

“I would recommend RSP as a great way to develop Accelerated Reader and a positive reading culture.”

New Rickstones Academy

Witham, Essex

New Rickstones Academy is a large school for years 7-13 near Witham, Essex. Staff at New Rickstones joined the Renaissance School Partnership (RSP) to increase the impact of their Accelerated Reader™ (AR™) implementation.

Kristina Fleuty, who is the LRC Manager and part of the core team for AR, explains the impact RSP has had at New Rickstones.

Data review

Intervention

Library use

Motivation

Professional development

Reading culture

Staff engagement

Joining the Renaissance School Partnership has allowed us to make vast improvements in how we deliver Accelerated Reader, which is reflected in the improvements in our data over the past year. We felt that working with Renaissance Learning™ through a partnership would give us the opportunity to receive support focused specifically on the areas we wanted help with. Indeed, being able to work one-on-one with a Programme Manager has really enabled us make progress in exactly the things we needed to, such as intervention strategies and reward strategies.

We have taken on board a lot of advice from Renaissance Learning, in particular about how to monitor closely the progress of each student. Our Programme Manager helped us select the best data to use for what we wanted to focus on for our improvement. RSP helped us learn how to use data effectively when developing things such as our strategies for intervention and identifying students who would benefit from each form of support. Our RSP Programme Manager has given us many tips about how to understand and use the data to best effect.

Key Stage 3 tutors and English teachers have shown increased enthusiasm for AR and now have a much more clearly defined role in terms of what they do to further each student’s success with AR. We feed specific data back to tutors and teachers weekly so they can help monitor progress. We feel there is an organised system in place with specific guidelines on how everyone should be using AR.

Working with Renaissance Learning helped me identify a need to expand the library’s selection of books in the lower book levels, in order to cater effectively for students who need extra reading support. Training days and on-site visits provided an opportunity to get advice about popular titles and hear from librarians and teachers from other schools.

RSP has also helped with the development of library lessons and how to include AR as an important feature of these lessons. RSP has really helped me have confidence that the library has an important part to play in the success of AR.

Since AR has been introduced the library really has become the ‘hub’ of reading at the academy. Students are actively encouraged by tutors and teachers to visit the library and the library itself hosts lots of activities and events to encourage a love of reading. The library is particularly popular with students who find reading challenging but who love changing their books frequently and taking quizzes. As a result the circulation of books is particularly high within the book levels 2-3.5 and all students feel more comfortable around books. The circulation of books is much higher amongst years 7-9, which are the year groups participating in AR, than in the rest of the school.

Data from AR demonstrates that a change has taken place in the reading culture at New Rickstones. Student participation in AR has increased by 10% across the duration of the programme. As well as taking more quizzes,



Thermometer showing how many quizzes over 85% each year group has passed so far this year.

students are passing them in far greater numbers. We have seen a 61% increase in the number of quizzes passed from before we joined RSP to our final term with the programme.

RSP has given me some great ideas about how to develop the library culture and really emphasise the ‘fun’ of reading. It is really helpful how willing people are to share their ideas with schools that are still developing AR.

We have a range of extra-curricular activities run by the library with a view to involving as many students as possible in AR and the library as a whole. There are lots of activities students can take part in at break and lunchtime. RSP also gave us the idea of showing book trailers at break time, which are proving popular! Film Club runs after school, showing films based on books to give students new ideas about what they might like to read. We are also developing a book panel group, which will be part book club and part a chance for students to help decide what books they would like to see in the library in the future.

Students are increasingly involved in the library. Some have become Library Assistants, helping to run the circulation desk and learning how to reshelve AR books according to Book Levels (BL). They also participate in and help organise a number of creative activities in the library.

Michael, in Year 7, is a really keen reader and maintains an excellent AR record. “I really like reading and taking quizzes. Having a Zone of

Proximal Development (ZPD) encourages me to challenge myself to read the hardest book I can, but I still know I will be able to quiz successfully and win prizes! I recently read *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, which has a high BL. I like to read books at the top of my ZPD.”

Matthew, in Year 8, has made great progress with his reading. “I liked seeing my name at the top of the AR display, proving I had passed more quizzes than lots of other people in my year! Being rewarded for reading is fun and makes me want to read more.”

AR and RSP have definitely helped to develop a reading culture in the school. Initiatives such as Drop Everything And Read (DEAR) Time help to make reading a key part of school culture every day. I often get book requests from students; some are always challenging me to expand the AR collection as they get through the books we have so fast! I enjoy students challenging me to come up with new books for them to enjoy.

We have been lucky enough to work with fantastic and helpful staff at Renaissance Learning. In particular our RSP Programme Manager has given us brilliant advice, passed on lots of resources and always comes to meetings with an enthusiasm for books and reading that you cannot help but be inspired by. I would recommend RSP as a great way to get personalised help for your school about how to develop AR and a positive reading culture in general.



Displays and AR awards board feature heavily in the library to reinforce the school's wider culture of reading.

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

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