

ANCHORAGE SCHOOL DISTRICT  
ANCHORAGE, ALASKA

ASD MEMORANDUM #271 (1999-2000)

April 24, 2000

TO: SCHOOL BOARD  
FROM: OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT  
SUBJECT: APPROVAL OF HIGH SCHOOL READING CLASSES

RECOMMENDATION:

It is the Administration's recommendation that the School Board approve the four reading courses: "Reading Foundations I," "Reading Foundations II," "Career and Strategic Reading," and Power Reading for College," described in Attachment A as accepted courses for the Anchorage School District.

PERTINENT FACTS:

Over the 1996-97 and 1997-98 school years, the English courses offered by the District, beyond English 9 and English 10, were reviewed, revised, and brought to the School Board for ratification and acceptance. The one exception to this statement relates to four reading courses developed by the Reading Subcommittee, which was part of the original Review Committee. The work of that group was not completed until the 1998-99 school year.

In spring 1999, the School Board received and discussed recommendations from the Reading Subcommittee. Those recommendations included the establishment of four new required reading courses at the high school level, the development of a separate reading department at the high school level, and the addition of a 0.5 credit in Reading to the graduation requirements. Those recommendations were discussed in a work session, without formal vote, though the discussion seemed to indicate general acceptance of the courses but little support for the other portions of the original recommendation.

The attached four courses represent the four courses originally developed by the Reading Subcommittee and discussed with the Board in spring 1999. They are being submitted for acceptance and ratification at this time. They would replace four courses: "Reading Lab," "Speed Reading," "Individualized

Reading,” and “Language Skills Lab.” previously presented in the Program of Studies.

The Administrative recommendation is that the four courses presented in Attachment A be accepted as general elective courses within the English area. That is, they would not be specifically required but could count toward the satisfaction of the required 4.0 credits in English. However, they could not be used to meet the specific English 9 or English 10 requirement nor could they be used to meet the requirement of one semester of writing.

These courses have been reviewed by the Anchorage\ Council of the PTAs, the high school principals, and the High School Language Arts Curriculum Committee.

The PTA originally opposed the recommendation to create a reading department and add a 0.5 credit in reading to the high school graduation requirements. The revised proposal was reviewed with them at their April meeting. The Council indicated they would provide a reaction, which will be forthcoming.

The high school principals reviewed the courses at their April meeting. They unanimously supported the Administration’s recommendation.

The High School Curriculum Committee unanimously rejected the original proposal to establish a separate reading department at the high schools, to add the 0.5 credit requirement in reading, and to accept the courses. That Committee maintains its opposition to the Administration’s recommendation.

Two members of the High School Curriculum Committee provided written comments as to their feelings toward the acceptance of the courses. One of the members stated, “My position has not changed. It seems odd that after spending years working to integrate skills into every class, we are now going back to isolating a skill and teaching it that way.” The second person wrote, “Even as options, however, these courses reject ten years of effort on the part of the Language Arts Department to incorporate all strands (reading, writing, listening, and speaking) into all classes.” Both respondents, and in past discussion, the Committee as a whole, very strongly support the need for an integrated language arts curriculum without the splintering and fragmentation they see in the acceptance of the new courses.

In a general sense, the Administration agrees with the overall concern for maintenance of an integrated curriculum and the avoidance of splintering into specific skill areas. However, the advent of the State Benchmark Examinations and the High School Graduation Qualifying Examination argue for specific reading courses for students who are struggling readers at the high

school level and need additional assistance. It is hoped that the courses described in Attachment A will address this, as well as the general population.

BC/CC/FS/MK

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Approved by: Carol Comeau, Assistant Superintendent, Instruction

**READING FOUNDATIONS I****Grade Level:** 9**Semesters:** 2**Credits:** 1.0**Course Description:**

Reading Foundations I is designed to help students strengthen basic reading proficiencies which include on-going assessment and appropriate instruction. Emphasis will be placed on strategies for word recognition, comprehension of varied text forms, and vocabulary acquisition. This class will also support individuals with strategies to be successful in high school. In content area texts, these strategies include:

- comprehension
- vocabulary
- word structures/word parts
- summarizing and making connections
- main idea and supporting evidence
- technical reading
- note-taking
- time and task management
- active listening
- test taking

**Prerequisite:**

Reading Foundations I will be available for grade nine students who are reading two or more years below grade level as determined by low performance scores on norm-references, below proficiency level performance on State Benchmark Tests, by counselor/teacher recommendation, or by academic records and performance in school.

**Course Overview:**

Reading Foundations I is a year long course designed for students identified at the end of eighth grade or at the beginning of ninth grade who qualify on one or more of the following criteria: reading two or more years below grade level, low performance scores on norm-referenced tests, "Below Proficient" or "Not Proficient" on the Eighth Grade Reading Benchmark Examination, and teacher, counselor, parent or student request.

Reading Foundations I will help students strengthen basic reading skills in the context of the ninth grade content curriculums. Emphasis will be on building proficiencies in reading comprehension, vocabulary development, and those skills necessary for success in high school. While rigorous and directed, course content and related instructional strategies will focus on the strengths of the individual and identification of the areas for improvement. This course emphasizes positive experiences related to improving literacy skills.

Reading Foundations I is offered to all ninth grade students who qualify and may not be repeated. Students who are successful in this course may proceed to Reading Foundations II or Career and Strategic Reading if interested or warranted.

## **Instructional Objectives**

Students will:

- demonstrate increased strategic reading competencies
- read self-selected and teacher selected content-area reading materials
- read a wide range of text forms appropriate for purpose and ability
- demonstrate increased vocabulary acquisition
- demonstrate increased strategies to gain meaning and improve comprehension
- practice standard English grammar, usage and mechanics
- use technology as a tool for enhancing literacy skills

## **Student Performances**

Students will learn strategic reading skills by:

- developing strategies to set purpose, to predict, to confirm, and to summarize
- developing strategies to learn and apply new vocabulary
- developing strategies to adjust reading rates according to purpose
- developing strategies to study words for structure and pronunciation

Students will analyze and evaluate content area fiction/nonfiction literature and expository text by:

- developing the ability to question, predict and conclude
- developing the ability to listen actively and note important information
- developing the ability to read critically, to identify logic, purpose and appeal
- developing strategies to read and access information in textbooks
- developing strategies to read and access information in technical documents
- developing strategies to be more successful on tests

Students will demonstrate the skill of applying multi-step directions to perform complex procedures and tasks by:

- identifying the time, resources, and sequence of activities necessary for task completion

Students will use technology to enhance literacy skills by:

- developing word processing and information accessing skills
- developing skills for self-editing and peer edition in written communications
- developing increased skills for practicing standard English grammar, usage, and mechanics

## READING FOUNDATIONS II

**Grade Level:** 10

**Semesters:** 2

**Credits:** 1.0

### **Course Description:**

Reading Foundations II is designed to help students continue work on basic reading proficiencies which include on-going assessments and appropriate instruction. Continued emphasis will be placed on strategies for word recognition, comprehension of varied text forms, and vocabulary acquisition. In addition, research skills and computer literacy will be addressed and enhanced. This class will positively support and provide strategies critical to content area studies and success. These strategies include:

- comprehension
- vocabulary
- word structures/word parts
- summarizing and making connections
- main idea and supporting evidence
- note-taking
- time and task management
- written expression
- test taking
- computer literacy
- research skills
- reading fluency and rate
- reading for enjoyment

### **Prerequisite:**

Reading Foundations II will be available for grade ten students who continue to demonstrate reading levels two or more years below grade level expectations; who are reading two or more years below grade level as determined by reading scores on norm referenced tests, and/or by counselor/teacher recommendations.

### **Course Overview:**

Reading Foundations II is offered for tenth grade students who 1) continue to demonstrate reading levels two or more years below grade level expectations, 2) who are reading two or more years below grade level as determined by reading scores on norm referenced tests, 3) and/or by counselor/teacher recommendation.

Reading Foundations II is designed to help students continue work on basic reading/writing proficiencies which include on-going assessments and appropriate instruction. Continued emphasis will be placed on strategies for word recognition, comprehension of varied text forms and vocabulary acquisition. In addition, research skills and computer literacy will be addressed. Goal setting and identifying plans for accomplishment will be emphasized while honing time management skills..

Reading Foundations II will positively support and provide strategies critical to content area studies and success.

## **Instructional Objectives**

Students will:

- demonstrate strategic content-area reading competency
- read self-selected and teacher selected materials
- read a wide range of text forms appropriate to age, ability, and purpose
- demonstrate increased vocabulary competency and applications
- demonstrate increased strategies to gain meaning and improve comprehension
- use technology as a tool for enhancing reading skills
- practice standard English grammar, usage and mechanics
- demonstrate proficient time management behaviors and improved organizational skills

## **Student Performances**

Students will learn strategic reading skills by:

- developing vocabulary and comprehension strategies
- developing strategic reading competency

Students will follow directions and complete a process by:

- identifying the time, resources and sequences of activities necessary for task completion
- practicing research/technical skills

Students will use technology to enhance reading skills by:

- self-editing
- peer editing

Students will improve test taking proficiencies by:

- identifying key words
- eliminating distracters
- choosing between plausible answers

## CAREER AND STRATEGIC READING

**Grade Level:** 11 or 12

**Semesters:** 1

**Credits:** 0.5

### **Course Description:**

Career and Strategic Reading is a semester course designed for students who want to develop and improve strategies and skills for reading and writing technical materials, to learn to read more efficiently in all content areas, and to learn how to access and organize information for successful school-to-career experiences. These strategies may include:

- comprehension
- vocabulary
- critical thinking and questioning
- technical reading/writing
- graphic organizers
- not taking
- patterns of organization
- time and task management
- skimming and scanning
- textbook use
- test taking
- computer literacy
- goal setting

### **Prerequisite:**

Career and Strategic Reading is designed for students who are mostly successful with grade level reading expectations and experiences.

### **Course Overview:**

Career and Strategic Reading is a semester course designed for students who want to develop and improve strategies and skills for reading and writing technical materials, to learn to read more efficiently in all content areas, and to learn how to access and organize information for successful school-to-career experiences.

Career and Strategic Reading will help students who are mostly successful with grade level reading expectations. Students may select this course in grades 11 or 12.

## **Instructional Objectives**

Students will:

- self-assess and identify goals for academic success
- build upon existing knowledge and acquire additional content-specific skills for comprehension
- practice positive and appropriate behaviors of time and task management
- cultivate active listening skills
- practice strategic skills for reading and writing technical text
- improve vocabulary and apply according to need and purpose
- learn a variety of test-taking skills
- develop an appreciation for strategic reading through experiential activities
- use technology as a tool for writing, organizing, and thinking.

## **Student Performances**

Students will demonstrate strategic reading/writing skills according to identified purposes. These may include:

- college/technical school admissions forms
- job applications
- technical manuals
- newspapers
- content area texts
- cookbooks
- tax forms
- owner manuals and warranties
- internet text
- voter instructions and ballots
- self-help books, etc.

Students will increase vocabulary and learn to apply appropriately:

- context clues
- etymology/root words/prefixes and suffixes

Students will demonstrate strategies and behaviors to become more successful with a variety of assessments:

- pretest preparation
- prioritizing and timing
- keywords and syntax
- plausibles and detractors
- written responses

Students will enhance critical thinking skills:

- distinguish levels of questioning, make predictions, determine purpose, identify audience
- recognize inference and draw conclusions
- support opinion with evidence

Students will advance their comprehension skills

- synthesize and summarize
- relate and extend to life experiences
- identify key words and concepts
- recognize a conclusion or produce a product

Students will demonstrate the ability to follow directions to complete a process/produce a product:

- establish a plan
- identify schedule
- engage in on-going evaluation
- recognize a conclusion or produce a product

Students will demonstrate the ability to recognize strengths and align those abilities with plans to reach desired goals:

- Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery
- define and clarify goals
- design plan(s) to accomplish desired goals

Students will demonstrate a working knowledge of computer word processing, electronic mail, and information retrieval from the internet:

- research
- communication
- spelling/grammar and word choice

## POWER READING FOR COLLEGE

**Grade Level:** 11 or 12

**Semesters:** 1

**Credits:** 0.5

### **Course Description:**

Power Reading for College is designed for students who are already experiencing academic success. It explores advanced comprehension strategies for reading and analyzing high-level and/or technical materials. The course will include preparation for the ACT/SAT tests, methods for organizing study materials, and strategies for vocabulary improvement. Extensive reading and analysis of challenging texts will be required. This course is recommended for 11th and 12th graders. Topics will include:

- critical reading, reasoning, and analysis skills
- learning tools and study skills necessary to succeed at the college level
- organization of difficult materials and recognize patterns of logic and discourse
- how to read materials critically and incisively
- SAT/ACT test preparation
- advanced vocabulary study
- improvement in reading efficiency
- time and task management
- computer and internet research skills

### **Prerequisite:**

Students who have passes the Alaska Graduation Qualifying Examination in reading and who read above grade level expectations.

### **Course Overview:**

Power Reading for College designed for students who are already experiencing academic success. This course explores advanced comprehension strategies for reading and analyzing high-level and/or technical materials.

Course study will include preparation for the ACT/SAT tests, methods for organizing study materials, and vocabulary improvement. Extensive reading and analysis of challenging texts will be required. This course is recommended for 11th and 12th grade students.

## **Instructional Objectives**

Students will:

- craft critical reading, reasoning, and analysis skills
- acquire learning tools necessary to succeed at the college level
- develop ability to organize difficult material and recognize patterns of logic and discourse
- prepare to read materials critically and incisively

## **Student Performances**

Students will:

- exercise patterns of organization, vocabulary comprehension techniques, and memory strategies

- demonstrate reading enhancement skills such as skimming, scanning, mnemonics, etc.
- fortify their understanding of language components such as affixes, Latin and Greek roots, etc.
- enrich their understanding of logic, rhetoric, and discourse
- compose advanced-level synopses of challenging materials