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Whole school reading strategy places Unity in top 7% for Contextual Value Added

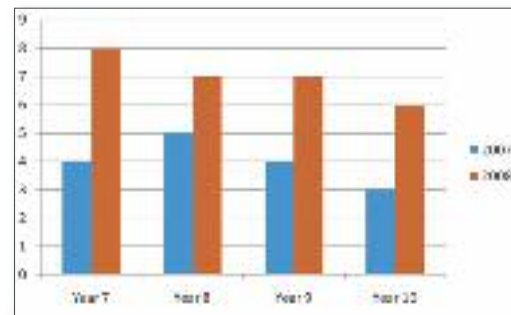


Over the last three years Unity City Academy (UCA) has ranked amongst the top 5% of "Most Improved Schools and Academies" in the UK. In 2009 it was the most improved school in Middlesbrough, with Contextual Value Added scores that placed it in the top 7% of schools nationally. Given the poor social context in which the Academy operates, this is a significant achievement.

In 2007, literacy levels at UCA were very low. Initial STAR Reading assessment revealed that, on average, 80% of the pupils were at least one year below their chronological reading age. Speaking, listening and writing skills were also extremely poor. Consequently, Accelerated Reader Advantage (ARA) was introduced as part of a whole school strategy and from 2007-2009, the average reading ages increased in Years 7, 8, 9 and 10 (see Graph), whilst KS4 attainment levels have also consistently improved since 2007.

When ARA was first introduced, UCA had no library and boxes of reading books were circulated between the classes. By the time a staffed library

was opened in November 2009, reading had become a whole school responsibility, whilst the consistent employment of AR Best Practices; such as designated time to read, regular STAR testing and data analysis has proved instrumental to raising literacy standards - as AR Project Manager Anthony Hulbert explains: "Every week pupils complete 100 minutes reading practice, whilst the Diagnostic Reports are used fortnightly by tutors to identify possible issues and praise and reward the pupils. Recognition of their achievements is vital, and they receive Accelerated



Graph: Whole School Average Reading Age Growth in Months

Recent STAR testing shows that Year 9 pupils using ARA improved their reading age by an average of one year three months between January and June 2010. Since the beginning of the 2010/11 academic year, UCA pupils have successfully quizzed over 8,133 books and read almost 52,000,000 words.

Last year, pupils at the Academy read over 10,000 Accelerated Reader books. Compared to where the pupils were prior to the introduction of STAR Reading and Accelerated Reader, this is a significant achievement. Plasma screens around the campus are used to praise pupils and staff for successful Accelerated Reader quizzing, and large displays on the ground floor illustrate the success of the school against previous years - all of which reinforce the reading ethos adopted by Unity City Academy since the adoption of Accelerated Reader.



Anthony Hulbert is Accelerated Reader Project Manager at Unity City Academy and has responsibility for ensuring that best literacy practices are administered across the school.

To read more about the success Unity City Academy has achieved with Accelerated Reader Advantage, please visit www.renlearn.co.uk/casestudies.

Author's Corner

Andy Briggs

is a screenwriter and the author responsible for the HERO.COM and VILLAIN.NET series for Oxford University Press.



He has written for movies such as JUDGE DREDD, FREDDY VS JASON and FOREVERMAN and is currently involved in a major animated show for DISNEY XD; JOSHUA WEBB: TREADSTONE 2.0 - the official Robert Ludlum spin-off from *The Bourne* series and a gritty new sci-fi adventure show for Carnival Films.

TARZAN - THE LEGACY OF GREYSTOKE is published by Faber and will be available from 2nd June. Andy Briggs is now taking bookings for events from mid-May onwards. He can be contacted directly on: andybriggs@inbox.com

Relaunching the Past

Everybody asks: "how can I get children to read more?" It's a question that weighs in every writer's mind and is inextricably linked to: "what should I write?" After all, we writers want to be read. I'm talking primarily about reluctant readers, and for them, sadly, originality alone is not a driving force to pick up a book.

Today's audiences are steered more towards brands. As a screenwriter, I am often in meetings around Hollywood, staring dumbly at the development executive when they ask me to come up with a story idea for Slinky - as in the metal coil toy that trundles down the stairs. On the surface this idea seems shocking, but should it? Even in the dark days when I was in school, branded clothes were the mark of being cool. Publishers have recently jumped on the bandwagon by copying literary successes with imitations, but they have also taken an interesting direction, straight from the pages of Hollywood: the remake and the prequel.

Charlie Higson's Young Bond series demonstrated how books could hook readers with existing brands and then pull them into exciting and original stories. Andrew Lane's brilliant Young Sherlock series followed suit and dragged reluctant readers kicking and screaming into the world of books. The reason reluctant readers seized these titles was

simple: they knew the brand. Of course, there was the added benefit that eager readers would also lap up these offerings.

The term brand is a little ugly, so let me share with you my train of thought. Everybody knows James Bond. He's an established character in both the literary and film worlds. The important aspect is that a reluctant reader will have already heard of Bond and so have their parents (some parents are reluctant to read too, so this brand awareness provides an easy connection to the book). Armed with that little extra knowledge, Young Bond is suddenly a more attractive read than a title they are unaware of. Once a reluctant reader has bitten on something they feel comfortable with, it is more likely they will take a step into the unknown.

It was with this in mind that I embarked on tackling the granddaddy of all brands: Tarzan. In 2012 Tarzan will be 100 years old. His creator, Edgar Rice Burroughs was the first author to promote his character as a brand - licensing comics, merchandise, film and TV shows. It all help make Tarzan a recognized brand thereby encouraging people to read the books. A nice circular piece of reasoning.

But like all classics, the younger generation is no longer reading them. How many teens have previously picked up an Ian Fleming Bond book or read Arthur Conan Doyle?

Read the rest of this article online at: www.renlearn.co.uk/renaissancenews

Wolsingham named UK's first Master Secondary School!



Wolsingham School and Community College is the first UK Secondary to be awarded 'Master School' status by Renaissance Learning. This significant achievement will be marked at a special assembly at the school on Friday 11th March during which Director of Professional Services

James Bell, accompanied by Archie - the AR Reading Bug, will present staff and pupils with certificates and a special award commemorating the event.

Several pupils at the school will also be recognised as being "multi-millionaires" as they have each read in excess of 2 million words since the beginning of this academic year, with one pupil having read over 3 million alone. They will also receive special certificates acknowledging their incredible achievement.

"It is a fantastic honour and privilege to be awarding Wolsingham 'Master School' status. Their excellent implementation of Accelerated Reader and consistent application of Renaissance Best Practices ensured their success in achieving this unique honour and also led to them recording their best GCSE results ever in 2010", remarks James.

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More information about how Wolsingham School and Community College have consistently raised standards of literacy amongst all pupils since introducing Accelerated Reader Advantage can be found at: www.renlearn.co.uk/casestudies

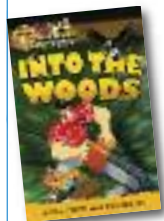
Special book offers for AR schools from Barrington Stoke!



Tribe

Vana, Finn, Talon, Kat, Bruin and Mo are six kids with a mission: to save the

planet from destruction by eco-criminals with their special, shape-shifting powers. In each book the friends must wrack their brains for a solution to a new problem, from a Super Storm sent to threaten London to a road building programme threatening an Indian Reservation in the US.



The books are by writer and educationalist Roger Hurn and Jane A. C. West, both of whom are very experienced in engaging reluctant and struggling readers. Jane A. C. West is the author of Barrington Stoke Solos titles, including "Snow Dogs" and "Cliff Edge." They have packed the books with action and humour and there's plenty of illustration by well-known artist Stik to support visualisation.

Tribe books are aimed at children aged 9+ with a reading age of 7.



To celebrate the launch of this new series, Barrington Stoke is offering AR customers a pack of one of each of 6 fantastic Tribe books (9781842999707) for only £28.75, a saving of over £7.00 on the full price. Please quote code **BS15** to ensure discounted price. (Offer ends 31/7/11)



Go!

Go! is a very popular series of short novels for the seriously struggling teen. With a reading age of 6, the series contains a wide variety of stories to suit all tastes. Every story is supported by high quality, age-appropriate illustrations to ensure success and raise self esteem.

Barrington Stoke is offering AR customers a specially discounted Go! Library Pack (9781842999660) containing a selection of 12 different books for only £64, a saving of over £7.00 on the full price.

To take advantage of these fantastic offers, please call **0131 225 4113**.



Book Awards Update:

As mentioned in the last edition of Renaissance News, Renaissance Learning is proud to be sponsoring the 2011 CILIP Carnegie & Kate Greenaway Children's Book Awards as well as the Northern Ireland Book Awards.

The winners are currently being selected from the entries received for the writing competitions set by former CILIP Carnegie Medal winners David Almond, for *Skellig*, and Theresa Breslin, for *Whispers in the Graveyard*. From Friday 1st April, visitors to www.readwriteexcite.co.uk will also be able to complete short AR quizzes on the shortlisted titles for the 2011 CILIP Awards, access other literacy resources and win fantastic prizes.



On Thursday 3rd March, schools from across Northern Ireland will be attending a special event supported by Renaissance Learning as part of the **Northern Ireland Book Awards**. Two of the eight shortlisted authors - Theresa Breslin, for *Prisoner of the Inquisition*, and Tim Collins, for *Diary of a Wimpy Vampire* - will be reading to pupils and sharing the secrets of their success. For more information, please visit www.nibookaward.org.uk.

Free Author Visit - winner announced!

Thank you to everyone who entered the draw to win a free visit from Barrington Stoke author Jane A. C. West.

The staff and pupils of Parret and Axe Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School in Dorset will soon be welcoming the author of various hi-lo titles from Barrington Stoke, including many from the Solos series, Jane A. C. West.



Jane A. C. West



New competition - enter now!

Visit www.freeauthorvisit.co.uk for the latest competition to win a visit from *Mokee Joe* author Peter J Murray to your school in April, or follow the link from the Renaissance Zone.



Peter J Murray

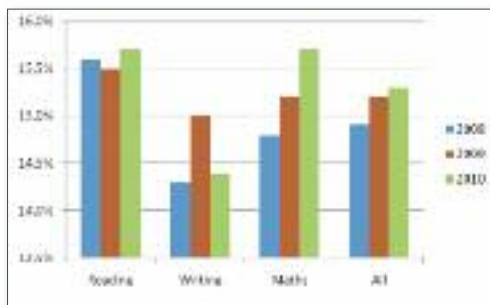


Two years' reading growth in just one year at Sir William Burrough Primary



Half the population of Sir William Burrough (SWB) community primary school in East London is eligible for Free School Meals and more than 80% speak English as an additional language. However, the hard work and commitment of staff and pupils under the leadership of Headteacher Avril Newman has transformed SWB into an award-winning school, which was listed as 'outstanding' in both the OFSTED 2008 Annual Report and 2009 OFSTED HMI Leadership Survey.

Since the introduction of Accelerated Reader Advantage (ARA), STAR Maths and MathsFacts in a Flash, the school has shown improvements in KS1 SATs results, as the overall scores over the last three years demonstrate (see Graph).



Graph: Sir William Burrough KS1 Results 3 Year Trend

These programs perfectly complement the school's learning ethos, as Deputy Headteacher and Project Manager Alex Bell observes: "We are committed to teacher-neutral, child-led assessment that puts the learner in charge of understanding their own development and provides the teacher and school leadership team with rich data and skill-by-skill analysis of progress. Renaissance Learning's software provides us with extremely clear indications of where intervention is needed." When the 2009 cohort finished KS2, the children's raw value-added achievement ranked in the top 3% of schools nationally.

STAR Reading assessment completed by one class in the first and second Autumn terms of the current academic year demonstrated a reading age improvement of three months, 30 scaled score points progress and 1-2 National Curriculum sub-levels. During 2009/10 Year 4 pupils improved their reading age by an average of one year and six months, with some across Years 4-6 achieving in excess of two years' growth. By the time pupils turn 11 their KS2 SATs results consistently compare favourably with national trends for both English and Maths as almost 90% of pupils reached Level 4 or higher in English and Maths in 2010, which is an improvement on the national figure by 9% in English and 10% in Maths.

To learn more about Sir William Burrough's success, please visit www.relearn.co.uk/casestudies.

Gaming vs. Learning? What seems to be the problem?

Throughout my work as a consultant I have seen countless schools and classrooms using 'good old traditional' methods of teaching numeracy and mathematics in general. Pen, paper and long division methods of calculation have remained unchanged throughout the centuries, and teachers often mention that even ancient civilisations used the same method of calculation. There is only one problem; they did not have the technology we have today to practise it.

For some time I have been trying to understand why some of my friends are spending so much time on their computers playing a particular game that has no connection with reality. It's certainly not making them any money (you actually have to pay a subscription), and it takes up so much of their time!

Being a mathematics teacher and consultant, I am always interested in finding new ways in which I can engage my students and audience in such a way that they almost forget that they are actually learning mathematics. I therefore decided to put my scepticism of this computer game aside, and take some time to understand what makes it so engaging for the people playing it.



The game in question is 'World of Warcraft', currently the largest online gaming platform, which - as you may have seen in a recent advertising campaign - has just undergone its latest and largest upgrade ever.

To begin with, I spent a few hours sitting next to a 'gamer' - asking them a multitude of questions in order to get some idea of what the game involved.

Essentially, the gamers play as characters in an entirely fictional and fantastical world, which is not related to the real world we are living in, and complete tasks - known as 'quests' - that are not related to anything we do in everyday life. When these 'quests' are completed, the gamer progresses to the next level.

It was at this point that I made some particular observations that I think are important.



Serge Tasic

Serge has worked within the UK Education sector for over 10 years both as a teacher, manager and Local Authority Mathematics Adviser in the secondary phase.

Read the rest of Serge's article at www.relearn.co.uk/renaissancenews

Renaissance Learning Incentives

For a limited time, we are offering two special 'incentive bags' featuring a variety of different items that are perfect for rewarding pupils that have met or exceeded their targets.



Goodie Bag 1 includes:

- 1 x AR ribbon award (3 per pack)
- 2 x AR feed bookmark (25 per pack)
- 2 x Pencil bookmark (25 per pack)
- 2 x Diver bookmark (25 per pack)
- 10 x AR plain white eraser
- 10 x AR Bugs with poly soft ribbon
- 10 x AM Bugs with poly soft ribbon
- 10 x AR star eraser



Goodie Bag 2 includes:

- 10 x AR star button
- 10 x AR power reader folder
- 10 x Flexi flyer
- 10 x Pencil bag
- 10 x Bubble blower
- 10 x AR Bugs with poly soft ribbon
- 10 x AM Bugs with poly soft ribbon

Total cost: £30.00 (ex. VAT)



To order a goodie bag, please visit:
www.renlearn.co.uk/schools

NEO 2 passes the test for JCQ

NEO 2 is a versatile writing tool that significantly reduces pressure on a school's ICT Suite by allowing pupils to write individually or collaboratively, transfer text, anonymously vote and complete AR quizzes and MathsFacts practice from the comfort of their own desks.

However, it can also now be used to solve keyboard issues in examination. Many schools find providing keyboard entry for

pupils in examinations a recurring and persistent problem - particularly in terms of ensuring the word processor adheres to all the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) criteria, such as disabling Internet access and spell checking functionality. NEO 2 can be quickly and easily adapted to ensure it fulfils all JCQ requirements for use in exams, providing a low cost, effective and easy solution to the problem. You can learn more about using NEO 2 in examinations at www.renlearn.co.uk/assessment.



New look for renlearn.co.uk

As you may have already seen, www.renlearn.co.uk has been completely updated to become friendlier, more useful, easier to navigate - and features a new online store. In particular, we have developed the Renaissance Zone, where you will find everything you need to know about books and quizzes, events, accreditation, professional development, and much more besides.

For example, in response to feedback from teachers and librarians, we have introduced downloadable resources that you can print at any time - including bookmarks, 100% boards and certificates, which you can edit. To access the wealth of resources and information available to you, please visit www.renlearn.co.uk/renaissance-zone.



Comics - Grab the interest of your reluctant or struggling readers!

One fifth of teenagers in England leave school functionally illiterate, a recent study has shown (*Guardian*, 7th May 2010). This is causing widespread concern among teachers, employers and the government especially in light of research which undeniably links a person's literacy levels to their success and happiness in life (*National Literacy Trust*, 30th March 2010).

Reading for pleasure has been revealed as the most important indicator of the future success of a child. It is often boys who are the most at risk of developing reading apathy when faced with strong media temptations such as the TV or games console.

Speaking at the London Book Fair 2010, crime writer Ian Rankin spoke passionately of his belief that one of the key reasons teenage boys are not reading more for pleasure is the demise of the 'pocket money comic book'. He believes

that in previous years a great number of boys were introduced to the pleasures of reading through comic books and that we need to look to them as a way to re-inspire a love of reading.

The power of the graphic novel lies in its ability to easily engage young readers who are drawn to the frames of visual, fast paced action which closely reflect the familiar visual appeal of the screen. As a medium, graphic novels are less threatening and more accessible, not to mention cooler, than their chapter book counterparts. This does not mean that they need be educationally unworthy.

The graphic novels from Raintree Publishers are widely used within schools as a valuable literacy tool. This is not just because of the way they catch the students' attention and fly off the library shelves, but also because of their educational value.

Raintree's graphics have been carefully crafted to ensure that the layout of the frames is clear,

not confusing, with a linear reading order which reflects that of a chapter book; the speech within the speech bubbles is in normal lower and uppercase text, rather than in the capitals seen so often in graphic novels; the books are also divided into chapters. The graphic titles are devised to support learning and to allow young people to progress onto reading and enjoying chapter books. There are even discussion and creative writing tasks at the end of each book to invite analysis of the text and self expression.

There is a wide range of fiction graphics available from Raintree. The benefit of this graphic fiction is, while its artwork is exciting and appealing, you can be sure there is no inappropriate content inside.

Perhaps the most surprising development, however, is the recent introduction of Raintree's graphics based on non-fiction subjects. These series provide a powerful way for children to acquire new and useful information in addition

to honing literacy skills. Children are able to enjoy reading about history, geography and even science - and pick up curriculum relevant knowledge along the way. The benefit is that the comic strip format allows children to absorb new and complex information effortlessly and enjoyably.



Join *Raintree Rewards*, one of the easiest ways to earn the books your school or library needs, and begin earning today! by simply placing your order, you can earn points.

For more information please visit: www.raintreerewards.co.uk

New quiz suggestion process



As part of the changes to our website, we are also improving the way in which teachers and librarians can suggest new quizzes in order to cope more efficiently with the significant increase in the number of suggestions we receive from AR users.

Regrettably, this means that our Content Team will be unable to offer the personal response that they have in the past. However, an improved service is on its way! In the meantime, please continue to submit your suggestions via

the 'Books and Quizzes' page of the Renaissance Learning website.

The Content Team are also now contributing to our Facebook page - providing details on new quizzes and suggestions for titles aimed at particular groups of readers, amongst other information.

To get involved, simply search for "Accelerated Reader UK" on Facebook.



Read to a Million Kids is bigger than ever in 2011!



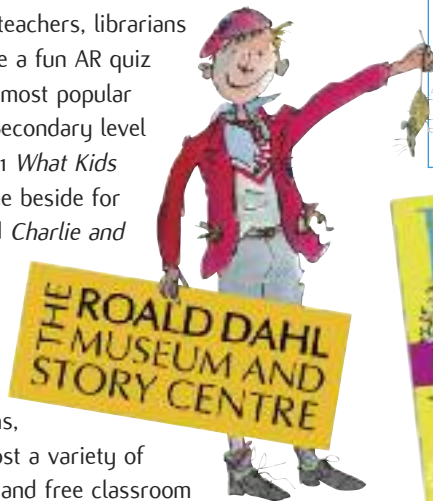
Read to a Million Kids

Following the success of last year's initiative, **Read to a Million Kids** is back with a bang as we aim to read to over a million UK pupils throughout 2011 with a series of exciting online resources and activities, and live reading events.

Visitors to www.readtoamillionkids.co.uk today can enter a competition to win either a class trip to the Roald Dahl Museum or a visit from one of their storytellers, whilst runner up schools will each receive a pack of Roald Dahl books.

For the chance to win, teachers, librarians or pupils must complete a fun AR quiz on one of Roald Dahl's most popular books at Primary and Secondary level (as identified in the 2011 *What Kids Are Reading* report - see beside for details) - *The Twits* and *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, which are hosted on the Read to a Million Kids website.

Over the coming months, the website will also host a variety of competitions, activities and free classroom resources - together with details of exciting live reading events featuring popular children's authors.



What Kids Are Reading 2011

In the first week of March, the third *What Kids Are Reading* Report will be published - and it will be bigger and better than ever! Featuring a foreword by Annie Mauger, CEO of CILIP, and contributions from leading authors, such as Anthony Horowitz, Philip Ardagh and Tommy Donbavand, the 2011 report also includes details of the most read non-fiction titles for the first time.

In addition to analysing the book-reading habits of approximately 150,000 UK pupils from Years 1-11 in terms of total books read, report author Professor Keith Topping of Dundee University has also collated the votes cast by the pupils as to whether or not they enjoyed the book. Therefore, unlike previous editions, the most popular authors in terms of pupil votes are also listed in the 2011 report.

To request your free copy of the 2011 *What Kids Are Reading* report, and enter the free prize draw, simply complete the form at www.readtoamillionkids.co.uk



Please visit www.readtoamillionkids.co.uk for more information and to enter the prize draw.

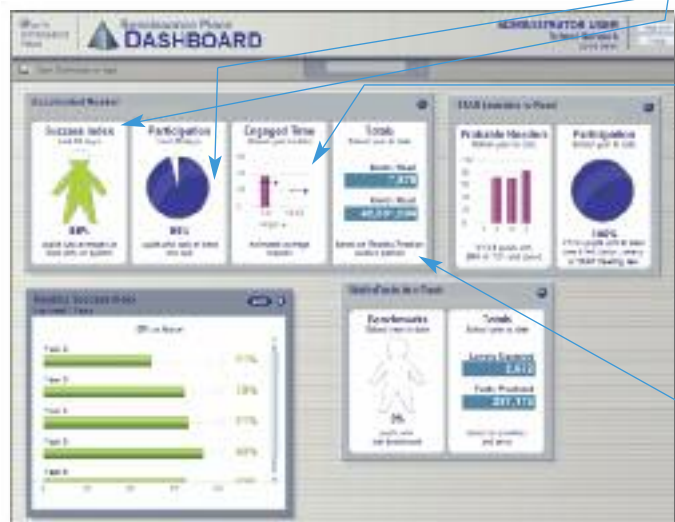
Did you know...?

Whether an Accelerated Reader or Accelerated Maths user, Renaissance Place contains a wealth of features that significantly aid implementation and usage of Renaissance Learning software. In each edition of Renaissance News we will focus on a different aspect of RP, AR, AM or NEO 2 to ensure you are getting the most from your Renaissance Learning products.

In this edition, we are looking at Dashboards in Accelerated Reader and Accelerated Maths

AR Dashboard:

At a glance, you can establish exactly how successful your Accelerated Reader implementation is progressing, and whether or not any adjustments are required to ensure even greater success. The Renaissance Dashboard provides immediate access to the most important information you need to guide your school or school network implementation without any extra effort on our part.



With the Renaissance Dashboard, you can access immediate answers to key questions that are vital to accelerating reading

growth, such as:

Are my pupils reading successfully?

The Reading Success Index tells you the percentage of pupils that averaged 85% or higher on Reading Practice Quizzes during a specified time frame. According to the latest research, pupils who average at least 85% are most likely to experience significant gains in reading ability - Renaissance Dashboard gives you the option to display the percentage of pupils who averaged 90% or higher because very high averages are associated with the greatest growth.

Are my pupils reading regularly?

The Reading Participation Chart displays the percentage of pupils actively enrolled in Accelerated Reader classes who took at least one Reading Practice Quiz within the specified time frame. Participation, as measured by quizzing activity, tells you if pupils are reading books regularly.

How much time do pupils spend reading?

The Engaged Time Graph illustrates the estimated number of minutes per day that pupils were actively engaged in reading practice during a specified timeframe. Monitoring the level of engaged reading time is important because research shows that pupils must actively read for at least 30 minutes (20 minutes at Secondary level) every day to significantly improve their reading ability.

How many books are my pupils reading?

Reading Totals shows the number of books and words read during a specified timeframe. The calculations are based on Reading Practice Quizzes that pupils pass. The more guided reading practice completed, the greater the acceleration of growth amongst pupils of all ages and abilities.

AM Dashboard:

For Accelerated Maths, Renaissance Dashboard provides various options to monitor the fidelity of implementation. It allows you to zero-in on detailed data for individual Classes, Years or demographic groups. You get immediate access to the information you need to help you make the data-driven decisions that will guide your school or school network towards a successful implementation with ease.



- The Success Index helps you monitor implementation integrity by displaying the percentage of pupils who averaged at least 85% or higher on Accelerated Maths tests during a specified timeframe.



- The Participation Chart shows you the percentage of pupils actively enrolled in Accelerated Maths classes with one or more assignments scored during the specified timeframe.



- Totals shows the number of tests scored and the number of objectives mastered during a specified timeframe.



- The Engaged Time Chart illustrates academic learning time by showing the estimated number of minutes per day that pupils were actively engaged in learning and applying concepts during a specified time.