"Students' reading ages increased by eight months over a three-month period."

Clacton Coastal Academy

Clacton-on-Sea, Essex

Clacton Coastal Academy is a large school for 11-18-year olds in Clacton-on-Sea, Essex.

Joanne Ballard, the school's Reading and Literacy Co-ordinator, has been the Accelerated Reader™ (AR™) project manager for three years.

Data review | Library use

Motivation | Progress monitoring

Reading culture

The vast majority of our students come from an under-privileged background; approximately 50% receive Pupil Premium funding. Money at home is usually spent on the necessities of life rather than books. Accelerated Reader has opened a whole new world for these students who had very little access to reading materials. Students often join the school with poor levels of attainment in reading. This academic year, 61% of the students joining us for Year 7 had a reading age below benchmark; 44% of Year 8 are below benchmark.

We implemented AR to encourage students to read, to gain a love of reading and to improve students' reading ability. In turn we expected it would improve literacy across the school. At first it was a struggle to get students to read: they just didn't understand the importance of it. Now they see it as part of the curriculum. They understand the importance of reading and as time goes on more and more students are gaining a love of reading.

Since joining the Renaissance School Partnership (RSP) programme, we have seen an improvement in every metric we measure using AR and STAR Reading™. The number of quizzes taken has increased by 230% this year compared to last. Students read over 48 million words over the course of the year, up from 7.5 million previously - a 540% increase.
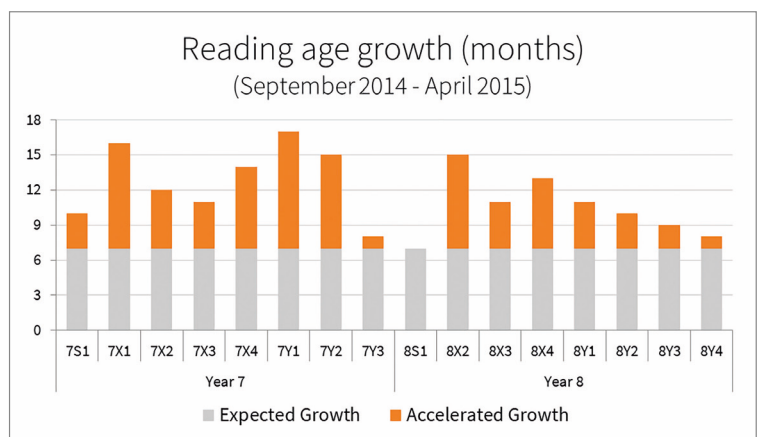
While these figures demonstrate that students have become more engaged with reading, other measures show the impact this increase in reading has had on attainment. Students' reading ages increased by eight months over a three-month period at the end of the programme. This improvement has led to a dramatic reduction in the percentage of students flagged as at risk of not making expected progress, down from 61.4% to 20.8%. Our Screening Reports show this change, too: the number of students at or above benchmark has improved by 14% over the year, and the number of those in need of intervention has declined from 24% to 6%.

Update: one year later

The students' reading ages and their eagerness to read is rapidly improving each year. Students are comparing their targets with each other and striving to reach and achieve Model and Master Class status.

Our Programme Manager has helped to improve the overall performance of AR in our school by giving us some fantastic new ideas to help motivate reluctant readers. For example, we now run a competition where students who read and achieve 100% on "Charlie and the Chocolate factory" are entered into a draw to win a ticket to see the theatre show.

We also now allow our students to research texts on their favourite hobby, such as a footballer or rugby player, and write their own quiz for other students to use. This was a great way to inspire the students, especially the boys.

Reading age growth (months)
(September 2014 - April 2015)

Legend: Expected Growth (grey), Accelerated Growth (orange)

Categories: 7S1, 7X1, 7X2, 7X3, 7X4, 7Y1, 7Y2, 7Y3 (Year 7); 8S1, 8X2, 8X3, 8X4, 8Y1, 8Y2, 8Y3, 8Y4 (Year 8)

For the first two terms of the 2014/15 academic year, students were expected to make 7 months' progress. Every class achieved or exceeded this, with several classes experiencing average growth of over twice the level expected.

RENAISSANCE SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP™

Accelerated™ Reader

STAR™ Reading

The support we have received from our RSP Programme Manager has been fantastic. I have put many of her ideas into practice with excellent results. She has given us brilliant ideas and tips for motivating students, and helpful advice on reports. For example, she suggested we write teacher-made quizzes. This has been invaluable as during exam time, when we have limited access to the LRC, I have been able to write quizzes on shorter pieces of text which students have been able to read and quiz on in a classroom.

We have seen a big impact on the way the LRC is being used. Timetabled AR lessons in the LRC have given students more time to choose books and explore different authors. The LRC is also now used for Reading Intervention before school to help our low ability readers. Students are not only using the library during and after school to quiz on their AR books but also to just chill out with some of the non-fiction books. There is a noticeable rise in students taking out books to read for pleasure, and many students recommend books they have read at home. Last year a termly "book swap" was introduced, whereby students brought a book from home and swapped it for another from a select pile. This is always well received. We have also found that more students are requesting to be student librarians.

Colleagues are supportive of AR because they understand the need to improve our students' reading ability. Motivation has increased because of the sense of achievement students gain when they score 90% or 100% on a quiz. Under RSP, the average per cent correct now exceeds the minimum recommended level at 88.1%. They also enjoy receiving motivational rewards such as trophies and football training sessions. With increased reading, reading ages are improving, helping students to access all areas of the curriculum.
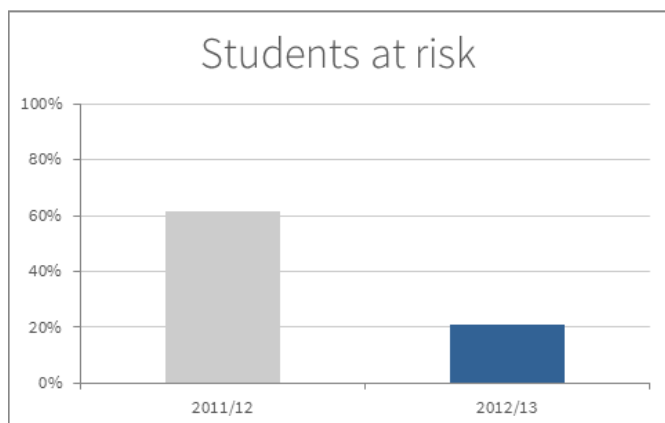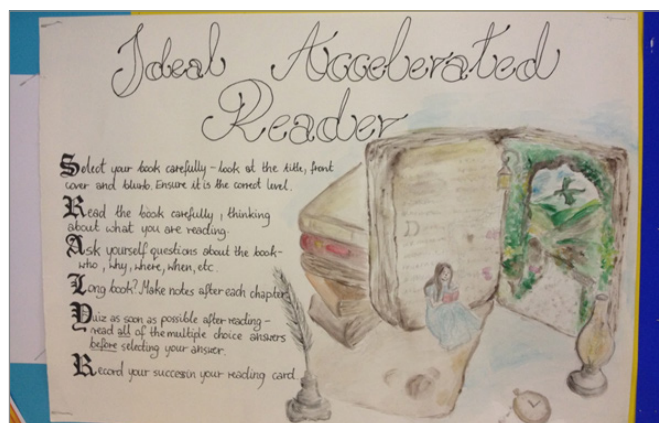
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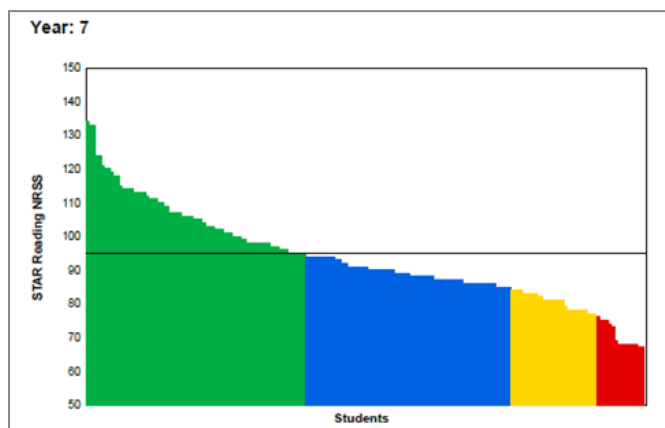
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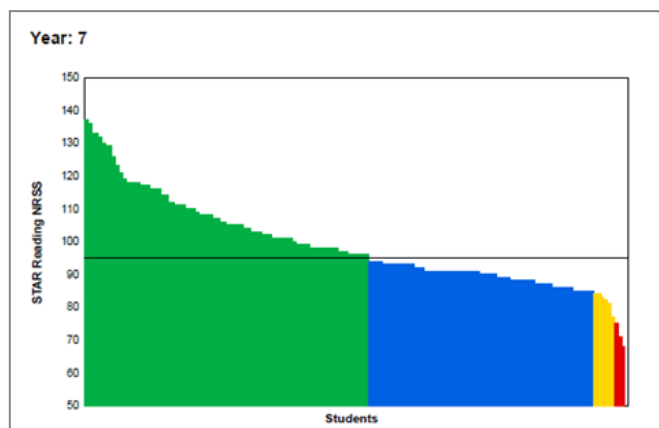
Graphs showing the increase in students at or above benchmark, and the decrease in students requiring intervention since the introduction of RSP.

The number of students at risk reduced by 40% under RSP.

A display showing recommendations for reading with AR.

Renaissance Learning opens the Renaissance School Partnership (RSP) programme to applications each academic year, carefully selecting a small number of schools to work with over the course of the year. Amongst other benefits, RSP schools have a dedicated Programme Manager who works directly with the school's leadership and AR teams, and an extensive training programme tailored specifically to the school's needs, including unlimited access to remote training. Read more at: **renlearn.co.uk/rsp**

Read more stories of success at: renlearn.co.uk/success