

RENAISSANCE®

I AM PART OF THEIR STORY

Wolsingham School,
Wolsingham, County Durham

Annette Lee, School Librarian at Wolsingham, shares the school's story of using Renaissance Star Assessments and Renaissance Accelerated Reader.



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Part of the story: 'Master School' using Renaissance Star Assessments to precisely establish reading progress

At Wolsingham, we have been using Star Assessments and Renaissance Accelerated Reader since 2007, implementing them with years 7, 8 and 9. Here, it's very much about encouraging our students to be part of a reading school: 4 times per week we have a 20 minute reading session during registration, and the students are expected to do 20 minutes of home reading every night as well. For us, the expectation is that all students will succeed and improve their reading age, and we try to give out as many awards for reading as we possibly can. Every term we have celebration assemblies, and awards are given to word millionaires and students who have made better than expected progress. We've recently moved into a new building, and the library is literally at the centre of the school: as soon as you walk in the library is there, and that identifies it as something the school believes in. The students do use the library as the hub of the school, and see it every day.

One of our reading targets with is that, by the end of Year 9, all students' reading age is at least equal to their chronological age. We carry out a Star test at least 3 times per year, including one in September, to determine student reading age. We place a lot of confidence in the data from

Accelerated Reader and Star have really helped us understand student reading habits

Assessment

Data Review

Progress Monitoring

Intervention

Star. Over the years we've continuously seen that the results do correlate with our teacher assessments, and that students leaving Year 9 with high reading ages consistently go on to perform well in their GCSEs. We've come to recognise the impact of reading age on a student's ability to access the curriculum, and when students are moving into Key Stage 4 with high reading ages we are confident that they will be able to access the reading required for their GCSEs, and will succeed.

In 2015, we were inspected by OFSTED, and it was great because we had all the information there and immediately available, and we could prove the impact of reading on students. In their report, they made some positive observations about our use of data:

'The school's own assessment of its performance is based on secure, measurable evidence. This information is used carefully to plan for further improvement'

'Leaders use data effectively to regularly analyse the performance of specific groups of students in the school. At regular meetings senior and middle leaders discuss the performance of students. This helps leaders and staff to identify promptly those students who need particular support. This sequence of events is followed up by robust evaluation of the impact on achievement.' 'Attainment and progress are improving and recent results, especially at GCSE, are almost all above the national average'

All of the students' reading ages are loaded into SIMS, and every member of staff has access to that information, and they can then use that to inform the planning and differentiation of their lessons. We also make use of the reading dashboard, which provides a large amount of data, including Student Growth Percentiles (SGP), which compare a student's reading progress, with other students within the class, school and country. When the SGP is not growing as fast as we would like, or if we feel students need some additional support for any reason, we run a 6 week intervention, where we'll Star test them at the beginning of the 6 weeks, once in the middle, and once at the end, to see what progress has been made. Year on year, we have around 30 students who join us with a reading age below 10, so those students are of course a focus for that intervention as well. We have one young man in Year 9 at the moment: when he came to us, he had a reading age of 6 years and 1 month. He's just completed a Star Test, which he wanted to do completely by himself, unaided, and he has emerged with a reading age of 12 years and 6 months, after using Accelerated Reader and Star for two and a half years. The difference that the ability to read has made to his life is evident in his everyday attitude to learning here at school; he's excited by finding new words and expanding his vocabulary, which is fantastic.

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We've encouraged our primary feeder schools to take on Accelerated Reader and Star as well, to try and improve reading age on entry, and they have done so. This way, parents already know about Accelerated Reader, so it's nothing new when they start here, and we are able to go out and support those schools when needed, and share best practice with them. We also run transition events when taking on new Year 7s, and we have very few issues getting those students on board with reading. We're quite happy sharing that practice, and we have had visits from other schools in the area because it works, and they want to see that. Just recently, we qualified as a 'Master School', based on Renaissance's recommended best practice.

Star and Accelerated Reader provide a huge amount of data, and so we want to get the most out of it. We hold regular meetings, and I attend each year group meeting and identify which students are doing well, and any students who may require some additional support. We also share a lot of the data with parents: we will show them their child's SGP, their projected reading age, and also the 'next steps' for their child, according to the learning progressions within Star. If, for instance, we have a student who is above the benchmark with their comprehension, but aren't developing complexity and are sticking with simple books, we can use the data from Accelerated Reader & Star to inform the parents. They really enjoy knowing that depth of information, and over time they've come to expect it from us. We also share a lot of the data with the students, and it's really nice to be able to show those successful students exactly how their reading has progressed since they joined.

Accelerated Reader and Star have really helped us understand student reading habits. For instance, if a student hasn't made as much growth in their reading age as we expected, we can look at their student record within the Accelerated Reader data, and see that perhaps the last 8 books they have read have been from the same author, and so they aren't being exposed to a broad range of vocabulary. We can find out how much they are reading, what they've read in the past week, what success they've had, and then we can reward and praise them for it. Staff genuinely become familiar with their reading preferences and habits, and can then guide them and introduce them to new authors, and then reading becomes a part of daily life.

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