

# I AM PART OF THEIR STORY

Perryfields High School Maths  
and Computing College,  
West Midlands

Perryfields is a co-educational  
community secondary comprehensive  
11-19 school with over 1,100 students.

In October, 2011 Tracey Hinkinson,  
Head Librarian at the school,  
introduced Accelerated Reader to  
the new Year 7 intake of approximately  
250 students and a low ability group in  
Year 8. Here she explains the dramatic  
impact the software has had on  
standards of, and attitudes towards,  
reading at the school.



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Library use

Motivation

Progress monitoring

Reading for pleasure

## “Accelerated Reader has transformed reading at Perryfields High School”

AR has transformed reading at Perryfields High School. It has really had a positive impact on our students' attitudes towards reading. Those that thought reading was for 'nerds' or 'swots' are now the ones talking to their friends about the great book they are reading at the moment. These students are then asking for books to be reserved so that they can start reading them once their friends have finished with them.

I would recommend AR for students of all levels of reading ability as it has something to offer everyone. The students here have discovered the pleasure you can get from a book, with some finding that books can affect you in ways they never thought possible. For instance, one 12-year-old male student told me that the book he had just quizzed on had brought him to tears. He wasn't embarrassed in telling me and I think he was quite shocked it had happened. My library circulation has increased dramatically since using AR, as students now begin to see a purpose in reading and being able to read well. Introducing the software has given the Learning Resource Centre a new dimension and a real purpose in school – bringing it back to the forefront of students' minds.

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AR has also worked wonders with students who have very low reading ages. Now students have their ZPD to guide them to the correct level of books, the sheer enjoyment they get from actually reading a book and then proceeding to pass the quiz is wonderful to see. I recall one student on passing his first quiz comment: "I can't believe it, I can't believe it, I never pass anything!" It literally brought a lump to my throat and I was lost for words. This particular student had a reading age of six years one month, yet after using AR for less than five months it had improved to seven years six months. Students who have a very low reading age now want to read to you, not only in Accelerated Reader lessons but also at break or lunchtime. These students would have panicked at the thought of reading aloud before the introduction of AR. Confidence is soaring and smiles now appear on the faces of our students.

We regularly monitor reading ages and levels using STAR Reading assessment and the students – and I – were amazed at their level of growth following the most recent testing. These results will spur them on to achieve even more next term – particularly as the student that has shown the greatest increase in reading age by the end of the year is rewarded with an Amazon Kindle.

Incentives are key to a lot of the success we have experienced with AR – those students who meet their targets are presented with certificates by the Headteacher in Assembly. Their names are displayed around the school. Our most able readers really enjoy the thrill of achieving 100% on their quizzes and are completely overwhelmed by the thought of becoming Word Millionaires. Millionaires have a special board covered in gold paper with their names displayed on it in glitter – and I am pleased to say that I am regularly adding names to it. In just five months we have created six Millionaires, with one student actually reading over four million words alone. In total over the last five months our students have read a combined total of more than 38,500,000 words, which is staggering!

I believe that Accelerated Reader will continue to improve students' reading year on year. For those coming into school with a low reading age or lack of interest in reading it gives them a second chance to improve and develop. Given the right encouragement they will become confident, proficient readers, which will help improve their exam results at Year 11 and in turn open many doors that would otherwise remain closed if they could not read.



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