

# I AM PART OF THEIR STORY

Dover Christ Church Academy,  
Kent

APLUS is a mini-school within a larger academy that helps students to make the transition between primary and secondary school. Accelerated Reader was introduced in 2011 and has been transforming the students' reading and writing since. Cathryn Chappell, the faculty's Higher Learning Teaching Assistant, describes the impact AR has had on Year 7 and 8 students.



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Data review

Intervention

Library Usage

Reading for pleasure

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## Over 95% of students in Years 7 and 8 say they enjoy reading.

Since we introduced the AR programme to KS3 our students have shown a much more positive attitude to reading than we were seeing before. This can be seen through how many words and books our students have read so far this school year (September – October), with over 13 million words and over a thousand books read! They love Fridays when they find out which class has read the most books and words, and the champion class for that week is announced.

When the students come into lessons they automatically get their book and are always keen to read and take a quiz on the book. They can't wait to get their book marks signed when they have passed a quiz and to receive a raffle ticket towards the annual draw for gaining 100%.

We have had a massive increase in the borrowing of books from the school library. We introduced AR to our APLUS mini-school in 2011 and every year we are seeing an increase of books going out. The students all read for pleasure and change their books without having to be prompted by teachers; in fact we need more books to keep up with the demand! We are having a new school built next year and the library will double in size, so even more books will be available to the students.

*There are fewer issues with poor behaviour as the students are able to access reading material which is tailored to their individual learning needs*

## We believe the programme has made the students better writers and readers.

All students in Years 7 and 8 are screened with the STAR Reading assessment in September, and then again every six months to check on progress. This highlights any students who may need intervention and enables us to help them to make progress. They are also checked weekly when the reports are given to the teachers.

The process of testing, whereby students' level of comprehension is measured and fed back to them is hugely beneficial. Students have shown through their literacy lessons that they have a much greater understanding of words and are able to use them to good effect in their writing, thus enabling them to move up sub levels and reach their targets.

We regularly use the Renaissance Place dashboard to monitor the progress of our students. We have found the dashboard a great resource as it can be accessed so easily and instantly gives the data we need. It is an excellent tool for monitoring and assessing the impact of the programme. All the teachers in APLUS can access it at all times, and keep the reports we use most on the dashboard for ease of access.

We meet monthly to discuss how the students are progressing with their reading. In particular, we use the reports to monitor participation, engaged reading time, and the number of words read and points earned. We discuss how we as a team can improve these figures. Meetings within APLUS ensure that the teachers and non-teaching staff are always up to date with any changes that are being made within the Accelerated Reader (AR) programme.

### **We demonstrate AR at our open evenings, which has had some great feedback**

Students are initially introduced to AR when they conduct their taster days in Year 6. They are shown samples of quizzes and the books they could be reading. They are also able to speak to the current students in Years 7 and 8 about their experiences with AR and what they have gained by using the programme. We demonstrate the programme at our open evenings so prospective students and parents can watch live quizzes being taken by our students. This has had some great feedback.

Parents are informed about AR with a letter home. The letter informs parents about the programme and supplies them with passwords so they can use Home Connect. They are also given a leaflet answering the most common questions asked by parents about AR.

When starting with AR, all students are shown a Power-Point presentation on how to use the programme. They then have an introduction to the library and are given their passwords and shown how to choose their books. They are also told of the rewards they will receive for getting 100% on quizzes, reading the most words and joining the 'millionaires club' for reading over a million words, as well as additional end of year rewards.

Before the programme started it was hard to get the boys to read. Although we still have a small problem with this, most of the boys are happy to read and appear to enjoy the team work and class rewards.

The greatest success of AR has been getting our students to read for pleasure. The enjoyment of their reading, along with enabling them to engage more fully with their books, has helped to create a culture of reading in their life that will last for years to come.

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