

ANCHORAGE SCHOOL DISTRICT
ANCHORAGE, ALASKA

ASD MEMORANDUM #271 (1999-2000) (REVISED)

May 22, 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/Writing 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 of the original Review Committee. The work of that group was not completed until the 1998-99 school year.

In spring 1999, the Board received and discussed recommendations from the Reading Subcommittee. Those recommendations included the establishment of four new 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 credits 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 are slightly reformatted versions of 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. With the addition of these courses to the Program of Studies, three previously authorized courses would be removed from the books "Reading Lab," "Speed

Reading,” and “Language Skills Lab.” “Individualized Reading” would continue as an authorized course.

These courses were previously discussed at the School Board Meeting on April 24, 2000. At that meeting, the student representative indicated that the Student Advisory Board had not had an opportunity to review the courses. Several English teachers also spoke to the Board regarding some concerns they had with the proposed courses. The School Board postponed action on the item until the May 22, 2000 School Board Meeting.

The high school principals had endorsed the courses prior to the April 24 meeting. The Anchorage Council of PTAs Executive Board had reviewed and endorsed the courses prior to the April 24 meeting (see Attachment B). Two additional reviews have taken place since the April 24 School Board Meeting.

On May 9, 2000, the Department Chair and one reading teacher from each of the six comprehensive high schools, along with the Reading Curriculum Coordinator and the Language Arts Curriculum Coordinator, were invited to meet with the Executive Director of Curriculum and Evaluation to discuss the courses. The notes from that session are provided in Attachment C. Among the conclusions reached at that meeting were recommendations to support the adoption of all four courses but to offer general elective credit for the “Reading Foundations I” and “Reading Foundations II” courses as well as for the “Power Reading/Writing for College” course. The recommendation was to offer “Career and Strategic Reading” as a repeatable course, which could be taken one time for English elective credit and one time for general elective credit.

The Student Advisory Board (SAB) discussed the four classes at their meeting on May 15, 2000. They also recommended acceptance of the four courses, however the SAB recommended that “Reading Foundations I” and “Reading Foundations II” be allowed to substitute for English 9 and/or English 10 for students who truly had a demonstrated reading problem. The discussants supporting this recommendation seemed particularly concerned that students who were struggling in reading not lose their elective(s) in grades nine and ten, with the electives replaced by the reading courses. Their concerns were primarily related to student motivation and the possible struggle students who have difficulty reading would have in English 9 and English 10.

The administrative staff considered the issues raised by the teachers in the May 9 meeting and by the students during the May 15 meeting. Both positions have merit, but the administrative staff feels it must opt to go with the teacher recommendation in this instance.

The Administration believes it is to develop students’ reading abilities to move them closer to grade level (as a key to the rest of their high school careers). However, it is not convinced that the reading fundamentals courses are the same as

English 9 or 10. There are literature, writing instruction, drama and speech activities in English 9 and 10 that are not provided in the reading foundations courses.

Although it is a shift in philosophy from a schedule driven by student demand, it seems that some students may need to be channeled into the reading fundamentals courses instead of having a choice of an elective. These courses, coupled with enrollment in English 9 and/or English 10 with a reading emphasis, as discussed during the teachers' meeting, might be the vehicles for students who are struggling readers entering high school to move up and develop the necessary reading skills to succeed at the high school level. With a motivation to regain control over their elective choices, perhaps they will work especially hard to improve over a semester or two. Offering these courses and strongly encouraging, if not outright assigning, struggling students to enroll may be a requirement to show "opportunity to learn" for students who do not perform well on the eighth grade Benchmark examinations. Regardless, enrollment in these courses and in English 9 or 10 simultaneously is bound to empower the floundering students who will continue to struggle in every subject until they can handle the content reading which is demanded.

Essentially, the Administrative position is:

1. "Reading Foundations I" should be approved and offered as general elective credit. It should be required of ninth grade students who have not demonstrated proficiency on their eighth grade Benchmark Reading examination. It would be taken in lieu of an elective class. Students who are not assigned to the course could take it for elective credit to enhance their reading skills.
2. "Reading Foundations II" should be approved and offered as general elective credit. It should be required of all tenth grade students who have demonstrated during ninth grade that they do not possess the necessary reading skills to succeed in high school. Students who are not assigned to the course could take it for elective credit to enhance their reading skills.
3. "Career and Strategic Reading" be approved as an English elective course for students in grades 10 through 12. The course should be repeatable one time for general elective credit. Students who do not pass the HSGQE Reading Section as sophomores should be strongly counseled to enroll in this course or in "Independent Reading" to develop and hone their reading skills.
4. "Power Reading/Writing for College" be approved and offered for a general elective credit. This course should be reviewed further for possible English, Social Studies, or Science elective credit in the future, depending upon the specific content that is being read and covered in the course.

BC/CC/FS/MK

Attachments

Prepared by: Fred Stofflet, Executive Director, Curriculum & Evaluation
Mardell Kiesel, Reading Curriculum Coordinator

Approved by: Pat McDowell, Executive Director, High Schools
Carol Comeau, Assistant Superintendent, Instruction

READING FOUNDATIONS I

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 eighth grade Benchmark tests, by counselor or teacher recommendation, or by academic performances in middle school. This course will be offered for general elective credit as a year-long course.

Reading Foundations I is designed to help students strengthen basic reading proficiencies. Course content and curriculum will not only include adolescent literature but also materials related to other grade nine disciplines. 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. Emphasis will be placed on strategies for word recognition, comprehension of varied text forms, word study, related writing experiences, listening activities, and strategies for discussion. This class will also support individuals with strategies for organizing time and managing resources.

Learner Outcomes:

✓Students will:

- demonstrate increased strategic reading competencies
- read self-selected literature and teacher selected, content-area, reading materials
- read a wide range of text forms appropriate for purpose and abilities
- demonstrate increased vocabulary acquisition through speech and writing activities
- demonstrate increased strategies to gain meaning and improve comprehension
- write and continue to practice standard English grammar, usage and mechanics
- use technology as a tool for enhancing literacy skills
- demonstrate active listening skills through read-aloud activities and guided discussion experiences
- demonstrate acquisition of oral language skills through the retelling of story and expository text by relating technical procedures in sequential order
- demonstrate improved behaviors which relate to organization of time and materials

Learner Behaviors:

✓Students will learn strategic reading skills by:

- reading more often in and out of the classroom
- 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, and on-line
- 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
- orally presenting directions and sequential procedures for a given task

✓Students will use technology to enhance literacy skills by:

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

READING FOUNDATIONS II

Reading Foundations II is offered for general elective credit to grade ten students who continue to demonstrate reading levels two or more years below grade level expectations.

Reading Foundations II is designed to help students continue work on basic reading proficiencies through self selected literature and teacher selected materials. Critical to this curriculum are the on-going assessments which will guide appropriate curriculum and instruction. Continued emphasis will be placed on strategies for word recognition and study, word attack skills, comprehension of varied text forms, and vocabulary in content. Strategies will be modeled and shared for oral discussions of current events and various literature selections as they relate to curriculum, community, cultures and school. Listening skills will be addressed through daily read-aloud time and whole and small group discussions. The six traits of effective writing will be modeled through activities with specific ties to tenth grade disciplines.

Strategies for improving performances on tests/assessments will continue to be addressed. Goal setting, time management and identification of plans for process and accomplishment will be emphasized throughout this course.

Opportunities for technology/literacy-related experiences will be provided and mentored according to individual skill levels.

Learner Outcomes:

✓ Students will

- demonstrate strategic content-area reading competencies
- read self-selected and teacher selected materials
- read a wide range of text forms appropriate to age, ability, and purpose
- demonstrate increased vocabulary competency in speaking and writing
- demonstrate increased strategies to gain meaning and improve comprehension from varied text forms through speaking and writing
- practice standard English grammar, usage and mechanics
- demonstrate proficient time management behaviors and improved organizational skills
- demonstrate improved listening and speaking skills
- improve performances on tests

Student Performances:

✓ Students will learn strategic reading skills by

- guided and shared reading lessons and experiences
- reading for the main idea and supporting details
- summarizing and making connections

- adjusting rate of speed according to purpose
- writing for a variety of purposes
- developing vocabulary and comprehension strategies
- reading and writing technical and narrative texts
- listening to materials read aloud
- talking about text and sharing critical thinking
- reading independently for enjoyment

✓ Students will follow directions and complete a process by

- setting goals
- identifying the time, resources and sequence of activities necessary for task completion
- identifying the rubric for final product

✓ Students will use technology to enhance reading skills by

- inquiry and research
- writing, spelling, usage and grammar proficiencies
- self-editing
- peer editing

✓ Students will improve test taking proficiencies by

- identifying key words in directions
- eliminating distracters
- choosing between plausible answers
- practicing and modeling written responses
- monitoring time

CAREER AND STRATEGIC READING

Career and Strategic Reading is a semester course designed for students in grades 10, 11 & 12 who want to develop or 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 is accepted for .5 English elective credit. This course is repeatable with the .5 general elective credit awarded for the second enrollment.

Key areas of emphasis in this curriculum are goal setting, prioritizing and managing time and tasks, project planning and presentation of self through portfolio, projects and speech. Course content will include the study of factors for success, assessments and accountability, and self evaluation. Texts may include but are not limited to the Wall Street Journal, US News & World Report, Consumer Reports, Life magazine, local news reporting formats and web sites as they relate to instruction, interest and inquiry.

Students will study the six traits of effective writing as they apply to specific forms of content area writing and specific purposes. Outside-of- classroom speakers and related community events will be integrated throughout the course with instructional emphasis on listening behaviors and appropriate discussion strategies.

Career and Strategic Reading course content will continue to address skills and strategies necessary to be successful on state competency tests.

Learner Outcomes:

✓ Students will:

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

Learner Behaviors:

✓ Students will demonstrate strategic reading/writing skills in texts related to life and career by reading and responding to:

- 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.
 - journals and magazines
 - news reporting formats
- ✓ Students will increase vocabulary and learn to apply appropriately:**
- various written communications, i.e. resumes and letters of intent
 - interviews and speaking engagements
- Students will demonstrate strategies and behaviors which promote success 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
- Students will advance their comprehension skills:
- synthesize and summarize
 - relate and extend to life experiences
 - identify key words and concepts
- 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 according to a rubric

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

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

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

- Power Point for presentation
- Internet and inquiry
- communication
- spelling/grammar and word choice

POWER READING/WRITING FOR COLLEGE

Power Reading & Writing for College is designed for students who are already experiencing academic success. Students who have passed the HSGQE in Reading and Writing and who want additional support and specific experiences to prepare for college are encouraged to enroll.

This course includes extensive analysis of high-level literature and technical materials. A selection of challenging texts requiring both critical reading and writing skills is included. Students will be expected to listen, discuss and extend course content to theorize, analyze, and critique.

This course will include preparation for the ACT/SAT tests, methods for organizing study materials, and strategies for vocabulary improvement. This course is recommended for 11th and 12th grade students.

Learner Outcomes:

✓ Students will

- craft critical reading, reasoning, listening and analysis skills
- write to respond, clarify and critique
- demonstrate reasoning and analysis through discussion
- develop ability to organize difficult material and recognize patterns of logic and discourse
- prepare to read varied text forms and genres critically and incisively
- demonstrate advanced vocabulary in speaking and writing
- prepare strategically for college entrance exams
- acquire learning tools necessary to succeed at the college level
- demonstrate strategies for reading with speed to skim and scan text for specific purposes
- demonstrate reading rate adjustment according to text and purpose

Learner Behaviors:

- ✓• **Students will exercise patterns of organization**
- ✓• **Students will seek and select comprehension techniques and memory strategies according to need and purpose.**
- ✓• **Students will demonstrate reading enhancement skills such as skimming, scanning and mnemonics**
- ✓• **Students will fortify understandings of word structures and etymologies such as affixes, Latin and Greek roots**
- ✓• **Students will enrich understanding of logic, rhetoric, and discourse**
- ✓• **Students will compose advanced-level synopses of challenging materials**
- ✓• **Students will succinctly summarize information from text in speech and written expression**
- ✓• **Students will locate evidence in text to support understanding of theme and main idea**
- ✓• **Students will make and support assertions with evidence from text and cite research or reference for reasoning**
- ✓• **Students will use effective strategies and demonstrate understanding of elements of discourse in expressive, persuasive, research-based, informational/technical or literary writing assignments**
- ✓• **Cite sources of information using standard method of documentation**
- ✓• **Students will experience increased success on standardized, normed and performance assessments.**

Attachment B

High School Reading Course Meeting
May 9, 2000
Notes of Conclusions/Recommendations

Following the April 24, 2000 School Board Meeting, at which the decision on four proposed high school reading courses was postponed until May 22, 2000, a meeting was set up for May 9 at 3:30 p.m. to discuss the proposed courses among interested teachers and Curriculum Department staff. Individuals invited to the discussion included the department chair from each of the six comprehensive high schools, a reading teacher from each of the comprehensive high schools, the Language Arts Curriculum Coordinator, the Reading Curriculum Coordinator, and the Executive Director of Curriculum and Evaluation. Those who were invited were asked to discuss the courses with their colleagues so they could reflect the views of the staffs from their schools. Of the 15 people invited, 11 were in attendance at the meeting. Three of the reading teachers and the Language Arts Curriculum Coordinator were not present. The specific list of attendees is presented in Table 1

Table 1

Attendees at the May 9, 2000 Meeting on
High School Reading Courses

<u>Person</u>	<u>School/Department</u>	<u>Position</u>
Mary Henderson	Bartlett High School	Department Chair
Rhonda Gardner	Chugiak High School	Department Chair
Kathie Steele	Chugiak High School	Reading Teacher
Chana Boyko	Dimond High School	Reading Teacher
Dave Harrington	Dimond High School	Department Chair
Janice Strickland	East High School	Department Chair
Pamela Weaver	Service High School	Reading Teacher
Glenn Wright	Service High School	Department Chair
Diane Frank	West High School	Department Chair
Mardell Kiesel	Curriculum	Curriculum Coord.
Fred Stofflet	Curriculum & Evaluation	Exec. Director

The meeting was essentially a discussion of the four courses that had been recommended to the School Board for acceptance, including the content of the courses, the type of credit offered for the courses, and how the courses meshed with the existing course offerings within the English department. This discussion went from approximately 3:30 to 5:15. A vote was never taken, though general consensus was reached on several issues. The decisions and recommendations from this meeting included:

- Accept the four courses with modifications to the original recommendation as identified below.
- Provide “general elective” credit for the *Reading Foundations I* and *Reading Foundations II* courses. – The discussion on this issue focused on three primary points:
 1. The original administrative recommendation would have allowed students to complete their English requirements totally as underclassmen, which is not a good idea and is contrary to the current statements in Board Policy related to graduation requirements.
 2. If students were to receive English credit for these courses, they would actually be receiving credit for skills that should have been attained prior to high school.
 3. Students who need help the most would be potentially losing their elective opportunity as freshmen if they took Reading and did not receive English credit. Ultimately, this might frustrate many and lead them to exit the system.

The discussion indicated that the “Reading Foundations” courses would be targeted toward students who had performed below acceptable levels on the Grade Eight Benchmark tests or who came to us from elsewhere with severe reading problems. The courses would be offered as need and interest warranted.

Following discussion of these main points, the recommendation for “general credit” prevailed as the consensus recommendation.

- The *Career and Strategic Reading* course should be accepted as an English elective for students in grades 10 through 12. The course should be designated as repeatable one time, with general elective credit awarded for the second enrollment for those students who chose this option. It was further recommended that the prerequisites for this course be eliminated to make it open to all students. In fact, the discussion indicated that this course may well be a course that could address the reading developmental needs of students who did not pass the reading portion of the High School Graduation Qualifying Examination on their first effort.

- The *Power Reading for College* course was recommended for acceptance as a general elective course. The discussion indicated that the skills that were focused in this course were already being addressed through a number of existing English elective courses. There was some fear that if this course were offered strictly as an English elective, students would be drawn in too many directions and resulting in low number of students selecting any specific course, potentially resulting in none of the courses “making.” Furthermore, in the discussion, it became clear that the original intent was that the specific content that would be read and discussed in the course might well be inter-disciplinary or from the disciplines of social studies, science, mathematics, or other areas, as well as from English. The course was viewed by its developers as a “shell” or form that could be shaped to specific content in all areas as interests and need arose.

Concern was expressed that a general elective might not be enough incentive for many students to take the course and that it might have difficulty making. However, the ultimate consensus was to recommend general credit for the course.

- It was agreed that the Reading Coordinator, with assistance from some teachers, would reformat the course descriptions into the standard template used for the previously accepted English elective courses. In the reformatting process, the Coordinator would identify how the courses address each of the general language arts areas of reading, writing, listening, and speaking.
- It was agreed that *Individualized Reading* should continue to be offered as an elective course at the high school level. However, the *Reading Lab*, *Speed Reading*, and *Language Skills Lab* could be eliminated as previously suggested. The discussion on *Individualized Reading* focused on the success some of the teachers had with the course and the heterogeneous composition of the student enrollment in the course. Those who taught it and found success were very supportive of it. While the course could address the needs of students who need help in reading, it was not seen as primarily remedial in nature. In fact, a given class could have very poor to very good readers

There was not real discussion on the other classes other than assent on eliminating them.

- It was agreed that individual schools could create a section or two of *English 9* and *English 10* which incorporated reading strategies into the instructional process. These would be presented to students with the *English 9* or *English 10* content. Students with reading difficulties could be encouraged to enroll in these specific sections.

This issue came up during the discussion on the “Foundations” courses. Several schools are already providing this option. It was seen as a valuable additional strategy to reach students in need of reading help. For students with less than

severe problems, this options was viewed as possibly the best option to provide them with the assistance they need.

- It was agreed that the message needed to be delivered and emphasized that the responsibility for the development of reading and writing skills within students did not lie solely with the English Department but was in fact a shared responsibility with all disciplines. This means that the reading teachers at the high schools should continue to have the opportunity to work with teachers from various disciplines in developing methodologies and strategies to improve students' reading and writing. The recommendation on *Power Reading for College* supports this position.
- It was recommended that after the courses are accepted, a group of teachers working with the Curriculum Department staff develop a recommended set of materials to be used with the courses. These identifications should be completed by December 2000 and funding for the materials should be requested in the 2001-2002 Financial Plan.

It was recognized that the agreements and recommendations from the group would be forwarded through administrative channels as recommendations. The administration will ultimately make a final recommendation to the School Board and the School Board will have the final say as to disposition of the courses.