

“Accelerated Reader has created a new excitement for reading.”

British Embassy School Ankara Ankara, Turkey

The British Embassy School Ankara (BESA) is an international school for students aged 3-13. It serves the international diplomatic and business communities as well as local families. There are approximately 220 pupils from around 40 different countries on roll, many of whom have English as an additional language.

BESA offers the British National Curriculum alongside the International Primary/Middle Years Curriculum. The school is an accredited member of COBIS and has recently received an outstanding report from the Independent Schools Inspectorate.

Samuel Walker and Ann Kardas are the Literacy Co-ordinators, with responsibility for Accelerated Reader.

BESA has always provided a high quality literacy education. However, it was thought that we could further improve this by giving the students greater freedom with the books they were reading. Previously we relied on guided reading schemes, which were often uninspiring and not enjoyed by the pupils. We also found it very difficult to support the students in their selection of books to read for pleasure. It was very difficult for us to assess whether students were reading these books and whether these books were at a level that was accessible to them.

Since introducing Accelerated Reader (AR) we have been able to guide students towards clearly marked books which are at their reading level. This has also given the students greater confidence in their own reading ability, as they now know they will be able to access the books they are reading. A few weeks after the introduction of AR a Year 4 child said “I never really liked reading before as I didn’t know which books to choose. Now I know which books I can read on my own.”

The data collected from quizzing with AR has been extremely useful in the teachers’ tracking of reading. We are now able to clearly see whether students comprehend the books they are reading, meaning we are able to push students onto the next level when they are ready. The programme also makes it very clear which students need support with their reading. A number of boys who were previously only choosing non-fiction books for free reading are now more inspired to choose from the fiction section. We have seen many examples of boys recommending series of books to their friends, again increasing the ownership the students have shown over their reading.

Most recently we have completely removed the previously uninspiring guided reading resources from Key Stage 2 and replaced these with the AR books. This has meant that students’ reading levels have increased as they now love the books they are reading. The targets that have been set by teachers through AR have created a buzz of excitement. Students are enjoying the challenge of trying to reach their targets.

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The biggest challenge in the introduction of AR was the re-labelling of our library. This took many hours and support was needed from every available member of staff. However, this proved to have a positive consequence as the fact that all staff were involved in the re-labelling meant that they were made familiar with the new system from the start.

We chose to introduce AR in stages so that teachers were fully able to understand everything that AR has to offer. Firstly, we introduced the levels and quizzes to the staff, followed by an assembly where we modelled the quizzing process. The assembly was

important as it ensured that all students were enthusiastic about the system. Next, we introduced the target setting and data collection to the staff. We ensured the parents were fully involved in the process by having a “Parents’ reading workshop”, which looked at Accelerated Reader (AR) as well as how parents can support their children’s reading at home in general.

Teachers are now able to see whether the students in their classes are reading books which are at the correct level. By using the Renaissance Place dashboard teachers are able to identify which students are not achieving the expected results in their quizzes, and are then able to put intervention in place to support this. It also highlights students who are consistently exceeding expectations and teachers are therefore able to challenge them further. It is also clear to see which students are not borrowing books from the library and therefore are not reading the expected amounts at home.

At BESA, AR has created a new excitement for reading. Both staff and students appreciate the increased freedom they now have over their reading. Students across the school now have an increased love of reading. This is evident from the number of students using the library in their own time: the library is now regularly full with students reading before school, at break times and at lunch. Students now feel like they have ownership over their library and are far more comfortable when choosing books. We have also seen a far greater number of students reading for pleasure around the school.

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