



Rooted in reading passports

Are they an effective way of promoting reading?

Research report

Steve Willshaw



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Welcome

to the Lincolnshire School Improvement Service



In September 2002, CfBT began a ten-year partnership with Lincolnshire County Council. The main aim was to support the school improvement agenda in Lincolnshire schools. The contract has been expanded to include the management of a number of services for the County Council, and has now been extended to 2017.

The Lincolnshire School Improvement Service (LSIS) has overall responsibility for the governance, leadership, learning and workforce development in schools and settings. This includes the monitoring, support and challenge provided to these establishments to raise the standards and improve the well-being of children and young people in Lincolnshire.





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Foreword

For children to become skilled and confident readers, schools must combine the high quality teaching of phonic work with equally high quality incentives to read for enjoyment and information. Moreover, children's early experience of the power of reading to enrich their lives generally comes from being read to, well before they are able to read for themselves. In the course of phonics teaching, there comes a point where children get the hang of how the alphabetic code works and they begin to self-teach. This is when they need 'to put in the reading miles', that is to say, they need to read a lot to hone their skills to become effortless readers and thus able to focus on the goal of reading, which is to comprehend the text.

This report shows that complementary incentives can help children to develop a healthy appetite for reading by rewarding their success, for example in the form of a series of 'passports' as they progress from beginners to skilled readers.

Sir Jim Rose, CBE

Chairman of the Education Committee, CfBT Education Trust





About the author

Steve Willshaw has been an English teacher for 25 years, starting his career in Tower Hamlets and going on to be a head of English in comprehensive schools in Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire before taking up his current post of Senior School Improvement Consultant. Steve developed and wrote the 'Rooted in reading' passports based on his experience of teaching English.

He is also the author of a study guide on *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* for the National Association for the Teaching of English (NATE) and has written schemes of work and notes for several Longman texts as well as advising on their series *Literacy through Texts*. He is an accredited LCI (Local Consultant for Improvement) and was the head of English for www.schoolsnet.com.

About the report

'Rooted in reading' is a reading promotion project offering primary and secondary school students a suite of 12 reading 'passports' to encourage reading for pleasure. The passports encourage the reading of a variety of text types and aim to expand the reader's literary and non-literary experience. They cover the whole range of reading levels from pre-school children sharing their first books with parents and carers through to high-achieving sixth-form students. After reading a book, children complete an entry that takes the form of a short review in their passport. The student's teacher, school or public librarian can then stamp their passport with the project's tree logo to endorse their reading.

This study explored the impact of the specific reading promotion project (namely 'Rooted in reading') based on survey responses from a sample of 46 schools in Lincolnshire (16 primary, 28 secondary and one special) and Derbyshire (one secondary) which made use of the passports. The sample surveyed for this research report included only users or facilitators of the 'Rooted in reading' project.

This report provides analysis of quantitative and qualitative data. The methods used included two surveys designed to obtain feedback from teachers and students respectively, and qualitative interviews with respondents to the survey from both targeted groups within the sample. One teacher from each school returned a survey (46 in total). In addition, 192 students from seven of the schools (two primary and five secondary) completed surveys on the impact of the passports on their own individual reading. The questions in the student survey were based on the 'What to teach' section of sub-strand 5.3 'Reading and engaging with a wide variety of texts in Teaching for Progression: Reading'¹.

Finally, four teachers from the sample of 46 teachers, and 14 students from two schools in the student sample (one primary and one secondary) were interviewed about their involvement in the passport scheme and its impact on their reading.

¹ DCSF 2008:27





Background: 'Rooted in reading'

The DCSF publication: *Getting Back on Track – Pupils who make slow progress in English, Mathematics and Science in Key Stage 3*² highlights several areas that schools need to address in order to engage and extend their students as readers. These include: providing opportunities to discuss students' reading habits, self-identification of students' reading abilities and capabilities, referrals to texts that will stimulate and extend reading ability, recommendations for wider reading, opportunities to read for enjoyment in a supportive environment, awareness that all types of reading count – not just fiction, and guidance on making independent decisions in relation to reading material.

With this knowledge, the initial passport was created during 2008, the National Year of Reading, with the aim of increasing students' reading of a variety of text types, including fiction, non-fiction, newspapers, plays and poetry. After the creation and use of this initial passport, it soon became apparent that this one design could not meet the needs of all primary and secondary school students, so new passports were designed. To date, over 200,000 reading passports, in 12 different designs aimed at distinct target groups, have been requested and distributed to primary, secondary and special schools in Lincolnshire and Rutland.

² DCSF 2007



Key findings

Schools using ‘**Rooted in reading**’ saw increases in attainment

In primary schools that made extensive use of reading passports, the percentage of students gaining Level 4 or higher in the Key Stage 2 reading SATs rose by 4.4 percentage points between 2007 and 2009. Across the schools sampled in Lincolnshire that made use of the passports, the rise was 2.0 per cent, while in schools that did not request any, this figure showed a fall of 0.3 percentage points. Although more variables would need to be controlled for in order to directly attribute this impact to the passports, the findings are indicative of a positive relationship between student achievement and passport use.

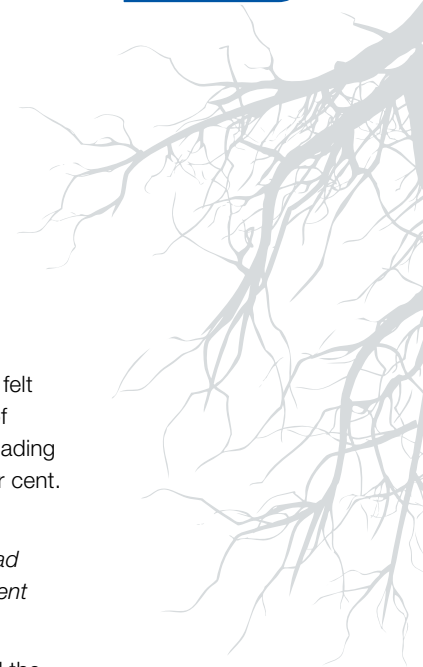
From the sample of 46 teachers, 89 per cent felt that the passports have had a positive or strongly positive impact on students’ reading skills; 72 per cent felt that there has been a positive or strongly positive impact on students’ writing skills and 86 per cent reported a similar impact on students’ reading stamina.

Similar views were reported by the sample of 192 students, 75 per cent of whom agreed that the reading passports have had a positive impact on their reading stamina.

‘**Rooted in reading**’ has increased the amount of reading children do

Both teachers and students reported that the passports have increased the amount of reading that students do, and also, importantly, students’ enjoyment of reading; 75 per cent of students surveyed reported that the passports have had a positive or strongly positive impact on their enjoyment of reading, which we know from recent research³ is the factor most closely linked to improvement in reading behaviour and reading attainment.

³ Clark and De Zoysa, *Mapping the interrelationships of reading enjoyment, attitudes, behaviour and attainment*, National Literacy Trust 2011



Nearly all of the teachers in the sample who responded to the survey (95 per cent) felt that the passports have had a positive or strongly positive impact on the amount of reading that students do. This impact was felt to be greatest in relation to fiction reading (90 per cent), although attitudes to non-fiction reading were also positive, at 79 per cent. One of the teachers interviewed explained this further:

“[‘Rooted in reading’] has led to a greater variety of reading material being read as well as developing pupils’ evaluation skills. Children are now reading different genres.” **Primary School Teacher**

Similarly, a majority of students (78 per cent) reported that the passports increased the amount of reading they did. Furthermore, nearly three quarters of students responding to the survey (74 per cent) reported that their enthusiasm for reading had increased as a result of using the passports. To illustrate, the comment below was taken from an interview with a student. Its sentiments are indicative of the general enthusiasm for the project demonstrated in most of the student interviews:

“It makes me feel quite happy that you get your stamps, so you know someone else has appreciated what you’ve done.” **Year 6 Student**

There was also some indication by teachers that the passports have had a positive impact on parents’ attitudes to reading (39 per cent).



The wider impact of 'Rooted in reading'

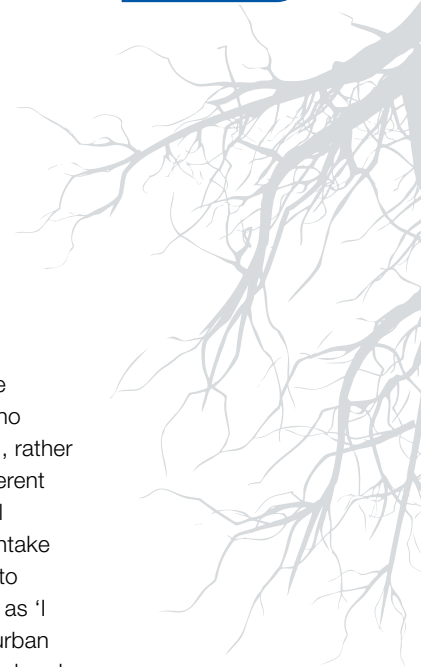
As well as the positive impact on the quality and quantity of students' reading, the research revealed a wider impact within the school community. Altogether, 68 per cent of teachers reported a positive or strongly positive impact on teaching in their school, and 87 per cent noticed the same results in relation to the use of reading resources within the school. In addition, just under half of the teachers (46 per cent) felt that the passports have had a positive or strongly positive impact on students' use of public libraries.

The future of 'Rooted in reading'

Analysis of survey responses suggests that the factors most likely to make the passports successful are:

- Involvement of other teachers and the headteacher (for example by talking about 'Rooted in reading' in assemblies, taking an interest in the passports, asking about progress)
- Involvement of the public library
- Extrinsic rewards (stamping, certificates etc), although these work better in some settings than in others. Generally the impact seemed to lessen as the children involved got older; younger readers particularly liked the stamping element and obtaining the certificates and badges.





Prior to the completion of the survey, the hypothesis of some teachers was that the passports might have a beneficial impact on reading but only for those students who already held positive views about reading, and would thus contribute to a widening, rather than narrowing, of attainment gaps. The comparison of survey results from the different schools suggests that the reverse may be true. Students in a rural grammar school recorded the least positive responses. Here the deprivation indices show that the intake is relatively advantaged. These academically successful students are likely already to have a positive attitude to reading; many of their responses included phrases such as 'I read every night anyway'. The most positive responses came from students in an urban primary school on a deprived estate whose attainment level was below both national and local authority means. These findings suggest that the reading passports could, contrary to the hypothesis, go some way to narrowing the attainment gap between advantaged and disadvantaged students.

Qualitative responses suggest that the programme's future success is determinate on the introduction and continued enthusiasm for the passports by a member of staff who also takes responsibility for the programme's implementation.



Conclusions and recommendations

While more focused research with a controlled sample would need to be conducted in order to positively identify the relationship between students' educational achievements and 'Rooted in reading', quantitative and qualitative results from the sample used indicate a link. However, what can be attributed to the 'Rooted in reading' programme is that the passports improve students' reading levels, stamina and enjoyment of reading, and contribute to the improvement of their reading skills. Recent research and publications⁴ highlight the direct link between the enjoyment of reading and student achievement. Consequently, teachers' continued enthusiasm for and commitment to the programme, and work to increase students' levels of and enjoyment of reading will theoretically improve students' results.

Future research could build on this study by examining how schools using 'Rooted in reading' compare with those that have not been involved in this initiative.



⁴ Cunningham, A., Stanovich, K. (1998) What reading does for the mind. *American Educator* 22;
Flowers, T. (2003) Exploring the Influence of Reading for Pleasure on African American High School Students' Reading Achievement, *The High School Journal* – Vol. 87, No. 1, October-November 2003, pp. 58-62;
OECD (2002) *Reading for change: Performance and engagement across countries*. New York: OECD;
Clark, C., Poulton, E. (2011) *Is Four the Magic Number? Number of books read in a month and young people's wider reading behaviour*. National Literacy Trust.

Rooted in reading passports



Sharing stories and rhymes passport

Designed for parents to use with children aged 0-5 years.



Reading together passport

Designed for parents to use with children aged 5-11 years.



KS1 passport

For children in Years R-Y2 (ages 4-7) or any others for whom this format is the most appropriate.



KS2/3 passport

For children in Years 3-7 (ages 8-12).



Transition passport

For children in Year 6 (aged 11) who are moving from primary to secondary school this year.



Passport plus

For children in Years 8 or 9 (ages 12-14).



Challenge passport

Reluctant readers of any age can use this passport which has been designed to encourage greater involvement in reading.



APP diary

(Assessing Pupil Progress; this passport is now called **Personal reading diary**) Children in KS3 and 4 can use these diaries to collect evidence of their reading which teachers can use as evidence of progress in independent reading.



Rooted in reading award

For young people in Years 10-13 (ages 15-18); modelled on the Duke of Edinburgh Award. Completion of tasks can lead to bronze, silver and gold certificates which can be referred to in applications for higher education or university courses. It can also, with some additional work, be used as a means of achieving the Arts Award at bronze and silver levels.



Critical literacy passport

Written for high-achieving sixth form students, undergraduates and general readers who want to increase the sophistication of their reading skills.



Reader's passport

Aimed at both individual readers and those who belong to reading groups.



Community passport

Share ideas about books with people in your community.



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