

RENAISSANCE® ASSESSMENT SUCCESS IN KENT

Wilmington Academy Dartford, Kent

Wilmington Academy is a mixed, non-selective secondary academy and part of the Leigh Academies Trust, with a much higher ratio of boys to girls (65% vs. 35%). Nadia Ward (Assistant Principal & Director of Literacy) and Debbie Kennedy (Academy Librarian) share their story on how they raised literacy levels in the school.



Find out more
renlearn.co.uk/success-story

Reading Culture

Secondary-Ready

GCSE

Reading Age

Student Progress

How we raised literacy levels in our Year 7 and 8 students

The rise in reading ages

In the early years, we saw primary school students come to us with really low reading ages so they were not really what we'd call "secondary-ready". Only about 35-45% of our students in Year 7 actually had a reading age at or above their chronological age. We quickly realised that we needed to address this issue. Debbie had already used Accelerated Reader and Star Reading in her previous school and upon seeing the low literacy levels, she zealously proposed to get the programme implemented at Wilmington Academy. Accelerated Reader and Star Reading have now been used in our school since 2010 and we have seen an astonishing rise in reading ages since then.

The library is now the place to be!

We went from just over 1000 book loans from the library in its first year to over 12,000 loans per year! I can definitely say that the library is now the place to be! The children rush in to get a book and eagerly grab the next once they're done. Accelerated Reader has definitely helped our children develop a love and culture of reading. What's more, it has also changed the way we see literacy as a school. We are now able to see how often each student reads and what they like to read, so we can help cultivate good reading habits.

“Across the years, we have seen an increase of no less than 67% of each cohort, starting their GCSE years at their chronological reading age. Some cohorts are as high as 81%.

- Nadia Ward, Assistant Principal & Director of Literacy

The impact of Star on the students

With our Year 7 and 8 students, we are able to track their reading progress three times a year, at the end of each term (December, April and July) using the Star Programme. The ZPD scores provided by Star allow us to talk to our students in terms of levels of progress rather than reading ages. This way, the students can see how much progress they've made and feel motivated to make even more. All staff are also made aware of reading ages to support learning in lessons, so they can differentiate lesson plans according to the ability of the student and help challenge their reading abilities.

The impact of Star on the staff

From a staff point of view, Star is a much easier way of tracking the students. It helps us to quickly identify the lowest readers or those needing additional support, so we can get that support in place early. For example, we work closely with our SEN department and what we do is track those students to see the impact the programme is having on them, together with the interventions.

Another advantage of using Star is that we can manage groups better. We can track our PPG, FSM, or EAL students as a group. We can even do a lot of comparisons between boys and girls, or even college by college! It's a lot easier to break these down with Star.



We as an academy have used a variety of literacy interventions across the years and Accelerated Reader and Star are by far the most effective.

- Debbie Kennedy, Librarian

Why we recommend the Accelerated Reader and Star Reading programme

The programme allows us to give our students autonomy in choosing their reading material and recording their progress. It creates a positive and productive dialogue between students and staff about their reading ability and practices. We have seen a huge appetite for reading and a soar in reading ages since we implemented the programme, so we'd definitely recommend it.

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