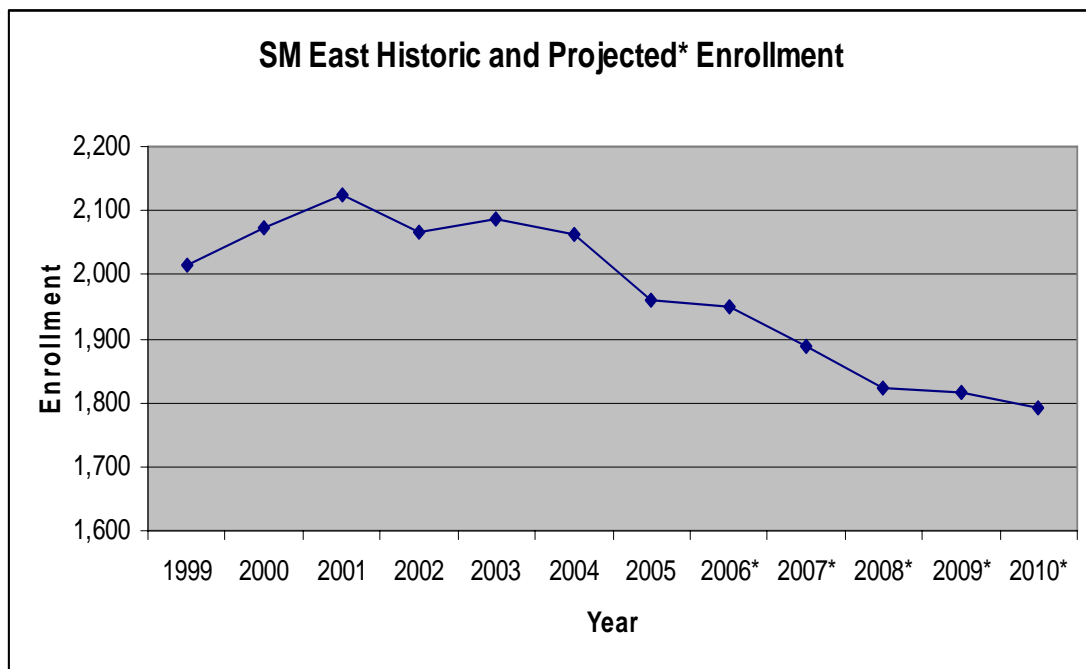
Graph 2 reflect not only a decline in overall enrollment, but also a decline in the enrollment of specific classes from one year to the next.

**Table 5 SME Historic and Projected\* Enrollment by Grade**

<b>Sept. 20</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>Total</b>
1999	520	520	527	449	<b>2,016</b>
2000	535	511	509	519	<b>2,074</b>
2001	589	524	495	515	<b>2,123</b>
2002	479	580	510	498	<b>2,067</b>
2003	568	476	527	515	<b>2,086</b>
2004	551	519	453	540	<b>2,063</b>
2005	485	506	500	469	<b>1,960</b>
2006*	508	449	480	514	<b>1,951</b>
2007*	503	470	423	491	<b>1,887</b>
2008*	483	465	442	433	<b>1,823</b>
2009*	480	447	438	452	<b>1,817</b>
2010*	478	444	421	448	<b>1,791</b>

Source: SMSD Demographic Profile, 2005

**Graph 2 SME Historic and Projected\* Enrollment**

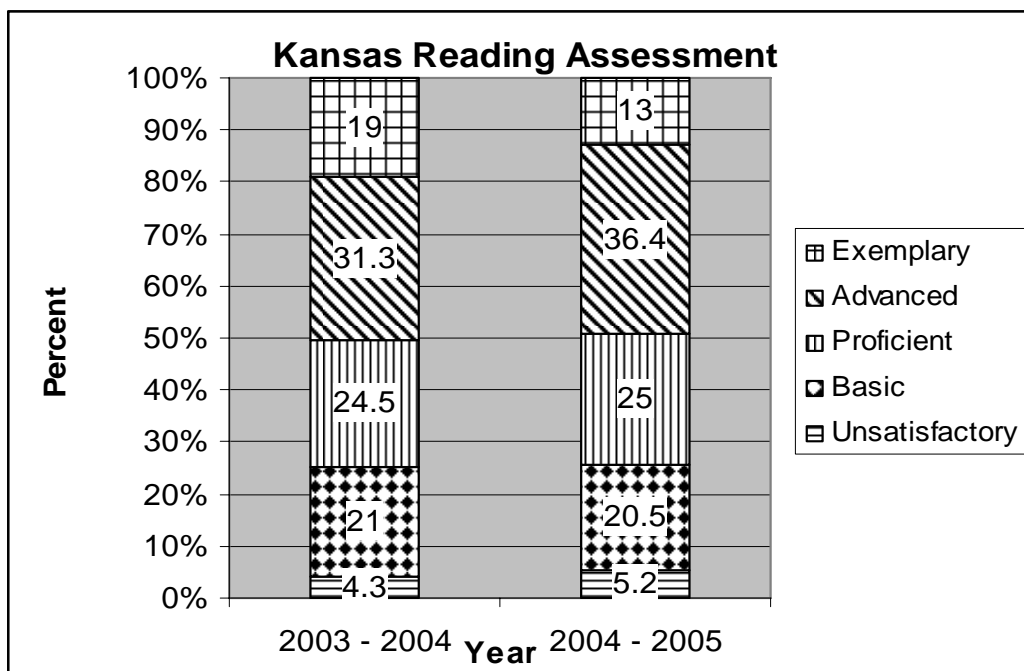


Source: SMSD Demographic Profile, 2005

Typically, more than 90% of Shawnee Mission East graduates seek higher education, but the school's curriculum is designed to meet the academic needs of the entire student body. The curriculum includes career and vocational programs which are accessible through the Shawnee Mission Area Vocational Technical Schools. An extensive special education program is available to students with exceptional academic needs and Shawnee Mission East is the district location for the prestigious International Baccalaureate program.

While a large percentage of students continue their education after high school, SME struggled overall on the Kansas Reading Assessment. Even though SME continued to meet the state requirements in the area of reading, and in most years received the distinguished Standard of Excellence award, twenty-five percent of the students annually were not at the proficient or higher level on the Kansas Reading Assessment (Graph 3).

Graph 3 SME Kansas Reading Assessment Results

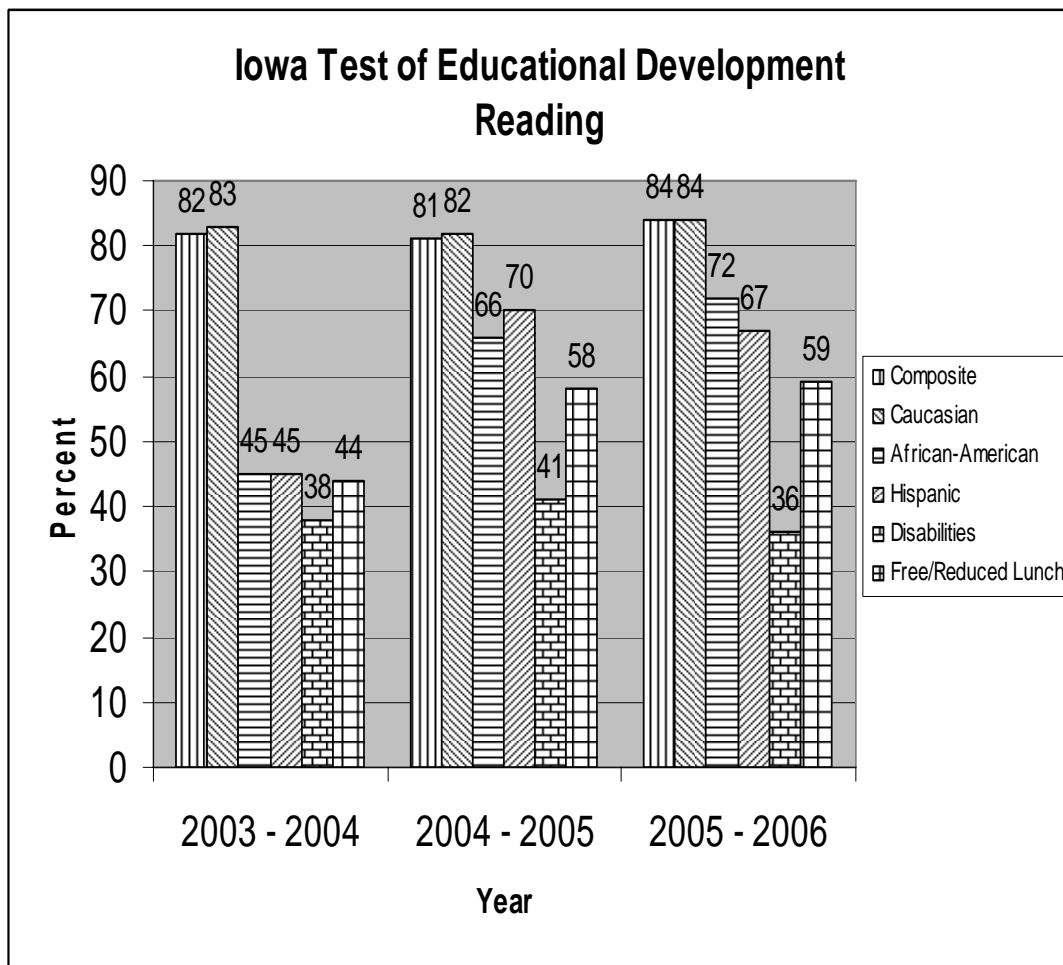


Source: Center for Educational Testing and Evaluation



Similar results were seen on the Iowa Test of Educational Development (ITED). While a majority of the students perform above district, state, and national averages, the composite scores have not shown a trend for improvement and minority students and subgroups are not performing at the level desired. Graph 4 reflects the difference between the Composite and Caucasian scores and those of the minority and subgroup populations. This difference has been as large as forty-eight percent between some groups during the time frame indicated and a composite score where very little growth exists.

Graph 4 SME Iowa Test of Educational Development Results



Source: Iowa Test of Educational Development

### *Purpose Of The Study*

The purpose of this study is to determine if the Voyager Passport Reading Journeys program has an effect on student reading achievement at the 9<sup>th</sup> grade level. Why Voyager? With the emphasis on every student being at the level of proficient or higher in reading by the mandated date of 2014 (as part of the No Child Left Behind legislation), the Shawnee Mission School District began examining reading programs to assist the student population. As more and more district schools failed to meet the AYP requirements, school administrators started placing more emphasis on reading. During the 2004-2005 school year, Carol Hailey, Language Arts Resource Specialist for the Shawnee Mission School District, began researching reading programs that could be implemented in schools not meeting the state requirements and all schools in the district.

After numerous programs were studied, the Voyager Passport Reading Journeys was selected. “The design of the Passport Reading Journeys meets the nine instructional components outlined in the Carnegie Corporation report, *Reading Next: A Vision for Action and Research in Middle and High School Literacy*,”(Walsh 1). Gina Biancarosa, in her article titled *After Third Grade*, identified the nine research based strategies for improving adolescent literacy as follows:

1. Direct, Explicit Comprehension Instruction
2. Effective Instructional Principles Embedded in Content
3. Motivation and Self-Directed Learning
4. Text-Based Collaborative Learning
5. Strategic Tutoring
6. Diverse Texts
7. Intensive Writing
8. A Technology Component
9. Ongoing Formative Assessment of Students (17-20)

In addition, according to Dr. Jeri Nowakowski, (executive vice president of product development, research and marketing for Voyager), “Passport Reading Journeys is a complete program that gives struggling adolescent readers the tools they need to meet the academic demands of different content areas and high-stakes testing”(47).

During the 2005-2006 academic year, schools in the Shawnee Mission School District piloted the Voyager Passport Reading Journeys program. At the high school level, the program was implemented as the curriculum for the Reading and Study Skills course. Shawnee Mission West High School was selected to pilot the program at the secondary level. The program produced favorable results for students based on internal assessments and surveys. As a result, the program was made available for the other secondary schools to implement during the 2006-2007 academic year as desired. As a result of a large percentage of students not performing at the proficient or above level on the Kansas Reading Assessment, a decision was made to implement the Voyager Passport Reading Journeys at SME as the curriculum in the Reading and Study Skills course. Beginning in the 2006-2007 school year, Shawnee Mission East High School began enrolling students in a Reading and Study Skills course. The students were selected based on their performance on one of three assessments. Either they performed at the basic or unsatisfactory level on the Kansas reading assessment, and/or performed below the fiftieth percentile on Iowa Test of Educational Development, and/or received a Rasch Unit (RIT) score below 235 on the Measure of Academic Progress (MAP) assessment. This score of 235 is considered to be below grade level. As a result, the focus for this course is to address reading skill deficiencies. Ninety-five ninth grade students were recommended for the course. Of this number, 66 actually enrolled in the

course with twenty-nine selecting to not enroll. Table 6 identifies some of the key aspects of the program.

**Table 6 Key Aspects of Voyager Passport Reading Journeys**

	Voyager Passport Reading Journeys
Overview	A targeted reading intervention program for students reading 3-4 grade levels below level through developing motivation, highly skilled teaching, systematic assessment, and age-appropriate content
Program Components	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DVD motivational launch</li> <li>• Explicit teacher instruction</li> <li>• Audio books for modeled reading</li> <li>• Online instructional support activities (SOLO)</li> <li>• Reading library</li> <li>• 2 age and content appropriate magazines</li> </ul>
Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DIBELS-based benchmarks</li> <li>• Vital Indicators of Progress (VIP) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Struggling</li> <li>Emerging</li> <li>On track</li> </ul> </li> <li>• SOLO on-line assessment</li> <li>• Comprehension and vocabulary assessment at end of each lesson</li> <li>• Practice high-stakes assessments</li> <li>• Writing pieces</li> </ul>
Reports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data management website</li> <li>• Variety of reports similar to DIBELS reports</li> <li>• Data disaggregated by NCLB groups</li> </ul>
Class Period	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minimum of 50 minutes</li> <li>• Flexible</li> </ul>
Instructional Model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whole group instruction – DVD motivational launch and vocabulary development reading</li> <li>• Flexible small group instructions – Comprehension Review Targeted word study intervention</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>or</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SOLO – leveled independent practice online</li> <li>• Whole group instruction/Reading/Writing connection</li> </ul>

Source: Reading Program Evaluation Report for the Shawnee Mission School District

### **Significance Of The Study**

This study promises to contribute helpful information to Shawnee Mission East High School, the Shawnee Mission School District, and the educational community as a whole on the effects of the Voyager Passport Reading Journeys program on student reading achievement. From the buildings perspective, this study can provide feedback as to whether such a program offering is beneficial or not to the students involved. The school district also benefits from this study as it looks for a program that produces positive reading achievement outcomes it can focus its energy and resources. For the Shawnee Mission educational community, the success or failure of this program could assist other buildings in determining what strategies may possibly work for their specific school community.

### **Definition Of Key Terms**

**Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)** - The accountability component of No Child Left Behind requires the same high standards of achievement for all, continuous and substantial academic improvement for all, measurable annual objectives for achievement, assessment participation rates, and graduation rates (U.S. Department of Education).

**At-Risk Students** - Students are classified as at-risk in the Shawnee Mission School District based on performance on Iowa Test of Educational Development, Measure of Academic Progress, and Kansas assessments, courses enrolled, disabilities, English Language Learners, race/ethnicity, socio-economic status, and/or teacher/counselor recommendations.

**Iowa Test of Educational Development (ITED)** - Group-administered high school achievement test battery used to assess academic skills that represent the long-term goals of secondary education, particularly the critical thinking skills of analysis and education (Riverside Publishing).

**Kansas State Reading Assessment** - State of Kansas assessment tool administered to students to evaluate proficiency in the area of reading. Results of the assessment are used to determine AYP for a school and district.

**Measures of Academic Progress (MAP)** - State-aligned computerized adaptive assessments that provide accurate, useful information about student achievement and growth from the Northwest Evaluation Association (Kingsbury 32).

**No Child Left Behind** - Signed by President George W. Bush on January 8, 2002, the No Child Left Behind Act gives schools historical educational reform based on stronger accountability for results, more freedom for states and communities, encouraging proven education methods, and more choices for parents (U.S. Department of Education).

**Reading and Study Skills Course** - Course developed in the Shawnee Mission School District to address individual students' areas of need and to prepare the student for standardized assessments.

**Standard of Excellence (Reading)** - At least 15% of the students assessed from a particular building must be in the Exemplary category on the Kansas Reading Assessment, with no more than 10% of the students in the Unsatisfactory category (Kansas State Department of Education).

**Voyager Passport Reading Journeys Program** - A target reading intervention program for students reading below grade level through developing motivation, highly skilled teaching, systematic assessment, and age-appropriate content (Guthrie 21).

**Objectives and Potential Outcomes**

The specific objective of this study is to examine the effect the Voyager Passport Reading Journeys program has on student reading achievement. A comparison was made between the growth from pre and post achievement levels on the MAP assessment between the 9<sup>th</sup> grade students recommended for the Reading and Study Skills course who actually enrolled in the course (thus participating in the Voyager Passport Reading Journeys program) to those students recommended who did not enroll. According to the Northwest Evaluation Association, the MAP assessment is an effective assessment tool because, “the test measures a student’s instructional level, providing useful information about where a student is learning. Because the tests align to the content and structure of state standards, the information teachers receive directly relates to the classroom experience” (17). In addition, a comparison was made between those that participated in the Voyager Passport Reading Journeys program and the general 9<sup>th</sup> grade population that is not labeled as at-risk (9<sup>th</sup> Grade Honors English and 9<sup>th</sup> Grade Regular English).

This study will produce outcomes that will provide valuable information as to the overall effectiveness of the Voyager Passport Reading Journeys program. It is expected the growth in student reading achievement will not be significant for those that participated in the program versus students that did not participate. Thus, the hypothesis for this experimental study is as follows:

***Null Hypothesis.*** The Voyager Passport Reading Journeys program will have no effect on student reading achievement of 9<sup>th</sup> grade students at the .05 level of significance based on the Measure of Academic Progress assessment.

### **Limitations and Delimitations**

This study is limited to data collected during the 2006-2007 academic year. In addition, it is possible some students were assessed at different times of the year. All 9<sup>th</sup> grade students took the pre assessment at the beginning of the school year and those enrolled in the Reading and Study Skills course took the post assessment at the end of their course. Those not enrolled in the course took the post assessment at the end of the school year. The study is delimited to students in the ninth grade of a large suburban high school in a Midwest school district participating in this study and thus the findings may not apply to populations in other grade levels or settings.

### **Assumptions**

The following are the assumptions for this experimental study:

- Both groups will be taught by the same faculty member so it is assumed that the instruction will be similar for all the students enrolled in the Reading and Study Skills course.



- The instructor received the proper training for the Voyager Passport Reading Journeys program and will teach the correct curriculum no matter which semester the students participate in the program.
- The students will put forth their best effort when they take the pre and post assessments.
- The students will be in attendance at class sessions and will participate and perform at the highest level possible.
- The MAP assessment will provide valid and reliable results that will give indicators of student reading achievement.

## Chapter Two

### Review of the Literature

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this literature review is to explore numerous topics related to reading. The first section examines the historical aspects of reading and its importance from a curricular perspective. The second examines philosophical approaches to reading methods and strategies implemented in secondary schools. The third focuses on the reading process. The fourth examines reading programs used by educational communities. The final two sections examine the Voyager's Passport Reading Journeys program and the Northwest Evaluation Association's Measure of Academic Progress assessment...the reading program and assessment tool used in this experimental study.

During the last several decades, the focus in education has been on methods of improving reading. This focus has led to numerous studies, reports, curricular changes, and alterations in teacher education and preparation. While historically most research focused on reading with elementary students and word recognition, an emphasis in the middle and high years is coming to the forefront. More and more emphasis is being placed on reading in the content areas, comprehension, fluency, and learning while reading. While it is definitely important for a fourth-grader to read at the appropriate grade level, many outstanding readers in elementary school will fall behind and experience failure as they move into middle school and then on to high school. In most cases, lack of teacher training in reading instruction and of actually teaching of reading in middle and high schools is the contributing factor to this failure (Snow 2).

As a result, educational leaders continue to develop programs and strategies to ensure students not only master the literacy skills during their primary grades, but also move on to the appropriate levels at the secondary schools. This would include continued growth in vocabulary, context, differing texts, and comprehension. Finally, above all, an emphasis on nurturing a passion and desire for reading with a purpose, for the enjoyment of the process, and for information gained (Snow 1).

If, however, at the secondary level, students are not prepared to read at the appropriate grade level to have successful experiences, a remedial reading program may be necessary. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) defines remedial reading education as basic courses in reading for students lacking skills necessary to perform at levels required by secondary institutions (NCES 74). In addition, the NCES defines developmental reading education as reading at a higher level than remedial levels. The comparison between remedial and developmental reading is like comparing “learning to read” (remedial) and “reading to learn” (developmental) (NCES 78). From the review of the various reading programs available it appears that reading instruction at the secondary level is primarily developmental.

The process of developing reading programs to meet the needs of secondary students is an extremely difficult task. The skills necessary at the secondary level are more challenging to learn. Some of the reasons for this include the focus on meeting specific curricular objectives and the lack of motivation of secondary aged students to read at higher and more complex levels (Allen 46). Fortunately, there are many reading programs and research now available for educational leaders to consider. This review addresses some of the information pertinent to the challenges facing secondary

institutions on selecting and implementing a reading program that benefits the at-risk student.

### *Historical Perspective*

*A History of Reading* by Alberto Manguel, provides insight into that most powerful of human activities, reading, an activity that Manguel notes began around 4,000 B.C. with a clay tablet inscription.

“In every literate society, learning to read is something of an initiation, a ritualized passage out of a state of dependency and rudimentary communication. The child learning to read is admitted into the communal memory by way of books, and thereby becomes acquainted with a common past which he or she renews, to a greater or lesser degree, in every reading” (71).

As a result of the Education Reform Act of 1982, much attention has been given to reading at all levels. Recommendations for improving the reading achievement of America’s students were made in the politically-charged report by the Commission on Reading which was entitled, *A Nation at Risk*. The emphasis of this document was on the status of public education in America and was authored by a commission created by presidential appointment. Ironically, the commission was made up of powerful businessmen and did not include a single educator in its membership. In the report, the authors declared U.S. schools were in danger of failing their country, and they cited mathematics and reading scores as evidence (NCE 3). The report sparked a flurry of activity, including Congressional hearings and studies, which in turn generated a number of research reports on early literacy instruction. Eventually, the research ended with the publication of the *Report of the National Reading Panel: Teaching Children to Read*.

The controversy engendered by this report is on-going, and in spite of the philosophical and pedagogical battles of reading researchers and practitioners nationwide, legislation has been passed, first as part of Goals 2000, then in the form of Reading First, an aspect of No Child Left Behind. But more than two decades later, the challenge of teaching all students to read has not been met (NCE 11).

Further research impacted reading in the landmark study *Becoming a Nation of Readers*. The study indicated reading was the cornerstone for which all other educational success is built; it is one of life's basic skills (Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, & Wilkinson 85). Former First Lady, Barbara Bush stated, "Above all, children love to be read to. Reading is a special time for them to be close to the grownups who care for them and a wonderful way to feel loved" (9). Adding to this emphasis on the value of reading is research stating the most important academic skill that our children can be taught is reading. A truly democratic society is dependent upon its population and their literacy skills (Morrow 681).

While billions of education tax dollars have been spent on reading programs, nine out of ten children who start first grade in the bottom reading group (remedial) stay in the bottom reading group throughout elementary school. That label alone predicts with alarming accuracy, who will succeed and who will fail (Allington & McGill-Franzen 86). Kozol indicates as children who struggle with reading grow to adulthood, they makeup more than thirty-three percent of the adults in the United States. This population does not have the skills required to perform most basic tasks, like read a newspaper article or poison warning on a can of pesticide, or calculate whether a paycheck is correct, or address a letter that will reach its destination. At best, they "just get by" (19).

Krashen reminds us that, “Although basic literacy has been on the rise for the last century, the demands for literacy have been rising faster. Many people clearly don’t read and write well enough to handle the complex literacy demands of modern society” (p. ix). According to the results of the National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS) conducted in 1993, between 48% and 51% of adults read below the eighth grade level (Kirsch, Jungeblut, Jenkins, & Kolstad 28). As surprising as these results may be to many, it may be even more surprising to learn that most individuals with low reading skills graduate from high school, and a significant number of them attend college (Keimig 4).

To further address the national reading problem, former President Clinton (National Standards for Excellence 96) established the America Reads Challenge. The overall goal of this national initiative was to ensure that every child was an independent reader by the beginning of the fourth grade. Additionally, in reaction to concerns about reading instruction and achievement, The Successful Reading and Instruction Act established the National Reading Panel in 1997. As defined by the United States government, the purpose of the National Reading Panel was to:

- a) conduct a thorough study of the research and knowledge relevant to early reading development and instruction in early reading
- b) determine which research findings and what knowledge are available in the nation’s classrooms
- c) determine how to disseminate the research findings and knowledge to the nation’s schools and classrooms (Edmondson & Shannon 227).

The Nation’s Report Card on Reading was published in 1998 by the National Assessment of Educational Progress showing that over one-quarter of eighth grade

students and just under one-quarter of twelfth grade students were reading below their grade level (Ogle 39). In 1999, the International Reading Association's commission on Adolescent Literacy demanded that educational institutions develop programs and curriculum that give students the necessary attention to enhance and improve their reading skills (Allington 88). As documented in a survey conducted by the National Assessment of Education Progress, only forty percent of all adolescents could read well enough to comfortably manage standard secondary school texts. Secondary students must be able to read to learn and not read to just decode written words for accuracy and speed (Kurek 20).

According to the U.S. Department of Education, "Reading performance has not improved in more than 15 years" (1). This point is further emphasized by the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) nationwide report indicating two-thirds of eighth grade students read below the proficient level (Donahue, Voelkl, Campbell, & Mazzeo 24). For those students with reading deficiencies, studies have indicated they will have multiple deficiencies as they grow older (Kos 875). To emphasize the importance of reading and the need to address deficiencies in children, educational consultant and former Texas teacher Phyllis Hunter declared to a cheering crowd at the podium in front of the 2000 Republican National Convention, that "Reading is the new civil right!" (ABC News 1).

### **Approaches to Reading**

As approaches to reading are examined, it becomes clear there are many different philosophies as to what are the best methods and strategies to implement. While each is

backed by research, experts in the field of reading continue to debate which methodology works best for all students.

Decades of discussions have been conducted in regard to the most effective approach to teach reading. Historically, four main approaches have been deemed quality literacy approaches: phonics, basal readers, literature based, and language experience/writing. Each approach has its own set of strengths and weaknesses. Phonics refers to an instructional design for teaching children to read. Phonics involves teaching children to connect sounds with letters or groups of letters. Basal readers are textbooks used to teach reading and associated skills to schoolchildren. Commonly called “reading books,” they are usually published as anthologies that combine previously published short stories, excerpts of longer narratives, and original works. A standard basal series comes with individual identical books for students, a teacher’s edition of the book, a collection of workbooks, assessments, and activities. Literature-based instruction is the type of instruction in which the authors' original narrative and expository works are used as the core for experiences to support children in developing literacy. The language experience approach supports children's concept development and vocabulary growth while offering many opportunities for meaningful reading and writing activities. Another benefit of the language experience approach is the development of shared experiences that extend children's knowledge of the world around them while building a sense of classroom community (Anderson 1).

Still others believe in order for secondary students to improve their overall reading skills, implementation of a variety of approaches should be the norm. For



example, Ericson believes we need to look at concepts such as guided reading, independent reading, group reading, and reading aloud (21).

In a guided reading format, a class reads a challenging selection with teacher guidance or teacher-structured activities before, during, and after reading. A guided reading strategy that several recent student teachers found valuable is called K-W-L (Carr & Ogle 626; Ogle 563). In this strategy the student lists what they know about the topic, what they want to know, and then following the assigned reading they share what they have learned.

Another approach to reading instruction for high school English classes is independent reading. Independent reading allows students to choose their own reading selections, and there are no (or at least limited) pre-reading activities, vocabulary notebooks, or comprehension questions. Students simply read from the beginning of a work and proceed on their own. To encourage independent reading, some high schools have a school wide time for sustained, silent reading (SSR) (Atwell 19).

One of the most valuable group reading approaches is literature circles:

“Literature circles are small, temporary discussion groups who have chosen to read the same story, poem, article, or book. While reading each group-determined portion of the text (either in or outside of class), each member prepares to take specific responsibilities in the upcoming discussions, and everyone comes to the group with the notes needed to help perform that job. The circles have regular meetings, with discussion roles rotating each session. When they finish a book, the circle members plan a way to share highlights of their reading with the wider community; then they trade members with other finishing groups, select more

reading, and move into a new cycle. Once readers can successfully conduct their own wide-ranging, self-sustaining discussions, formal discussion roles may be dropped” (Daniels 13).

Another approach in high school English classes is reading aloud. This is not the round-robin version used during elementary school years. Usually, the teacher or a capable student reads aloud (or perhaps is heard on tape) with effective voice inflections, energy, pauses, and even sound effects. These skills are often developed during early childhood. Ericson indicates that most good readers had the experience of being read to when they were young, and so they developed notions of narrative and early literacy skills (26).

An approach that engages the reader more than other methodologies emerges from reader-response theory. Reader-response theory recognizes the reader as an active agent who imparts "real existence" to the work and completes its meaning through interpretation. Wilhelm has identified ten components of reader-response theory essential to the approach:

- Entering the story world
- Showing interest in the story action
- Relating to characters
- Visualizing (seeing) the story world
- Elaborating on the story world
- Connecting literature to life
- Considering significance
- Recognizing literary conventions

- Recognizing reading as a transaction (accept, reject, or resist the author's vision)
- Evaluating an author, and the self as reader (157-69)

Perhaps the most challenging area of reading for many high school teachers involves early reading instruction. Crawley and Merritt have noted most high school teachers are not aware of beginning reading strategies, believing their students have already progressed beyond this level of instruction (11). Even though the focus on recent reading initiatives has been on "early intervention" in the primary grades, there are thousands of older struggling readers for whom such programs are clearly of no benefit (Krashen & McQuillan 118). One approach positively impacting the older struggling reader is creating a "reading environment." Research has shown that rapid progress in reading is possible if students experience a rich environment of reading materials and have the opportunity to read books both interesting and comprehensible (Krashen & McQuillan 99; McQuillan 48).

The primary goal of intervention is to increase the amount that students read. Underlying this goal are the beliefs that, as Smith (94) has stated, we "learn to read by reading," that students who read more will become better readers, and better reading will be reflected in all areas of literacy, including writing competency. These beliefs are supported by considerable research, which has shown more reading does indeed lead to better reading among students of all ages (Krashen, 63; McQuillan, 38). Elley emphasized this point by indicating children who have greater resources of books of varying topics will tend to spend more time reading (375).

In his *Read-Aloud Handbook*, Jim Trelease suggests educators do a good job in our schools of creating school-time readers. Where many schools fail is in creating lifetime readers (118). Trelease goes on to report that seventy-five percent of high school seniors will never voluntarily read once they graduate. Bushman and Bushman support Trelease's suggestion in surveys of adults who identify themselves as readers *in spite of, rather than because of*, their reading experiences in high school (3).

Careful examination of reading literature points to the effectiveness of a much more comprehensive and student-driven approach using best practices. This approach calls for the development of the lifetime readers using the following key elements (Moore 96):

1. Curriculum that is highly relevant to the student population
2. Regular opportunities for students to process their understanding through dialogue and writing
3. Instruction that takes place in meaningful contexts
4. Learning environment which provides ample opportunity for independent reading of high interest texts at the students' ability levels
5. Instruction is strategy-based rather than skill-based
6. Instruction involves expert modeling of processes—including silent reading and strategies
7. Frequent assessment that informs instruction

The development of lifetime readers begins in the early years. When it comes to meeting the needs of students who do not acquire the necessary passion and literacy skills in regular academic courses, effective middle and high schools have implemented

initiatives that are markedly similar to each other, and complement the school-wide literacy efforts. The key elements consistent with many successful remedial initiatives include the following (Moore 126):

1. A secondary reading specialist
2. Before or after school tutorial programs
3. Peer tutors
4. A reading course in place of an elective
5. An investment of resources for the purchase of high interest, appropriately leveled books and magazines for student choice reading and other curricular materials to assist in instruction
6. A combination of individualized and small group instruction
7. Frequent assessments that inform instruction
8. Older remedial students reading to younger students

If a successful remedial program is developed, educators and researchers have noted the relationship between this development, reading comprehension, and scholastic achievement (Snow, Burns, & Griffin 199). With the emphasis being placed on assessment results, the value of reading is even more important. Allington indicates reading comprehension is also the key to solid performance on the standardized achievement tests that have quickly become the hallmark of U.S. educational accountability policies (22).

Decades of research funded by the federal government and numerous studies reveal two additional major facts that contributed to a student's success at learning to read. The first is that a combination of approaches works better than any single approach

(Anderson 1). Students have different personalities and learning styles. Studies about brain research and multiple intelligences highlight the fact teachers must utilize a variety of ways of presenting material so students can best understand the knowledge. The second factor is the teacher. The teacher's knowledge of his/her students' needs, the presentation of the material, classroom management style, and the ability to connect with his/her students is far more important than the methods (Anderson 1).

Within the context of a high school there are many complex approaches to reading instruction. According to educational researcher Cathy Toll, "Issues surrounding literacy instruction, school change, and reading research reflect broader issues about how literacy is constructed, who controls what goes on in classrooms, and the kind of world we want to have in the future" (324). At one time, elementary schools were given the sole responsibility of making decisions about how, where, and when reading instruction should occur and ensuring students knew how to read. There was an assumption made that this task could be accomplished at the elementary school level and students would not be in need of additional reading instruction once they reached high school. Consequently, the overwhelming majority of information about reading instruction is written for the elementary school (Mangieri 93).

Carlson and Francis indicate, "Students who have been poor readers in the early elementary years remain poor readers throughout school; the problem intensifies with each new year" (142). As expressed by Elizabeth A. Wilson, it is necessary to consider that:

"Reading is not simply an isolated subject that is mastered in elementary school and then need never be taught again. On the contrary, reading - and literacy in

general - is a critical tool that must continue to be developed in adolescence and beyond. Our reading abilities are fundamentally tied to other important life skills, such as communicating thoughts through writing, discussing and analyzing information with others, gaining knowledge, improving vocabulary, and following written directions” (71).

Important consideration must also be given to what happens at home. As early as 1966, quantitative evidence was presented to support the idea that parents who read regularly to their children helped in the children’s overall education, especially in the area of reading. These early indications of the importance of reading in the home environment tended to emphasize the importance of reading to children when they were very young (Cole & Williams 19). Decades later, the Commission on Reading released their report, Becoming a Nation of Readers. Overall, the report emphasized reading in the home environment. The report claimed that parents need to read to their children, to be seen reading, and to make sure that there were reading materials in the household (Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, & Wilkinson 15).

Evidence is overwhelming that the amount of reading material that is available in the home is directly related to student reading performance. Since 1971, this correlation has been noted, and studied. At all of the age groups studied, “children from homes with an abundance of reading material have substantially higher average reading proficiency levels than do children with few such materials available” (National Institute of Education 50). The challenge to give children the foundation of success – literacy – is paramount.

“Our responsibility as literacy teachers has not changed, in this regard at least, for

two hundred years or more. Whichever way we go about it, we owe all the children, whatever their backgrounds, the prize of literacy. With that prize, who knows what they go on to achieve?" (Fisher & Johnson 5).

No matter the home or classroom approach, the value of offering a variety of selections for reading simply cannot be overstated. Whatever the source, students need ready access to collections of poetry, essay, short stories, multicultural literature, contemporary fiction, young adult and children's literature, magazines and newspapers, and informational texts and nonfiction works. To limit our selections to novels, especially to the "classic" novels, is to tell our students that all these other texts, perhaps the students' preferred types of reading, have less value. And to limit class reading to novels, especially to the classic novels, is to limit students' bridges to the joy of reading. (Claggett 69).

Finally, Janet Allen states, "I like to ask teacher candidates or teachers in my Content Area Literacy, Methods of Teaching English, and Literature Issues classes why reading matters, what difference it makes. I am always inspired by the passion of their answers:

- Reading lets us experience lives in other times and in other places.
- Reading allows us to stretch and exercise our imaginations.
- Reading lets us learn, giving us power.
- Reading develops empathy and understanding of others.
- Reading lets us escape.
- Reading shows us how others have handled situations similar to our own, or see how others have coped with difficult circumstance.



- Reading lets us know how the world was, how it is, and how it might be.
- Reading inspires us to be better human beings and citizens.
- Reading lets us have fun and can make us laugh” (158).

### *The Reading Process*

Reading is the process of creating meanings for any and everything in the environment for which the reader develops awareness and is one of the most important life skills. It is the foundation for an individual’s positive experience not only in school, but also in life. If a person cannot read or at least read well, opportunities for a productive life and a successful career will not exist (Stewig 190). Research reveals reading is a four-step process involving (1) perception—interpretation of sensory impressions; (2) comprehension—understanding the meaning of what is read; (3) reaction—feelings that are affected by what is read; and (4) application—putting together information from what is read with the reader’s experiential background (USDE 1).

Readers, including those at the high school level, have varying needs for reading instruction. Most students, even those in Advanced Placement English classes, require instruction and opportunities to further develop their comprehension capabilities (Ericson 15). Much of this burden in secondary schools falls on the English teacher. However, high school English teachers see themselves primarily as teachers of literature, composition, and grammar and not as being responsible for the teaching of reading. After all, surely the students come to them knowing how to read since they already went through elementary and middle school. Yet, whenever a group of high school English teachers meet, they are likely to voice concern over their students’ lack of reading skills, even those of the more able students. And certainly they pose questions about the

number of students who seem to lack the most fundamental of reading skills (Ericson 18). Whether they know it or not, high school English teachers already possess some of the necessary skills to teach reading, and that in fact most are already teaching reading every day. This occurs as they provide activities fostering a love of reading, guide discussions on vocabulary, make inferences about character or setting, and allow students to relate what they have read to personal experiences. But as is always the case with teaching, more can be done. (Ericson 14)

To assist the English teacher with the task of teaching reading, the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) and the International Reading Association (IRA) co-developed and adopted a set of national standards for all grade levels which address reading:

“Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textural features (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, graphics)” (NCTE/IRA 3).

Other literacy experts believe an interactive model of the reading process best captures how most students at the high school level read:

“They connect what they know about language, decoding, and vocabulary to their background experiences and prior knowledge. They also take into account the demands of the reading task and reasons for which they are reading. However, readers run into trouble when decoding is not automatic or when insufficient

prior knowledge prevents readers from conceptually making sense of print”  
(Alvermann & Phelps 24).

Another important aspect of the reading process recognized by reading specialists is metacognition, or the awareness and monitoring of one’s thinking processes. When applied to reading, metacognition means readers know when they understand material, when they are making connections, if they are into the reading, and if they value the reading. Further, metacognition involves knowing ways to fix a problem with reading, perhaps by rereading or slowing the pace of reading, or, in some cases, by making a change of reading selection. (Ericson 21).

A traditional way of viewing the reading process in secondary schools is as a collection of reading comprehension skills. Comprehension skills apply to both narrative and expository texts and include retelling, drawing inferences, finding or stating the main idea, summarizing, sequencing, distinguishing fact and opinion or cause and effect, recognizing organizational structures, adjusting the rate of reading to fit the difficulty of the text or purpose for reading, and evaluating the content for accuracy and consistency (Alvermann & Phelps 80; Readence, Bean, & Baldwin 59).

The work of Herber and Raphael (516) add an additional focus to the reading process. They identify three levels of comprehension as determined by the reading selection of the reader. Literal comprehension calls for a student to read and understand the details and facts presented as they appear in a narrative or expository selection. Inferential comprehension requires students to make connections between details and information in the text. Applied or evaluative comprehension calls on the readers to evaluate, apply, or make additional connections. According to Pearson, “There can be no

doubt children's reading comprehension performance concerns educators at all levels today. More than ever before, we are devoting much intellectual and emotional energy to helping students better understand the texts we require them to read in our schools" (724). In the years before 1985, Pearson found some educators who thought "...there was little one could do to train comprehension...it was a matter properly left to the fates of intelligence and experience" (724).

While comprehension continues to be a concern, many other researchers stress the importance of vocabulary development. "Reading is probably the most important mechanism for vocabulary growth throughout a student's school-age years and beyond" (Baumann & Kameenui 7). Baker, Simmons, and Kameenui (14) cite three principles of instructional design to increase vocabulary with diverse learners:

- Primed background knowledge – the knowledge that students already have in their heads that is so critical to their reading of most texts.
- Mediated scaffolding – when students are shown ways to determine unknown words when they encounter them.
- Conspicuous strategies – using unique and varied ways to make the concept and its related words memorable.

Experts in the field of reading have become locked in a senseless battle between phonics and whole language, which has generated much debate and less improvement in the reading process of children (Sternbert, Griforendo, & Jarvin 48). Low reading scores on the 1994 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) contributed to the controversy. Based on these results most high school students can decipher and understand what they read at the most basic level, but they struggle with taking what they

have read and processing it into knowledge that should be gained from what has been evaluated. There continue to be reports across the country that stress educational institutions are not teaching the basics of reading and thus individuals continue to fall behind. As a result, many students are failing to learn how to read (Routman 70).

Reading is an extremely difficult and complex process in which the recognition and comprehension of written symbols are influenced by readers' perceptual skills, decoding skills, experiential backgrounds, mind set, and reasoning abilities as they anticipate meaning on the basis of what they have read. The total process is a gestalt, or whole; a serious flaw in the major function or part may prevent adequate performance (Harris & Sipay 14).

Additional Research conducted by Greaney (337) found that engaging in reading is an immediate cause of progress in the reading processing; the mere act of accepting more self-selected materials will contribute more than reading instruction as students mature. A study conducted by Anderson, Wilson, and Fielding (285) discovered a relationship between the amount of time a student spent reading books and gains in reading achievement. In fact, it ranked first as a factor that is seen as the best predictor of gains in reading achievement.

### **Reading Programs**

Reading is something that most people do, but think little about how they do it. In fact, few people actually remember how they learned to read. Unfortunately, while most children learn to read without difficulty, a surprising number face serious stumbling blocks. For these children, effective teaching methods and programs are critical. As researchers and scholars in the field of reading education continue to strive to find the

perfect solution to address individuals that struggle with reading, new programs are developed and implemented. The Shawnee Mission School District investigated numerous reading programs for implementation at the secondary schools. These programs are discussed in this section.

The Literacy Center Program is aimed at improving literacy for students reading at or below the fifth-grade level in the ninth grade. Components of the program include Literacy Coaches who focus on strategies and appropriate types of readings. They function under the notion that reading is an active process, recognizing and practicing different kinds of reading, and allowing opportunities for risk-free practice. The Literacy Center Program is divided into two main components: coach-led instruction sessions and learning centers sessions. As a culmination activity, students create portfolios and present them in a student-led conference (Allen & Gonzalez 31).

Readers' Workshop is a teaching method that has been around for many years. Its main focus is to foster a love for reading within students, and to differentiate, or personalize, instruction in order to accommodate the learning needs of all students. Reader's Workshop includes several parts for the teacher and the student (see Table 7).

Table 7 **Reader's Workshop Components**

<b>Students:</b>	<b>Teacher:</b>
take more responsibility for their learning	teaches mini-lessons based on observations of student needs
choose books that appeal to them and are at their own instructional level	conferences with individual students
respond to the text they are reading	personalizes instruction
share thoughts and ideas within small groups	keeps records of student progress

Source: *ASCD Classroom Leadership*

The mini-lesson, which can be reading strategies and/or literacy skills, is usually at the beginning of the Reader's Workshop. Activity period follows when the students read, respond, and confer. The teachers then conference with students about what they are reading. The final part of Reader's Workshop is when three-member groups take turns sharing his or her book. Students are assessed by their reading logs according to a rubric, and the teacher takes a reading inventory of students twice a year (Wulf-McGrath 1).

The twelfth-grade reading class for struggling students, Pumped Up Grammar, was developed because twelfth grade students often exclude themselves from participation in and enjoyment of school activities which seem to require good reading (Robinson 75). There are eight activities that form this program (see Table 8).

**Table 8 Pumped Up Grammar Activities**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Modality</b>	<b>Format</b>
Community Building	speaking, listening	whole class
Read-alouds	listening	whole class
Reciprocal Reading	speaking, listening, reading, writing	small group
Learning Reflections	speaking, listening	small group, whole class
Silent Reading	reading	individual
Timed Readings	reading, speaking, listening, calculating	individual
Word/Vocabulary Games	varies	individual, small group
<i>Pumped Up Grammar/</i> Daily Journal	speaking, listening, reading, writing	individual

Source: *Daily Dose of Pumped Up Grammar*

Research has found that low-achieving students rely heavily on teachers for their reading recommendations (Fleener, Morrison, Linek, & Rasinski 75). An approach to give this choice and confidence back to the student is with Literature Circles. Literature

Circles provide an opportunity for teachers to teach the reading of literary text in a manner similar to what they should already know about the teaching of reading and learning. Harvey Daniels recognized teachers have “traditionally allowed kids little choice or ownership of their reading, instead marching them through an endless lockstep series of teacher-selected and teacher-controlled readings...The result, kids don’t get enough practice with reading to get good at it—or like it” (11). Some basic tenets of literature circles should be emphasized:

- Students choose their own reading materials and form groups based on book choice, with different groups reading different books.
- Groups meet regularly to discuss their reading.
- Students create notes, questions, or drawings to guide their discussion.
- Group discussions should be open and natural, an activity in which personal connections, digressions, fun, imagination, curiosity, and even disagreements are welcome.
- Initially, while learning to interact in literature circles, students assume designated roles with specified tasks.
- The teacher serves as a facilitator only, not as a participant.
- Evaluation is by teacher observation and student self-evaluation.
- When students are finished reading and discussing a book, they form new groups around new reading choices (Daniels 18).

Research by Bates on Young Adult Literature Programs indicates adolescents demand strategies for living from their reading and that literature presented in English



courses must have some interest to them (135). The value of including young adult literature in secondary reading programs includes:

- Young adult literature provides the “strategies for living” many young adult readers seek from their reading.
- Young adult literature is, in general, developmentally appropriate.
- Young adult literature meets the needs of its readers; therefore, this literature is more likely to motivate students to want to read and to work hard at reading.
- Teachers can use young adult literature to help their students learn to read for different purposes and to address other skills typically addressed in the secondary reading program.
- Young adult literature can also introduce secondary readers to the artistic elements used by writers of any great literature and thus serve as a bridge to more sophisticated texts.
- Young adult literature can be used by teachers seeking to tailor reading programs to the needs of particular students who read with diverse levels of skill and who come from diverse cultural backgrounds and experiences.
- Young adult literature can be used throughout the curriculum so students develop content-area reading skills and the ability to make interdisciplinary connections. (Brown & Stephens 112).

Children’s picture books can be used in a variety of ways in the high school classroom to enhance the reading practices of older students:

- to enhance literary elements, concepts, and study topics

- to model writing style and genre
- to appreciate the sophistication of succinct, targeted language
- to practice specific content-area reading strategies in new and familiar pieces of literature
- to connect print and illustration in media literacy
- to demonstrate critical theory applications in literature
- to challenge, enrich, and connect high school literature with quality children's literature
- offering enticing books for students who know how to read but choose not to
- substituting shorter books for students who prefer not to read longer texts
- contributing understandable language to help develop inferences, concepts, or generalizations
- presenting multiple opportunities for analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating what they read
- giving vocabulary and background for comprehending information in content-specific nonfiction formats, helping students succeed in their classes across all areas of the curriculum (Ammon & Sherman 6; Benedict & Carlisle 12; Shively 30)

Summer reading programs have become popular in some school districts. Many children spend their entire summer without access to books. Research indicates at-risk children cannot afford to stop reading during the summer. Providing access to books for these children during the summer vacation is extremely important so they can continue working on skill development and the enhancement of their passion for reading. This can

be done by opening the school library during the summer, sending books home with students, and sending reading lists home with students (Mcgill-Franzen & Allington 3).

Fluency is an important part of comprehending the written word. Reader's Theatre is a strategy in which students rehearse an appropriate text until they can read it with speed, accuracy, comprehension, and inflection. The student then performs the reading for an audience. This teaching methodology leads to even the most resistant of readers becoming engaged with the piece read (Worthy and Prater 56).

Members of the National Reading Panel examined over 400 carefully selected experimental research studies from the past 40 years to draw conclusions about scientifically proven literacy practices. In the final NRP Report, five key elements of effective reading programs were identified, and experts recommended a renewed reliance on scientifically proven research to guide educators in decisions about classroom practices in reading (Armbruster, Lehr, & Osburn 21). The five key components include:

- **Phonemic Awareness:** Children profit from an understanding that there are individual sounds that make up a spoken word. Students must first become aware of how the sounds work before they can learn to read text.
- **Phonics Instruction:** Students are taught to use the relationships between the sounds of spoken language and the letters of written language to read and write words. The goal of this instruction is to enable students to develop decoding skills that will allow them to read new words.
- **Fluency Instruction:** Reading fluency is the ability to read text accurately and quickly. As fluency improves, a student's ability to comprehend what he

or she is reading also improves because there is less of a focus on decoding individual words.

- **Vocabulary Instruction:** To communicate effectively, students must know many words including both oral vocabulary, or words recognized or used in speaking, and reading vocabulary, or words recognized or used in print.
- **Text Comprehension Instruction:** Text comprehension is defined as a student's ability to understand what he or she has read. It is the hallmark of a skilled reader (NRP, 2000).

David Shepherd in his work, *Comprehensive High School Reading Methods*, describes what he considers the five essential components of a reading program:

1. Reading instruction is provided in each of the subject fields as it applies to each.
2. The central library of the school provides opportunity to the students for both research and pleasure from reading.
3. Supplementary classroom libraries must be available to provide opportunities for enrichment.
4. Elective courses are offered in the mechanics of reading for those students who wish to sharpen their reading-study skills.
5. Remedial courses are available for those students who need help in addition to the content reading instruction in each classroom (293).

Roe, Stoodt, and Burns support the above program. Their description of an overall design of a high school reading program is as follows:

“A total-school reading program is one in which all school personnel cooperate and

all students are offered reading instruction according to their needs. Reading instruction is offered in special reading class and clinical settings and is a priority in content area classes as well. The skills are taught as their use is required; therefore, instruction is meaningful to the student because they see a direct application for it. Developmental instruction is offered to students who are progressing satisfactorily in building reading skills, and corrective and remedial instruction is offered to students who are experiencing difficulties. In such a program, all aspects of a reading program are included: 1. Developmental reading is taught; 2. Content area reading is taught; 3. Recreational reading is encouraged; and 4. Remedial reading is offered” (519).

Vacca and Williams also support the idea of the whole school reading programs being involved in reading instruction. “In affective secondary reading programs, all students are recognized as having reading instruction needs, and instruction is integrated with the reasoning strategies that ground each discipline” (104).

While some reading programs focus primarily on one method of reading instruction, other reading programs teach to reading styles operation on the premise “that no single method is ‘best’ for every child. Children possess a wide range of strengths and abilities; teachers need to master a similarly wide range of strategies so they can match their instructional approach to the most appropriate way of engaging the child” (NRSI 2). One such way is with the use of the computer. Technology has begun to play an increasing role in instruction, and in computer labs and classrooms. With computers “technologically oriented reading specialists are using computers as naturally as they are using books and magazines” (Wepner 220).

Marjorie R. Simic in, *Guidelines for Computer-Assisted Reading Instruction*, provided guidelines to be used when using computers in reading programs:

1. Computer instruction in reading should focus on meaning and stress reading comprehension...
2. Computer instruction in reading should foster active involvement and stimulate thinking...
3. Computer instruction in reading should support and extend students' knowledge of text structures...
4. Computer instruction in reading should make use of content from a wide range of subject areas...
5. Computer instruction should link reading and writing...(1)

The Ohio State University Early Literacy Learning Initiative developed in 1984 defined key components of a balanced literacy program. A balanced English program consists of an equal amount of the following components, which when placed together create a quality every day reading program (Fountas 96):

- Reading Aloud to Children
- Shared Reading
- Guided Reading
- Independent Reading
- Shared Writing
- Interactive Writing
- Guided Writing or Writing Workshop
- Independent Writing

Direct Instruction Reading Program is a comprehensive system of instruction integrating effective teaching practices with curriculum design, classroom organization and management, and staff development. Published by SRA/McGraw-Hill, this program uses scripts, teacher directed signals and small groups (AFT 32).

The International Reading Association asserts the following opportunities will facilitate adolescents to grow into self-assured, autonomous readers and are important components of a reading program:

1. Adolescents must have access to a varied library of material they can and want to read.
2. Adolescents deserve instruction building both the skill and desire to read increasingly complex materials.
3. Adolescents deserve assessments showing them their strengths as well as their needs and guiding their teachers to design instruction that will best help them grow as readers.
4. Adolescents deserve expert teachers who model and provide explicit instruction in reading comprehension and study strategies across the curriculum.
5. Adolescents deserve reading specialists who assist individual students having difficulty learning how to read.
6. Adolescents deserve teachers who understand the complexities of individual adolescent readers, respect their differences, and respond to their characteristics.

7. Adolescents deserve homes, communities, and a nation that will support their efforts to achieve advanced levels of literacy and provide the support necessary for them to succeed (Moore, Bean, Birdyshaw, & Rycik 4-9).

Basal Readers is an instruction program in which groups of students receive reading instruction via basic reading textbooks used throughout schools. This program provides the foundation for language instruction, reading, spelling, and grammar. Students move through a series of progressively difficult books and teacher-prepared lessons and tests (AFT 53). The basal reader approach is defined as instruction based primarily on following the teaching methods recommended by authors of a basal reading program using carefully sequenced lessons and frequently using part to whole learning strategies. Grouping in the basal reader approach traditionally consists of three ability groups of high, average, and low, non-flexible instructional groups sorted out by the teacher's assessment of students' reading achievement (Flood, J. and S., Lapp & Nagel).

The beliefs and practices include:

- reading and writing are best taught by breaking down learning into subskills taught in isolation and tested as discrete units.
- children need to master skills of phonics before they are ready to do actual reading.
- reading is best taught from simplified basal readers that control vocabulary and are organized around phonetic patterns
- writing instruction should begin with handwriting and copying to first master basic skills
- punctuation and grammar are best taught with workbooks/worksheets (615).



In recent years, theorists and researchers in education have praised the program of reading aloud to students, as well as having those students read aloud. Some have extolled its virtues as a means of improving reading comprehension (Ecroyd 91). Others have pointed out reading aloud tends to build a student's vocabulary (Berliner 39). Almost all of them, it seems, have also noticed, if correctly practiced, the process can enhance reading motivation and improve the overall attitude of students toward the reading process (Sherman 201).

Recognizing that fluent oral reading and even above-average intelligence does not mean that students have sound strategies to comprehend challenging texts, Cunningham and Wall (1994) developed a six-step program emphasizing creating meaning rather than discovering it.

- Step 1: Provide background (such as vocabulary information or a review of previously taught skills that would be needed for the lesson.)
- Step 2: Set a purpose for the reading. "Purpose" here would be defined as either what the students should focus on while they read, or a clear preview of the task they will be asked to perform after reading.
- Step 3: Read silently for the purpose given.
- Step 4: Have the students as a group perform a task which directly reflects and measures how well the students fulfilled the purpose for the reading.
- Step 5: Have the students as a group evaluate the task performance.
- Step 6: Have the students think about what they learned from doing the first five Steps (480-486).

READ 180 is an intensive reading intervention program that helps educators confront the problem of adolescent illiteracy on multiple fronts, using technology, print, and professional development. READ 180 is proven to meet the needs of students whose reading achievement is below proficient level. The program directly addresses individual needs through adaptive and instructional software, high-interest literature, and direct instruction in reading, writing, and vocabulary skills. To truly succeed, a systematic program of reading intervention must incorporate six crucial elements (Scholastic 19).

### **1. Scientific Research Base**

The scientific development of READ 180 began in 1985 when Dr. Ted Hasselbring of Vanderbilt University developed breakthrough software that used student performance data to individualize, adjust, and differentiate the path of reading instruction. Research continued through the 1990s as it was put to the test in Florida's Orange County public school system.

### **2. Proven Results**

READ 180 is proven to work. Students who enter the program unable to read proficiently experience success and become readers. After ten years of research in association with Vanderbilt University and over six years in schools, READ 180 has brought significant gains in reading proficiency for the students who need it most.

### **3. Comprehensive Instruction**

READ 180 includes a Teaching System that equips - and trains - educators to deliver effective reading, writing, and vocabulary instruction to struggling readers. Teachers receive a rich and engaging curriculum of skills instruction,

point-of-use professional development, a variety of assessment tools, and reports that link to resources for differentiating instruction. The Teaching System makes it easy for teachers to cover essential skills while meeting individual needs.

#### **4. Purposeful Assessment**

Only READ 180 gives you the power to track and analyze student performance at every step. A variety of instruments accurately assess students to identify their most urgent needs, enabling the program and teachers to adjust instruction accordingly.

#### **5. Data-Driven Instruction**

READ 180 is the only program of its kind that uses assessment data so effectively to differentiate instruction. The READ 180 Software continually adjusts the level of instruction based on student performance. Actionable reports and periodic checkpoints alert teachers to students' needs and direct them to resources for individualizing instruction.

#### **6. Professional Development**

Scholastic has designed a comprehensive implementation training, an online course, and teaching materials that integrate professional development to provide educators with the background, teaching routines, and instructional support they need, when they need it (Scholastic 45).

### **Voyager Passport Reading Journeys**

The Voyager Passport Reading Journeys has gained favor across the country. The program has been adopted in over 1,000 districts, and several studies, financed by Voyager, show evidence that it is helping to raise reading achievement in selected

schools and districts. With its scripted, skills-based lessons, ongoing assessments of students' skills, a data-management system to track results and an intensive intervention component for struggling readers, Voyager fits with the requirements of Reading First and several state reading-improvement plans (Manzo 1).

Voyager has worked hard to build credibility through studies in several districts using its built-in assessment and a number of standardized tests. The program provides intensive instruction in skills tested in the early grades, particularly alphabet knowledge and word reading. "Some teachers swore by the program and were great advocates, while other teachers were very turned off by the scripted nature of it," said Joy Frechtling, a research company in Rockville, Maryland. Ron Klausner, the president of ProQuest Education Businesses, which oversees Voyager, said the proof in the quality or success of the program is the reorder rate. "At the end of the day in this era of accountability, customers' renewing at 90 to 95 percent is a pretty impressive factoid," Klausner said (Manzo 20). In addition, the Voyager Reading series is an extension of the Laubach Way to Reading. This program, which has been in use for over 40 years, is a basic reading and writing program developed to teach adults with little or no reading ability. It is designed to teach the language the student speaks, as quickly and enjoyable as possible (New Readers Press 19).

Voyager's Passport Reading Journeys program provides word study, vocabulary, comprehension, and fluency instruction that is appropriate for adolescents based on age and areas of interest. Passport Reading Journeys focuses on students reading below grade level and incorporates an array of tools, strategies, and technology to motivate students and improve their reading achievement (Voyager 1). At Shawnee Mission East High

School some ninth grade students were arriving from middle school reading below grade level with little, if any, motivation to improve their reading. The strategies and technology used with Voyager Passport Reading Journeys provide an opportunity to address this building need.

The assessment tool (Table 9) for the Voyager Passport Reading Journeys includes Reading Benchmark (Lexile), Reading Connected Text, end of Expedition assessment, progress monitoring, and student self-assessments.

**Lexile Framework for Reading** is a scientific approach to reading measurement that matches readers to text. The Lexile Framework measures both reader ability and text difficulty on the same scale, called the Lexile scale.

**Reading Benchmark (Lexile)** is a measure of vocabulary and comprehension. Powered by the Lexile Framework for Reading, the Reading Benchmark focuses on a student's ability to understand reading passages.

**Reading Connected Text (RCT)** is a measure of a student's fluency aimed at concentrating on their ability to accurately read the material.

**Comprehension and Vocabulary Assessment** help teachers monitor students' progress in acquiring the comprehension and vocabulary skills taught within the Expedition.

**SOLO (Strategic Online Learning Opportunities)** Progress Report summarizes each student's performance in three key areas:

- Vocabulary
- Comprehension
- Reflection on what they learned per SOLO sessions (Voyager 9)

**Table 9 Voyager Passport Reading Journeys Assessment Components**

<b>Assessments</b>	<b>Purpose</b>
Reading Benchmark (Lexile)	Determines Placement in SOLO
Reading Connected Text (RCT)	Determines Fluency Rate
Comprehension and Vocabulary Assessment	Assesses Mastery of Skills and Content Taught
SOLO Progress Report	Student Self-Assessment

Source: Principal's Handbook for Passport Reading Journeys (9)

Voyager Passport Reading Journeys aligns with the nine instructional components recommended (Table 10) for adolescent literacy from *Reading Next: A Vision for Action and Research in Middle and High School Literacy* from A Report to the Carnegie Corporation of New York:

- Direct Explicit Comprehension Instruction
- Effective Instructional Principles Embedded in Content
- Motivation and Self-directed Learning
- Text-based Collaborative Learning
- Strategic Tutoring
- Diverse Text
- Intensive Writing
- A Technology Component
- Ongoing Formative Assessment (Voyager 1)

Table 10 **Voyager Passport Reading Journey’s Alignment with Reading Next**

Reading Next Recommendation	How Voyager Translates That Recommendation
<b>Direct, Explicit Comprehension Instruction</b>	The dominant instructional focus of Passport Reading Journeys (PRJ) is comprehension. Teachers explicitly describe priority strategies and model how they work. Students apply and practice the strategies before, during, and after reading to develop competence and confidence.
<b>Effective Instructional Principles Embedded in Content</b>	80% of the text in PRJ is informational – designed to expand readers’ knowledge in science and social studies. By integrating vocabulary and comprehension instruction with text that striving readers find most challenging, PRJ bridges the divide across content areas and enables students to achieve success in more than one class.
<b>Motivation and Self-Directed Learning</b>	All of PRJ is infused with motivating elements. Teen guides in fast-paced videos provide stimulating introductions to Expedition topics. Cartoons of the same teens star in Flash movies and guide students down each interesting SOLO technology path. In both, the Student Anthology and SOLO, content is selected, written, and illustrated with young people in mind. The PRJ Library and SOLO allow students to self-select from a menu of interesting passages, books, or magazines.
<b>Text-based Collaborative Learning</b>	Every alternate day gives students time to collaborate as they construct a solid understanding of the content. Paired with their peers, students discuss and write text-informed responses to the passages. Graphic organizers often provide the structure for these comprehensive-building discussions
<b>Strategic Tutoring</b>	PRJ accommodates both teacher-directed and computer-facilitated tutoring. The primary teacher-directed tutoring resource is Word Study for student who need help reading words accurately. SOLO, the technology tutoring program, enables students to progress through novel text at their own rate. SOLO also has a hypertext function which allows students to click on difficult words for their pronunciation and definition.
<b>Diverse Text</b>	To read better, striving readers read a lot. PRJ ensures that students have a range of challenging, relevant, and compelling text on varied, high-interest topics, including athletics, forensics, weather disasters, and personal identity. Three Lexile ranges of reading selections are available in SOLO and in the PRJ Library to provide students with “just the right” level of text within their improvement zone.
<b>Intensive Writing</b>	Writing takes two forms in PRJ – one as a regularly occurring and effective response to reading and one as an intensive 30-lesson writing unit. While the primary focus of each differs, the result of teaching both is reciprocal growth in reading and writing.
<b>A Technology Component</b>	Two technology components leverage instructional time in PRJ. One is the inspiring, animated Expedition DVD, which bookends each 2-week unit and anchors instruction for new vocabulary and concepts. Video examples of hurricanes, bank vaults, and microbes help students visualize what’s coming in print. The second component is SOLO, computer sessions where students apply comprehension skills and test their vocabulary knowledge on a novel, Expedition topic-related passage.
<b>Ongoing Formative Assessment</b>	The comprehensive assessment system embedded in PRJ provides detailed information on students’ strengths and weaknesses in comprehension, vocabulary, and fluency. The VPORT system facilitates the management of this valuable formative data.

Source: Principal’s Handbook for Passport Reading Journeys (2)

### Measure of Academic Progress

The Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) is a computerized assessment tool that provides feedback to the instructional level of the individual student. The assessment can be used as a pretest and posttest that will provide information on student growth (NWEA 1). The Shawnee Mission School District and Shawnee Mission East High School will use this assessment to determine the instructional level and student growth of the 9<sup>th</sup> grade students in reading. It is also the pretest and posttest used in conjunction with the Reading and Study Skills class and Voyager Passport Reading Journeys program. The results from a MAP assessment will be used at Shawnee Mission East to:

- Identify the skills and concepts individual students have learned.
- Diagnose instructional needs.
- Monitor academic growth over time.
- Make data-driven decisions at the classroom, school, and district levels.
- Place new students into appropriate instructional programs (NWEA 12)

The MAP assessment determines a student's instructional level and since the assessment matches the content of the state standards, the feedback educators receive impacts what they do in the classroom (NWEA 7).

### Research-based Accuracy

MAP tests are scientifically-based assessments that provide reliable and valid data about student development. NWEA continually conducts research to ensure that data from the assessment is reliable. In the most recent research, the Pearson correlation coefficient for the reading assessment was  $r = .94$  (NWEA 5)



### An Equal-Interval Scale

The MAP assessment provides feedback in the form of a RIT (short for Rasch Unit after the test theory's founder, Danish statistician Georg Rasch). This is an equal-interval scale similar to a yardstick which also has equal units of measurement (inches). The RIT, like a yardsticks, are accurate and reliable indicators of growth over time because the units/inches of measurement never change. In addition, since RIT units are of equal value, you can reliably make comparisons and draw conclusions about the improvement of a student or a group of students (NWEA 28).

The RIT scale is used to determine a student's academic growth over time. The questions on the assessment have different levels of difficulty or RIT. As the MAP evaluates a student's level of performance, during the taking of the assessment, it adjusts the level of difficulty to correspond to the ability of the test taker. Eventually the MAP program identifies the level of functioning and assigns a RIT score (NWEA 29).

The teachers are given access to the individual student's RIT score and other available data (Lexile, percentile, etc.) that can assist them with working with meeting the academic needs of the students. Research shows that if instruction is given that matches the needs of the students involved, better results and performance occur (NWEA 29).

The information that is provided by a RIT score gives the educational community important feedback (NWEA):

#### Grade-independent

“Because the tests are adaptive and the test items displayed are based on student performance, not age or grade, identical scores across grades mean the same thing. For example, a third grader who received a score of 210 and a fourth grader

who received a score of 210 are learning at the same level. This allows growth to be measured independent of grade” (13).

#### Equal-interval

“The RIT scale is infinite, but most student scores fall between the values of 140 and 300. Like meters or pounds, the scale is equal-interval, meaning that the distance between 170 and 182 is the same as the distance between 240 and 252. This allows educators to apply simple mathematical equations to the scores to determine the mean and median scores in a class or grade” (13).

#### Stability

“More than twenty years after it was first implemented, scores along the RIT scale mean the same thing. As a result, educators can confidently measure growth over many years” (14).

#### Test Design Process

The assessment items on MAP are highly scrutinized which helps ensure a reliable and valid tool. These questions come from a pool of more than 15,000 assessment items that have been developed and reviewed for accuracy and state alignment. New items are added on an annual basis from teachers that have been trained in the writing process MAP uses for its questions (NWEA 16).

Every test item must go through a series of reviews and field-tests before it is allowed to be placed in an assessment. Once a test item passes the field-testing (minimum of 300 students), bias review, and is evaluated for difficulty it is assigned a RIT scale value. At that point, the testing item becomes part of the overall test bank for the particular subject area (NWEA 17).

## Chapter Three

### Research Methodology

#### **Introduction**

This study was designed to assess the effects the Voyager Passport Reading Journeys program has on student reading achievement at the 9<sup>th</sup> grade level. The reading program was implemented as the curriculum for the Reading and Study Skills course at Shawnee Mission East High School beginning in August of the 2006-2007 school year. The 9<sup>th</sup> grade students selected for the course had performed at the basic or unsatisfactory level on the Kansas reading assessment, and/or performed below the fiftieth percentile on the Iowa Test of Educational Development, and/or received a Rasch Unit (RIT) score below 235 on the Measure of Academic Progress (MAP) assessment. The established score of 235 is considered by the test's authors to be below grade level. Ninety-five 9<sup>th</sup> grade students were recommended for the course. Of this number, sixty-six actually enrolled in the course with twenty-nine selecting to not enroll. The students recommended and enrolled in the course were compared to those students recommended and not enrolled. In addition, a comparison will be made between the students enrolled in the course and the students in 9<sup>th</sup> grade honors English and a separate comparison will examine those in regular 9<sup>th</sup> grade English.

This chapter presents the following components of this experimental study: (a) the research hypothesis, (b) a discussion of the measurement instruments used, (c) a description of the population groups, (d) dependent and independent variables, (e) types and methods of data collection, (f) research design and data analysis implemented, and (g) summary.

### **Research Hypothesis**

Through the review of literature, the research showed in most cases there was little positive effect on student achievement when exposed to additional reading support. As a result, the following research hypothesis will be tested:

*The Voyager Passport Reading Journeys program will have no effect on the reading achievement of 9<sup>th</sup> grade students at the .05 level of significance based on the Measure of Academic Progress reading assessment.*

This hypothesis can also be represented as  $H_0 : \mu_{posttest} = \mu_{pretest}$ .

### **Instrumentation**

The research instrument used to collect reading data was the Measure of Academic Progress (MAP) assessment. This online assessment tool is taken at a computer and provides feedback to the instructional level of the individual student and provides percentile data for the teacher.

### **Research-based Accuracy**

MAP tests are scientifically-based assessments that provide reliable and valid data about student achievement. The Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) continually conducts research to ensure that data from the assessment remains reliable. In the most recent research completed by NWEA, the reliability estimates of achievement level tests and the Measure of Academic Progress at the 9<sup>th</sup> grade level for the reading assessment was  $r = .94$  (NWEA 5). The validity evidence for achievement level tests and the Measure of Academic Progress at the 9<sup>th</sup> grade level for the reading assessment was  $r = .87$  (NWEA 8).

### *An Equal-Interval Scale*

The MAP assessment provides feedback in the form of a RIT. This is an equal-interval scale similar to a yardstick which also has equal units of measurement (inches). This allows the RIT to provide accurate and reliable indicators of growth over time since the units of change are the same. In addition, since RIT units are of equal value, reliable comparisons and conclusions can be drawn about the improvement of a student or a group of students (NWEA 28).

The questions on the assessment have different levels of difficulty or RIT. A unique feature of the MAP is the ability to evaluate a student's level of reading performance while the student is taking the assessment. As a result, the MAP adjusts the level of difficulty to fit the ability level of the test taker (NWEA 29).

### *MAP Test Design Process*

The assessment items on the MAP are highly scrutinized to ensure a reliable and valid tool. Questions come from a pool of more than 15,000 assessment items that have been developed and reviewed for accuracy and state alignment. New items are added on an annual basis from teachers that have been trained in the writing process MAP uses for its questions (NWEA 16).

Every test item must go through a series of reviews and field-tests before it is allowed to be placed in an assessment. Once a test item passes the field-testing (minimum of 300 students), bias review, and is evaluated for difficulty it is assigned a RIT scale value. At that point, the testing item becomes part of the overall test bank for the particular subject area (NWEA 17). With these components of the test design process in place, the reliability and validity of the assessment is increased.

### *Instructor Training*

The instructor for the Reading and Study Skills course received initial training on the Voyager Passport Reading Journey's program in June, 2006. The training focused on program implementation and instruction and was conducted by a Voyager consultant. In October, 2006, the same consultant visited the instructor's classroom and discussed issues and concerns with the program. A collaboration session took place in January, 2007, of all the Voyager instructors throughout the district to share each school's experiences with the program. At Shawnee Mission East, the same instructor taught every Reading and Study Skills course, thus each student received instruction from the same person.

### *Population of the Study*

The general population for this study was the 9<sup>th</sup> grade students at Shawnee Mission East High School during the 2006-2007 school year. The 9<sup>th</sup> grade class consisted of 495 total students with 245 female and 250 male students. Specifically, 9<sup>th</sup> grade students were selected based on their performance on one or more standardized assessments utilized by the Shawnee Mission School District. Ninety-five 9<sup>th</sup> grade students met the above criteria and were recommended for the course. Of this number, 66 actually enrolled in the course with 29 selecting to not enroll. Of the 66 students enrolled, 31 were female and 35 were male. Of the 29 students that did not enroll, 17 were female and 12 were male.

### *Dependent and Independent Variables*

In this study the independent variable is the Voyager Passport Reading Journeys program which is the curriculum for the Reading and Study Skills course that 9<sup>th</sup> grade

students were recommended and enrolled. The dependent variable is the reading achievement level of the 9<sup>th</sup> grade students. All 9<sup>th</sup> grade students took the assessment at the beginning of the school year (pretest) and then again at the end of the school year (posttest). Achievement levels were analyzed and compared among the students recommended for the course that actually enrolled (thus participating in the Voyager Passport Reading Journeys program), those recommended for the course that did not enroll, and the remaining 9<sup>th</sup> graders who qualified for regular and Honors English 9.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

All 9<sup>th</sup> grade students were given the Measure of Academic Progress Reading assessment the week of September 5, 2006. These scores represented the pretest data. Of the 66 students that opted for the program, 21 took the Reading and Study Skills course during the first semester of the 2006-2007 school year. On December 19, 2006, this same group of students took the MAP reading assessment again. These scores represented the posttest data for the students. Forty-five 9<sup>th</sup> grade students recommended for the Reading and Study Skills course were enrolled and participated in the Voyager Passport Reading Journeys program during the second semester of the 2006-2007 school year. These students took the MAP Reading assessment at the completion of the course on May 29, 2007. These scores represented the posttest data for these students. All 9<sup>th</sup> grade students that were not enrolled in the Reading and Study Skills course took the MAP Reading assessment the week of May 1, 2007. These scores represented their posttest data for this group of students.

The MAP Reading assessment was administered by 9<sup>th</sup> grade faculty, with administrative support. The setting for the assessment was the school library. The 9<sup>th</sup>

grade students were brought to the library by their teacher and took the assessment on a computer. The testing time allotted was 80 minutes for the entire assessment, however there were no students that needed the entire time to complete the assessment. Students not present during the week of May 1, 2007 took the assessment during the week of May 7, 2007.

### **Design and Analysis**

This study was quantitative and consisted of data collected from the Measure of Academic Progress reading assessment. The simple analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to analyze the reading scores. The ANOVA is used when one factor or treatment variable (reading program) is explored and there are more than two groups within this factor. In this experimental study the level of risk or level of significance is set at .05. There are also several computational components to the process.

### **Summary**

The Voyager Passport Reading Journeys program has been used as a support, tutorial and enhancement program at various instructional levels. In this specific experimental study the focus was on student reading achievement at the 9<sup>th</sup> grade level. With this being such a critical period of time in student's lives as they transition from middle school to high school, a support instrument such as this is important if it proves to be effective. To assess the program, the Measure of Academic Progress was used as the assessment tool. The results of the treatment (9<sup>th</sup> grade students participating in the Voyager Passport Reading Journeys) and control groups (9<sup>th</sup> grade students not participating) were examined and compared.



This study analyzed statistical data collected from the Measure of Academic Progress assessment and is quantitative in nature. As a quantitative study, analysis consists of comparing the outcome levels of two groups to each other under two different situations (pre – posttests). In this particular experimental study, the impact the Voyager Passport Reading Journeys program had on 9<sup>th</sup> grade reading achievement.

## Chapter Four

### Findings of the Study

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of the study was to determine if the Voyager Passport Reading Journeys program had an effect on the reading achievement of 9<sup>th</sup> grade students. This reading program was implemented as the curriculum for the Reading and Study Skills course at Shawnee Mission East High School for the 2006-2007 school year. Ninety-five students were recommended for the course, with 66 actually enrolling and 29 selecting to not enroll. In addition to the performance of these two groups, a comparison was also made to the 9<sup>th</sup> grade students not recommended and enrolled in honors English and with those not recommended and enrolled in regular English 9.

#### **Overview**

The standardized test data was collected from the Measure of Academic Progress (MAP) assessment taken by 9<sup>th</sup> grade students at Shawnee Mission East High School. The assessments were administered to the 9<sup>th</sup> grade students during the week of September 5, 2006 as the pretest for the study. Students enrolled in the first semester Reading and Study Skills course took the post assessment on December 19, 2006, which was the last day of the course. The posttest data was collected from assessments taken in May, 2007. All 9<sup>th</sup> grade students not enrolled in a Reading and Study Skills course took the assessment the week of May 14, 2007. Those students enrolled in the second semester Reading and Study Skills course took the posttest assessment on May 29, 2007, the last day of the course. The data collected from the MAP assessment for each student was a Rasch Unit (RIT) score. The RIT score is valuable in this study as data is given in

equal-interval scales. Since RIT units are of equal value, reliable comparisons and conclusions can be drawn about the improvement of a student or groups of students.

A simple analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to determine if there were significant differences between the treatment methods of select 9<sup>th</sup> grade students on reading achievement as measured by the MAP assessment. Data was collected from each of the four 9<sup>th</sup> grade groups (9<sup>th</sup> grade students recommended and enrolled, 9<sup>th</sup> grade students recommended and not enrolled, 9<sup>th</sup> grade students not recommended and enrolled in English 9 Honors, and 9<sup>th</sup> grade students not recommended and enrolled in regular English 9) in the form of a RIT score obtained from a pretest and posttest. The measurements and results are presented in the following section.

### **The Data**

The results from the case study are presented in three sections. The first contains specific student group's results, the second contains the ANOVA data and F ratio, and the third contains the comparison between the groups. In addition to the data tables, each section also contains a brief narrative as to the background of the group involved in the study followed by analysis of the data presented.

### **Student Group Results**

#### ***9<sup>th</sup> Grade Students Recommended and Enrolled***

Sixty-six of the 95 students who were recommended for the Reading and Study Skills course in order for them to participate in the Voyager Passport Reading Journeys program enrolled in the course. Two of these students recommended and originally enrolled in the course did not attend school at Shawnee Mission East High School during the 2006-2007 school year and thus did not participate. Of the 64 students enrolled in the

Reading and Study Skills Course, 21 participated in the course during the first semester while 43 participated during the second semester. Each course was taught by the same instructor who followed the same curriculum.

Each of the 64 students enrolled in the course took the pretest and posttest MAP assessment. As shown in Table 11, the mean score for the group was a RIT of 219.5 on the pretest with a RIT range of scores from 186 to 239. The standard deviation (average amount of variability in a set of scores) is large with the average distance from the mean at 10.4.

Table 11 **9<sup>th</sup> Grade Students Recommended and Enrolled**

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Minimum	Maximum
Pretest	64	219.5	10.4	1.3	216.9	222.1	186.0	239.0
Posttest	64	223.1	8.7	1.1	221.0	225.3	197.0	240.0

The posttest scores reflect a slight improvement from the pretest results. The mean score for the group was a RIT of 223.1, or a gain of 3.6 RIT units. The range of scores was less with the minimum being a RIT of 197 and a maximum of 240. The standard deviation is smaller with an average distance from the mean of 8.7.

***9<sup>th</sup> Grade Students Recommended and Not Enrolled***

Twenty-nine of the 95 students that were recommended for the Reading and Study Skills course in order for them to participate in the Voyager Passport Reading Journeys program did not enroll in the course and thus did not receive the treatment. These students and their parents chose not to enroll for personal reasons. Prior to making the decision, each student and family received an explanation of the potential advantages of participating in the Voyager Passport Reading Journeys program. All of these students

enrolled in a regular English 9 course and did not receive any aspect of the treatment associated with the Voyagers Passport Reading Journeys program.

Each of the 29 students who were recommended for the Reading and Study Skills course but not enrolled participated in the pretest and posttest MAP assessment. As displayed in Table 12, the mean score for the group was a RIT of 221.6 on the pretest with a RIT range of scores from 210 to 241. The standard deviation is an average distance from the mean of 7.5.

**Table 12 9<sup>th</sup> Grade Students Recommended and Not Enrolled**

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Minimum	Maximum
Pretest	29	221.6	7.5	1.4	218.8	224.5	210.0	241.0
Posttest	29	224.9	8.8	1.6	221.5	228.3	210.0	243.0

The posttest scores reflect a slight improvement from the pretest results. The mean score for the group was a RIT of 224.9, or a gain of 3.3 RIT units. The range of scores was slightly more with the minimum being a RIT of 210 and a maximum of 243. The standard deviation is larger with an average distance from the mean of 8.8.

***9<sup>th</sup> Grade Students Not Recommended and Enrolled in English 9 Honors***

One hundred thirty-eight students who were not recommended for the Reading and Study Skills course enrolled in the English 9 Honors course. This course and students did not receive any of the treatment associated with the Voyager Passport Reading Journeys program. These students had one of two different teachers who taught English 9 Honors during the 2006-2007 school year.

As Table 13 shows, each of the 138 students enrolled in the English 9 Honors course participated in the pretest and posttest MAP assessment. The mean score for the

group was a RIT of 242.7 on the pretest with a RIT range of scores from 225 to 260. The standard deviation reflects an average distance from the mean of 7.0.

**Table 13 9<sup>th</sup> Grade Students Not Recommended and Enrolled in English 9 Honors**

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Minimum	Maximum
Pretest	138	242.7	7.0	.60	241.5	243.9	225.0	260.0
Posttest	138	244.4	6.3	.54	243.3	245.5	227.0	260.0

The posttest scores reflect a slight improvement from the pretest results. The mean score for the group was a RIT of 244.4, or a gain of 1.7 RIT units. The range of scores was less with the minimum being a RIT of 227 and a maximum of 260. The standard deviation is smaller with an average distance from the mean of 6.3.

***9<sup>th</sup> Grade Students Not Recommended and Enrolled in Regular English 9***

Two hundred sixty-nine students who were not recommended for the Reading and Study Skills course enrolled in the regular English 9 course for the first semester of the 2006-2007 school year. Five 9<sup>th</sup> grade students from this group did not return to Shawnee Mission East High School for the second semester of the school year. These students did not receive any of the treatment associated with the Voyager Passport Reading Journeys program. These students had one of four different teachers who taught regular English 9 during the 2006-2007 school year.

Each of the 269 students enrolled in the regular English 9 course who were not recommended for the Reading and Study Skills course participated in the MAP assessment pretest. As reflected in Table 14, the mean score for the group was a RIT of 242.4 on the pretest with a large RIT range of scores from 204 to 278. The standard deviation reflects a large average distance from the mean of 13.1.

Table 14 **9<sup>th</sup> Grade Students Not Recommended and Enrolled in Regular English 9**

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Minimum	Maximum
Pretest	269	242.4	13.1	.80	240.8	244.0	204.0	278.0
Posttest	264	233.5	12.7	.78	232.0	235.1	160.0	251.0

Five fewer 9<sup>th</sup> grade students were enrolled at Shawnee Mission East High School during the second semester than were in the first semester. The posttest scores for this group reflect a decrease from the pretest results. The mean score for the group was a RIT of 233.5, or a reduction of 8.9 RIT units. The range of scores was even larger with the minimum being a RIT of 160 and a maximum of 251. The standard deviation is smaller with an average distance from the mean of 12.7.

#### Analysis of Variance/F Ratio

The one-way ANOVA provides information related to the variability of the groups involved in the study. In particular, the F ratio is the ratio of variability between groups to variability within groups. As the average difference between groups gets larger, the F value increases as well. As the F value increases, it becomes more extreme in relation to the distribution of all F values and is more likely due to something other than chance (Salkind 201). As shown in Table 15, the obtained F values in this study are larger than the critical value.

Table 15 **ANOVA**

		Sum of Squares	Degrees of Freedom (df)	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Pre	Between Groups	37911.5	3	12637.2	102.3	0.0
	Within Groups	61252.8	496	123.5		
	Total	99164.3	499			
Post	Between Groups	24656.4	3	8218.8	73.9	0.0
	Within Groups	54600.9	491	111.2		
	Total	79257.3	494			

### Student Group Comparisons

Multiple comparisons were made among each of the groups indicated (9<sup>th</sup> grade students recommended and enrolled, 9<sup>th</sup> grade students recommended and not enrolled, 9<sup>th</sup> grade students not recommended and enrolled in English 9 Honors, and 9<sup>th</sup> grade students not recommended and enrolled in regular English 9) as part of the experimental study. These post hoc comparisons (Bonferroni method) are valuable since each mean is comparable to the other means to show where the differences lie between groups. The Bonferroni post hoc analysis is used to determine the significant differences between group means in an analysis of variance setting.

#### ***9<sup>th</sup> Grade Students Recommended and Enrolled Compared to 9<sup>th</sup> Grade Students Recommended and Not Enrolled***

The 9<sup>th</sup> grade students recommended for the Reading and Study Skills course were selected based on their performance on one or more previously taken standardized assessments (Kansas Reading Assessment, Measure of Academic Progress, or Iowa Test of Educational Development). Sixty-four of these students were enrolled in the course and participated in the Voyager Passport Reading Journeys program.

**Table 16 9<sup>th</sup> Grade Students Recommended and Enrolled (9RE) Compared to 9<sup>th</sup> Grade Students Recommended and Not Enrolled (9RNE)**

	(I) Group	(J)Group	Mean Difference (I – J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Pretest	9RE	9RNE	-2.1*	2.5	1.0	-8.7	4.5
Posttest	9RE	9RNE	-1.8*	2.4	1.0	-8.0	4.5

\* The mean difference is not significant at the .05 level

As shown in Table 16, the results of the pretest and posttest for the students recommended for the Reading and Study Skills course and participation in the Voyager Passport Reading Journeys program shows there is little difference between the means of



the students whether they participated in the course with the Voyager program or not. While each group did show improvement in the RIT mean score from pretest to posttest, the mean difference is not significant at the .05 level based on the Bonferroni comparison.

***9<sup>th</sup> Grade Students Recommended and Enrolled Compared to 9<sup>th</sup> Grade Students Not Recommended and Enrolled in English 9 Honors***

The sixty-four 9<sup>th</sup> grade students recommended for the Reading and Study Skills course that were enrolled in the course with Voyager were compared to the one hundred thirty-eight that were not recommended and were enrolled in the English 9 Honors course. The students enrolled in the English 9 Honors course did not receive any treatment from the Voyager Passport Reading Journeys program.

**Table 17 9<sup>th</sup> Grade Students Recommended and Enrolled (9RE) Compared to 9<sup>th</sup> Grade Students Not Recommended and Enrolled in English 9 Honors (9H)**

	(I) Group	(J)Group	Mean Difference (I – J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Pretest	9RE	9H	-23.2*	1.7	0.0	-27.7	-18.8
Posttest	9RE	9H	-21.3*	1.6	0.0	-25.5	-17.0

\* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level

The results displayed in Table 17 of the pretest and posttest for the students recommended for the Reading and Study Skills course and participation in the Voyager Passport Reading Journeys program shows there is a difference between the means of these students and the students not recommended for the course who were enrolled in English 9 Honors. While each group did show improvement in the RIT mean score from pretest to posttest, there is a large difference between the means of these two groups. As a result, the mean difference is significant at the .05 level based on the Bonferroni comparison.

***9<sup>th</sup> Grade Students Recommended and Enrolled Compared to 9<sup>th</sup> Grade Students Not Recommended and Enrolled in Regular English 9***

The sixty-four 9<sup>th</sup> grade students who were enrolled in the course and participated in the Voyager Passport Reading Journeys program were compared to the 269 students who enrolled in the regular English 9 course. The students enrolled in the regular English 9 course did not receive any treatment from the Voyager Passport Reading Journeys program.

**Table 18 9<sup>th</sup> Grade Students Recommended and Enrolled (9RE) Compared to 9<sup>th</sup> Grade Students Not Recommended and Enrolled in Regular English 9 (9)**

	(I) Group	(J)Group	Mean Difference (I – J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Pretest	9RE	9	-22.9*	1.5	0.0	-27.0	-18.8
Posttest	9RE	9	-10.4*	1.5	0.0	-14.3	-6.5

\* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level

The results shown in Table 18 for the pretest and posttest taken by the students recommended for the Reading and Study Skills course and participation in the Voyager Passport Reading Journeys program shows there is a difference between the means of these students and the students not recommended for the course who were enrolled in regular English 9. While each group did show improvement in the RIT mean score from pretest to posttest, there is a large difference between the means of these two groups. As a result, the mean difference is significant at the .05 level based on the Bonferroni comparison.

**Summary**

The analysis of the MAP reading assessment data from 9<sup>th</sup> grade students at Shawnee Mission East High School obtained during the 2006-2007 school year provided significant results that will in turn assist in the further understanding of the relationship

between the Voyager Passport Reading Journeys program and 9<sup>th</sup> grade reading achievement. A simple analysis of variance was useful in analyzing data from the four different groups. Within this analysis the Bonferroni comparison provided the significant pairwise differences between the groups contributing to the overall significant difference between all four groups. This difference lies between the 9<sup>th</sup> grade students recommended and enrolled in the Reading and Study Skills course and the 9<sup>th</sup> grade students not recommended and enrolled in either the English 9 Honors or regular English 9 courses. There was no significant difference between the 9<sup>th</sup> grade students recommended and enrolled in the Reading and Study Skills course and the 9<sup>th</sup> grade students recommended who did not enroll.

The final chapter will address insights constructed from the literature review and evaluate the null hypothesis proposed in this case study. In addition, the chapter will interpret and draw conclusions related to the data analyzed, speak to contributions of the study, and discuss possible recommendations for future research needs based on the findings of the study.

## Chapter Five

### Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

#### **Introduction**

This study examined the effects of the Voyager Passport Reading Journeys program on the reading achievement of 9<sup>th</sup> grade students over the 2006-2007 academic school year at Shawnee Mission East High School. This program was implemented as part of the overall curriculum in the Reading and Study Skills course. Ninety-five students were recommended for the course. Of these 95 students, 66 actually enrolled in the course and 29 opted to not enroll. Two students who were recommended and originally enrolled in the course did not attend SME during the 2006-2007 school year. The 9<sup>th</sup> grade students selected for the Reading and Study Skills course had performed at a non-satisfactory level on a previous assessment. All 9<sup>th</sup> grade students were placed in four categories for comparison and analysis.

#### **Summary**

The first component of this experimental study was the administration of a standardized reading assessment which served as the pretest for the study. All 9<sup>th</sup> grade students were given the Measure of Academic Progress Reading assessment the week of September 5, 2006. Of the 64 students who opted for the program, 21 took the Reading and Study Skills course during the first semester of the 2006-2007 school year. On December 19, 2006, this same group of students repeated the MAP reading assessment. These scores represented the posttest data for the students. Forty-three 9<sup>th</sup> grade students recommended for the Reading and Study Skills course were enrolled and participated in the Voyager Passport Reading Journeys program during the second semester of the

2006-2007 school year. These students took the MAP Reading assessment at the completion of the course on May 29, 2007. These scores represented the posttest data for these students. All 9<sup>th</sup> grade students not enrolled in the Reading and Study Skills course took the MAP Reading assessment the week of May 1, 2007. These scores represented the posttest data for the comparison groups of students.

The MAP Reading assessment (both pre- and post) was administered in the school library. The allotted testing time for the computerized assessment was 80 minutes. However, there were no students who needed the entire time to complete the assessment.

Following the collection of the data, a simple analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to determine if there were significant differences between the different 9<sup>th</sup> grade student groups in the area of reading achievement as measured by the MAP assessment. Data was collected from each of the four 9<sup>th</sup> grade groups in the form of a RIT score obtained from a pretest and posttest.

The one-way ANOVA provided (Table 15) information related to the variability of the groups involved in the study. In particular, the F ratio provided the ratio of variability between groups to variability within groups. As the average difference between groups changed, information as to whether the change was more likely due to something other than chance was provided.

Post hoc comparisons (Bonferroni method) were made between each of the groups indicated as part of the case study. The comparison provided data (Tables 16, 17 and 18) for each mean as part of the comparison to the other means to show where the differences lie between groups. The Bonferroni post hoc analysis was used to determine

the significant differences between group means in an analysis of variance setting. In this case study the level of risk or level of significance was set at .05.

As a result of the data collected in this case study, the null hypothesis (*the Voyager Passport Reading Journeys program will have no effect on the reading achievement of 9<sup>th</sup> grade students at the .05 level of significance based on the Measure of Academic Progress reading assessment*) was confirmed since no significant differences could be determined between the standardized achievement scores of the 9<sup>th</sup> grade students recommended and enrolled in the Reading and Study Skills course and the 9<sup>th</sup> grade students recommended and not enrolled.

### **Conclusions**

The 9<sup>th</sup> grade students who were recommended and participated in the Reading and Study Skills course (and thus participated in the Voyager Passport Reading Journeys program) during the 2006-2007 school year at Shawnee Mission East High School showed no statistically significant differences in reading achievement as measured by the Measure of Academic Progress assessment. These students were compared to those students who were recommended and not enrolled in the course. While the data for both of these groups of students (Tables 11 and 12) did reflect a Rasch Unit (RIT) mean increase from pretest to posttest (3.6 RIT units for those enrolled and 3.3 RIT units for those recommended and not enrolled), the level of significant difference between the two groups was not reflected in the results. A possible explanation for these results may be due to this being the first year of the Voyager Passport Reading Journeys program being used as the curriculum for the Reading and Study Skills course. As in any new program, there are items to be improved, instructional methodology to be adjusted, and

considerations to classroom environment and structure. A second reason for not seeing any immediate effect could be due to the training the teacher received on implementing the Voyager Reading program. The teacher participated in a one-day training in the summer prior to implementation and then periodic updates from district personnel. More in-depth training and support from Voyager personnel may have benefited the process. Finally, the Reading and Study Skills course was offered only as a semester course. The Voyager program is recommended to be administered over an entire school year and some individuals in the Shawnee Mission School District believe it would have better served the students to have participated for this length of time.

A comparison of the 9<sup>th</sup> grade students who were recommended and participated in the Reading and Study Skills course to those students not recommended and enrolled in English 9 Honors courses (Table 13) showed a significant difference (-23.2 mean difference for the pretest and -21.3 for the posttest). A possible reason for the differences could be attributed to the advanced reading skills and participation in an advanced curriculum for the students in English 9 Honors course. The honors curriculum requires more reading than the regular course and the reading required is at a more challenging level.

A final comparison of the 9<sup>th</sup> grade students who were recommended and participated in the Reading and Study Skills course to those students not recommended and enrolled in regular English 9 courses (Table 14) also showed a significant difference (-22.9 mean difference for the pretest and -10.4 for the posttest). The significant difference is possibly due to the students in regular English 9 performing better on

previous standardized assessments. This would be an indicator of advanced skills as compared to those students in the Reading course.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

As the results of this case study are examined and consideration is given to the findings, recommendations can be made for further research. The following recommendations are a result of consideration following the completion of the case study.

The criteria used for selection of students to be placed in the Reading and Study Skills course needs to be analyzed. For example, was the criteria used for this study an accurate predictor of which students would best benefit from the Voyager Passport Reading Journeys program? Each student's selection data (state reading assessment, Iowa Test of Educational Development, and/or Measure of Academic Progress) needs to be analyzed and compared to the outcomes in this study to determine if these assessments were a predictor of success. By determining the appropriate criteria for placement in this curriculum, the students can correctly be identified and benefit from their participation.

Discussions and decisions need to occur as to whether a student can opt out of the Reading and Study Skills course, and if so, how a student, and his/her family, can go against the recommendation to participate. In this case study, those students who were recommended and did not participate in the course allowed for a comparison group. However, more students participating in the Voyager Passport Reading Journeys program as part of the Reading and Study Skills course would allow for better analysis of the programs impact.



A longitudinal study should be conducted with additional years of data collected to determine the overall effects of the reading program. While the one year study did provide a glimpse as to the effect the Voyager Passport Reading Journeys program had on the 9<sup>th</sup> grade students participating in the Reading and Study Skills course, more data would clarify its value.

The training provided to the instructor for this course and program needs to be more in-depth and continued throughout the school year. This would not only increase the instructors overall effectiveness, but would also ensure the consistency of instructional practice and methodology. The training would best be administered by a person from the Voyager organization or appropriately trained district personnel. The current training was a one day summer in-service with follow-up support from a Shawnee Mission School District resource specialist.

A study should be considered comparing the course as a semester offering to its being offered for an entire school year, which is the recommendation of the Voyager program. This would allow for data collection to compare whether the pace of the curriculum delivery should be slowed to better meet the needs of the students participating. In addition, the Voyager Passport Reading Journeys program has ancillary materials available which could be used to enhance the classroom experience if more time were available.

Student motivation in a course such as Reading and Study Skills needs to be considered. Often students enrolled in a remedial class lack the desire necessary to take full advantage of the instruction provided. A quote by an unknown author emphasizes this issue, “No one understands the courage it takes for a student to return to the place

that they experienced failure yesterday, today, and more than likely will experience again tomorrow.” As a result of this, consideration should be given to time spent with the instructor and the students to build a positive working relationship and to consider motivational techniques that work for each individual student.

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