Develop lifelong readers in the North West with Accelerated Reader™

Accelerated Reader™ (AR™) is a powerful tool for monitoring and managing reading practice.

AR motivates students of all ages and abilities to read for pleasure, and enables teachers to diagnose problems accurately and rapidly.
Inform instruction and promote reading for pleasure

Accelerated Reader helps teachers to monitor students’ regular reading practice.

The programme gives teachers the information they need to ensure that students are habitually reading and understanding the books that will best develop their reading skills.

Using the reading levels ascertained with the regular STAR™ tests to determine an appropriate reading range, students are guided to books at the ideal level of complexity. They develop their reading skills best when reading books difficult enough to stretch them but not so difficult as to be inaccessible. AR provides ongoing progress monitoring, enabling regular opportunities to praise students and to identify where intervention may be necessary.

Book an online demonstration at renlearn.co.uk or contact a member of our team on 020 7184 4040.
“Monitoring student progress is at the core of planning and delivering learning programmes and Accelerated Reader is indispensable to this.”

In January 2013 All Saints Catholic College received a positive report from OFSTED, which praised the structured approach taken to raising literacy standards – within which Accelerated Reader plays a significant role. This success is testament to the hard work undertaken to improve attitudes towards reading, not just in the LRC but throughout the school, as Julie Carss, Learning Resources Manager at the College explains: “Since the introduction of AR there is much less stigma attached to reading – every student has a reading book with them every day – and they are eager to ‘share’ and even recommend books to each other.” The college utilises the structured approach offered by AR and STAR Reading®, and has found that the students respond positively to the challenge and competition involved. “Reading at the correct level gives children confidence, as does success in quizzes and being able to progress through the levels, which all makes their reading experience so much more enjoyable and less stressful.”

In addition to allocating time for quiet reading during Academic Review (form time), Julie is in the process of providing every Form Group with a ‘book box’. Several departments offer students 10 minutes reading time as a matter of course, which is already standard practice within the English department. As a result, the students have become accustomed to getting reading books out at the beginning of a lesson, whilst the teacher takes a register/prepares resources, etc. “Since we introduced this initiative, colleagues have remarked on a calmer start to lessons and appreciate the consistent classroom practice, which students are familiar with and which the SLT (and OFSTED inspectors) look for.”
The majority of quizzes are taken on the school computers. Quiz results are often the starting point for conversations about books between staff and students, and Julie’s colleagues from other departments have commented on how much they all benefit from this extra interaction. “During daily reading sessions, students are more inclined to ask about the meaning of words or about particular events and situations referred to in the books they are reading. We have also noticed an improvement in their spelling. I have just introduced an AR staff reading challenge within the English department, which has got the students buzzing with excitement – other departments are now showing an interest as the connection with reading is such a great way to motivate and engage with the students. It has been noted that AR reading time at the beginning of their lesson allows the children to settle and focus and one colleague said that he noticed the whole AR experience gave children more confidence. Children will protest if they are not allowed their 10 minutes reading time!”

Twice a week Julie organises ‘Break for Reading’ sessions in the LRC during which only students who want to read or take quizzes can enter. This provides them with the opportunity to read alone or to older students and staff in a peaceful environment. “We often set reading as homework, which is actually welcomed by students as they are able to do more quizzes and gain further reward. However, the teacher no longer needs to rely on the word of the student to find out if reading homework has been completed – quiz results speak for themselves! Similarly, parents can check their child’s reading record using Home Connect.” The students’ appetite for reading is now so great that not only has the profile of the LRC been raised within the college, but also the number of books borrowed has risen significantly over the last three years (see Chart 1). “I find that I have to replace books at an alarming rate, not least because they are being worn out through constant use! The positive attitudes toward reading have been noticed throughout the college. One teacher commented to me recently that ‘it is very apparent that significantly more of my students are reading much more actively thanks to AR – this is evident from the number of hands that go up at the start of every lesson to request permission to take a quiz and change their books.” There has been a very significant increase in the number of books borrowed by students annually since the introduction of AR. Although still significantly lower than the girls, the percentage of items borrowed by boys has also steadily increased over the last three years.

“During our recent OFSTED inspection the inspectors were hugely impressed with AR –

Chart 2: Percentage of students achieving 5+ A*-C GCSEs (or equivalent) including English and maths GCSEs
not only in terms of the figures they were able to scrutinise (borrowing trends/reading test results/quiz results and average daily reading time, etc.), but also from speaking to the children who were enthused by AR. They said of the programme: ‘Students read regularly. They use the school’s recently introduced structured reading material (i.e. AR) which ensures they extend their thinking, understanding and experience. Boys especially enjoy the competition of the tasks set.’ One of the questions I was asked by an inspector was about how I was able to monitor the suitability and appropriateness of books the children were choosing, and explained that the classification of the interest level (Lower Years, Middle Years and Upper Years) of AR quizzed titles meant I could make an instant judgement as to whether a book is appropriate or not.”

In their report, the inspectors also found the majority of students to be making good progress, with the proportion achieving five or more GCSE A* to C grades (including English and mathematics) having steadily increased since 2009 (see Chart 2). In 2012, 81% of all KS4 students were making expected progress in English. When considering the students’ National Curriculum levels in reading, approximately 25% started Year 7 above Level 4, but by the end of the 2011/12 year this had risen to some 65% - which can in part be attributed to the regular reading and comprehension quizzing practice provided by AR.

The Instant ‘up-to-the minute’ data provided by AR allows meaningful snapshots of students’ reading activity to be captured as well as showing trends over a chosen period of time, which is particularly important. “Monitoring student progress is at the core of planning and delivering learning programmes and AR is indispensable to this – it is almost like having an extra member of staff to take care of one of the most important areas of the subject.”

The introduction of AR to All Saints Catholic College in 2009 has had a positive effect on literacy standards and attitudes towards reading – not only in the English department and LRC, but throughout the school. “I can say with confidence that AR has been instrumental in promoting reading for pleasure in college and promoting the LRC to the heart of the school. Allowing children to see the average number of minutes they are completing each day is a massive incentive, as is number of words read.

I am constantly amazed at the wealth of useful features offered by AR – Home Connect, automatic target setting, the option to create your own quizzes and especially the ability to show progress. I find the Sample Quiz feature particularly useful with students who are lacking in confidence.

For the first time I am able to confidently direct children to books within their range of ability. Children are encouraged and motivated by the immediate feedback of the results of their quiz, and many thrive on the success, praise and rewards of the competition generated by AR. It is also useful to be able to give parents information about their child’s reading age and book level to enable them to support their child at home and to provide them with suitably challenging reading material. Children who have always struggled
are able to see measurable progress, in some cases for the first time. Without AR, we had no reliable way of checking if a child had read a book – with AR the proof is in the quiz results, and the diagnostic codes take it further by enabling colleagues to understand why a child is not making progress. Because the programme is tailored to students’ individual needs, the burden of differentiation is removed from the teacher. Students are provided with instant feedback, which is something that cannot be guaranteed after every completed piece of work in other subjects. The level of personalisation offered by AR also takes the work out of planning and delivering intervention.”

“The teacher no longer needs to rely on the word of the student to find out if reading homework has been completed – quiz results speak for themselves!”

Inform instruction and engage students

The data generated by Accelerated Reader covers reading comprehension, vocabulary development, literacy skills development, and more.

AR provides teachers with immediate information, helping them monitor the reading level and comprehension skills of each student and inform further instruction or intervention. Students and parents get instant feedback to help motivate success with the use of TOPS reports and Renaissance Home Connect™, which allows parents to view their children’s progress from home.
Bridge assessment and instruction with STAR Reading

Reading ages and levels are determined by periodic assessments with STAR Reading, which comes bundled with Accelerated Reader.

A student’s optimal reading level is determined through the STAR Reading assessment. STAR Reading is a computer-adaptive assessment of reading comprehension and skills for independent readers, giving each student a reading level and a range of book levels within which the student will achieve maximum success with their reading. This is the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), the personalised starting place for reading practice with AR.

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“I believe that Accelerated Reader has had a hugely positive impact on the boys’ academic performance.”

Wennington Hall School
Lancaster

Set in 17 acres of attractive parkland in the Lune Valley near Lancaster, Wennington Hall School is a Grade II listed Building. It caters, on a residential or day basis, for the needs of 75 boys of secondary age who have difficulties associated with their academic, social, emotional and/or behavioural development, which - at the time of referral - make normal secondary provision unsuitable for them.

To meet the challenges faced by teaching to students that are often up to four years below their chronological learning age, the school has been using Accelerated Reader (AR) for almost 10 years - as Learning Support Manager Elaine Prendergast explains.

“We are fortunate at Wennington Hall in that we have a very generous student-teacher ratio. Class sizes vary from four to eight students and each is led by a qualified teacher experienced in working with Special Educational Needs students. Most also have a Teaching Assistant - staff who run a One-to-One programme in which students are given extra help with literacy and numeracy.

One of the biggest challenges we face stems not only from the emotional problems suffered by many of our students, but also from the fact that some have missed so much school over the years they are functioning significantly below their chronological learning age and need to be taken back to basics. We decided that the best way to meet this challenge was to extend our already full reading programme and thus open up a broader learning platform which - hopefully - would also improve behaviour.

In 2003 we took the decision to introduce Accelerated Reader as, ultimately, it allows the students to engage and progress in all areas of the curriculum. I oversaw and still manage the whole process, supervising our team of 12 Teaching Assistants - two of whom work with the implementation of AR on a full-time basis - who devote up to 25 hours a week to AR in the school’s Reading Club.

As I also have responsibility for the Library, one of my first projects when we first introduced AR was to add an exclusive AR library to the two traditional libraries that already existed. Over the years our library circulation has increased considerably and the boys have become very active readers. STAR Reading™ tests are completed regularly and consistently show improvements in the boys’ reading ability, which both they and we feel is fantastic. They love quizzing and can see the progress they are making from the instant results and other report data. The boys particularly
enjoy seeing how many words and books they’ve read and the number of points they have earned towards their individual targets. AR makes student centred, personalised learning very easy, which is exactly what we were looking for at Wennington Hall. As well as using AR in class, many boys spend their break times - in total three hours a day - with their heads buried in books, combing the library shelves or taking quizzes.

Vocabulary, spelling and comprehension have notably improved - as has the confidence that comes from encouraging the boys to read aloud in class and take part in open discussion. This has had the knock-on effect of improving behaviour and self-belief.

Overall, I believe that AR has had a hugely positive impact on the boys’ academic performance - particularly in terms of both literacy and numeracy - which has also helped them in other areas of the curriculum.”

Learn more about Accelerated Reader

To request more information about Accelerated Reader, book an online demonstration, or to arrange a quote, please contact us:

020 7184 4040
info@renlearn.co.uk
renlearn.co.uk/demo
An independent study by the National Literacy Trust found, for the second consecutive year, that students using AR enjoy reading more, are more likely to have a favourite book, and are more likely to read outside class. They are also more likely to agree that the more they read, the better they become at it.

Read the full report at renlearn.co.uk/nlt

The importance of reading for pleasure

Students find Accelerated Reader (AR) reading practice quizzes motivational as well as fun, responding to the regular feedback provided by the programme.

Success spurs enthusiasm, motivating students to read in class, at break times and in their own time at home. Students using AR recognise the effectiveness of regular reading practice because they see their own progress towards personalised targets and seek to accelerate their success.

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Schools in the North West are seeing fantastic results with their students’ reading ages and increased enjoyment of reading through the use of Accelerated Reader.

“Accelerated Reader makes student-centred, personalised learning very easy”

Elaine Prendergast, Learning Support Manager, Wennington Hall School

Learn more at:
020 7184 4040
renlearn.co.uk/scotland
What Kids Are Reading is an independent study written by Professor Keith Topping, University of Dundee, and published by Renaissance Learning.

The 2014 report analyses the reading habits of 426,067 children in 2,016 schools reading 6,544,973 books totalling 77,699,033,289 words.

Books kids are reading most often
Tables of top 20 books read by boys and girls in each year group

Popularity of authors and favourite books
Analysis of popularity of authors and tables of most popular books by year group

Books for struggling readers and high-achievers
Details of the books struggling and highly-achieving children are reading

Regional variations
How book-reading habits vary by region

Download the full report and browse additional features:
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