

Evolution of our reading passport program

By Luke Featherston

Snapshot

Luke Fetherston, from Trinity College Colac, describes their reading passport program. Luke was awarded the 2020 SLAV Research Fellowship to support the exploration of the design and implementation of this program.

Current program

In late 2020, we received the SLAV Research Fellowship to design and implement a new reading program called the Reading Passport. Our aim was to create a homework and reading program to encourage wide reading for Year 7 and 8 students. This incorporated our Microsoft digital learning platform called OneNote and a physical bookmark to record student reading. This was designed to be a shared implementation with the Resource Centre staff and the Year 7 and 8 English teachers. The aim was to have students choose their own texts and books to encourage a high level of engagement.

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To set this up, we created a series of OneNote pages which were shared with Year 7 and 8 English teachers to then pass on to Year 7 and 8 students, via their digital English Class Notebooks. We wanted to ensure there was some accountability for students to read, record and engage with a text, but also make it low stakes enough that students were not put off by doing activities related to the text.

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The information shared via OneNote included some instructions for English teachers (Image 1), an overview for students (Image 2) and an activities list for students to complete after reading each book or text. The activities were designed to be short, engaging and low stakes, such as writing up a text message conversation between two characters, coming up with an alternative title or opening line for the book or creating a playlist of songs which would match the text.

Students would then complete an activity in a specific area in the OneNote (Image 3, which includes an example response to an activity) and then complete a reflection at the end of the year (Image 4).

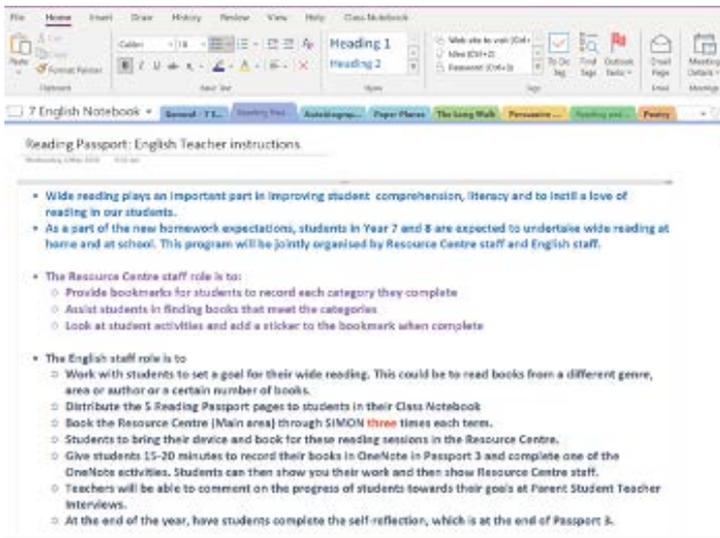


Image 1: Instructions for teachers

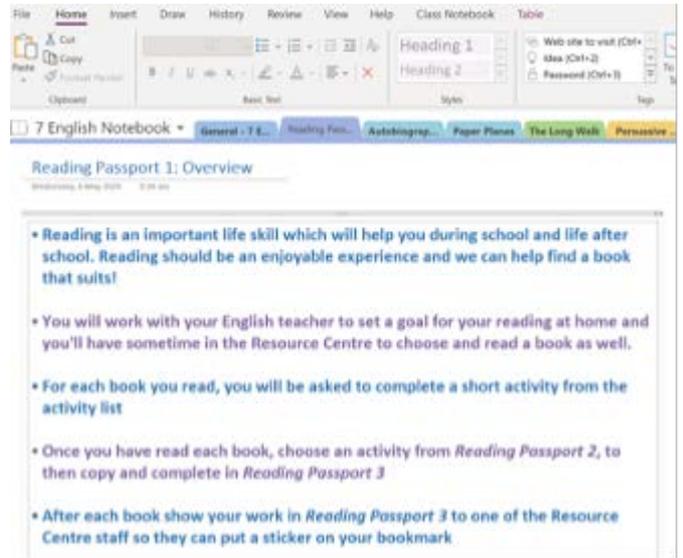


Image 2: Overview for students

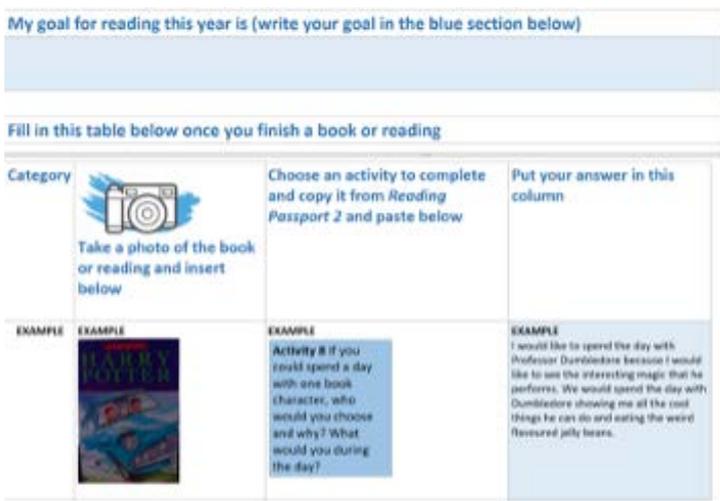


Image 3: Student area to complete activities

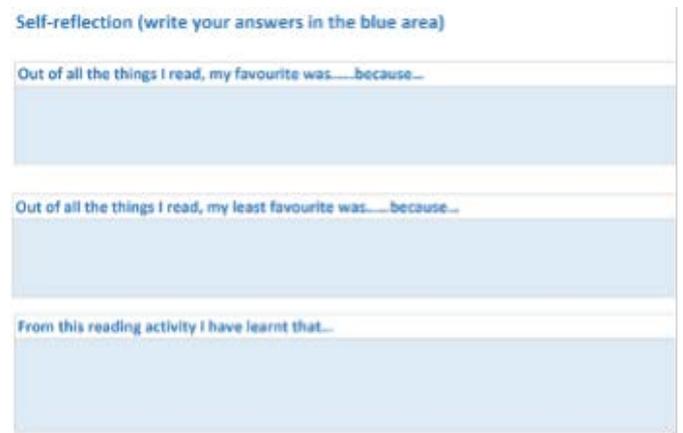


Image 4: Student reflection at the end of the year

We also designed a series of posters to help students with setting goals for their reading and book selection process (Images 5 and 6).



Image 5: Poster to show example reading goals

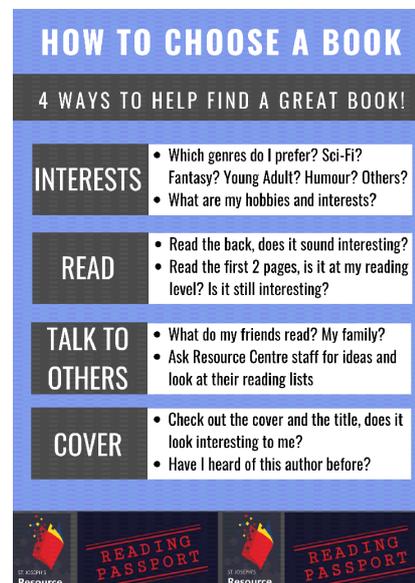


Image 6: Poster to help with book selection

Areas to improve

There were two main areas which we wanted to improve further after starting the Reading Passport initiative. The first was to make the English class visits more structured. Under the current program, we encouraged English teachers to book into the Resource Centre three times a term. This time was for students to select books, read books and complete the activities in the OneNote. However, we noticed that some teachers were not coming in as often as others or were leaving all the sessions to the end of the term. Also, given I still had a teaching load, sometimes the English teachers were coming in while I was in class, so I was unable to be there to support teachers and students during this time in the Resource Centre.

The second area that was not working as well as we hoped was the stickers we were providing students as they read different texts. The stickers were placed on each student's bookmark, to visually show teachers, parents and students which texts students had read. These stickers (shown in Image 7) were to encourage wide reading and thoughtful consideration of text choice. However, we noticed that most students forgot their bookmarks, and given the relatively unstructured English class time in the Resource Centre, we were not able to fully explain or give out the stickers with the bookmarks. We also had a Loyalty Reader bookmark, which had been really successful, so students were more likely to bring in that bookmark, rather than the additional bookmark we created for the Reading Passport initiative.



Image 7: Bookmark stickers

Suggested changes for the future

Reflecting on our current approach and areas for improvement, we are now looking to make the following changes to the program for the future.

- **Improve the use of the time in the Resource Centre**

Firstly, we are aiming to improve the structure of English class visits to the Resource Centre, to now schedule each Year 7 and 8 English class once a fortnight. Given each visit will be planned in advance, it will allow me to find a time when I can be involved with the sessions in combination with the teachers. We will also create a Reading Passport booklet which will be housed in the Resource Centre for students to refer to during these structured sessions.

We are also looking to change the purpose and activities within the sessions. This will include creating four rotations across the hour visit, with 10-15 minutes per activity conducted in small groups. We will share the supervision, coordination and running of the various rotations between the Resource Centre Manager, Resource Centre Assistant and the English teachers. The four activities we are proposing will be:

1. Silent reading

Students spending time reading a book or text of their choice.

2. Listening to a read aloud

This could include listening to different types of texts such as chapter books, different genres, historical fiction, verse novels, picture books, short real-life stories, magazines or news articles, classics like Shakespeare, poems, speeches, a book prologue or books we have multiple copies of so students can read at the same time. This could include having 'guest readers' such as the school leadership or other interested teachers.

3. Small group/pair discussion

Students will have the opportunity to discuss the books they are reading with other students, using a series of prompts we will provide in the Reading Passport booklet.

4. Complete the Reading Passport booklet

This booklet will include an area to complete a reading profile and motivation survey, set individual reading goals, a place to record and reflect on reading and to complete low stakes activities to engage with the text. This would also allow staff time to discuss with individual students about their reading goals and progress.

- **Remove stickers and bookmarks**

The other major change will be to remove the stickers and the Reading Passport bookmarks, instead using the Reading Passport booklet to document reading progress and show which texts are being read by students. This booklet could also be given to teachers to discuss with families at Parent-Teacher-Student interviews as a link back to the expectations around reading at home.

Conclusion

As with any new program, there are going to be adjustments and changes along the way. As the Reading Passport evolves, we will better learn how to engage students in reading and how to best structure the program to maximise student engagement.

Luke Featherston is the Resource Centre Manager at Trinity College Colac. After working as an Economist for 10 years, Luke has spent the last 10 years teaching Humanities and Business Management and holding various school leadership positions. Luke was awarded the 2020 SLAV Research Fellowship to support his exploration of the Reading Passport Program.