

RENAISSANCE®

# I AM PART OF THEIR STORY

Copthall School,  
Mill Hill, London

Copthall School is a secondary school based in north west London, with over 1,000 pupils on roll. It has a high intake of EAL students, SEN pupils, students eligible for Pupil Premium, and others requiring additional reading support. The school implemented Renaissance Accelerated Reader™ in 2010 with Years 7 & 8. This year, the school have achieved an average daily engaged reading time of almost an hour: Zahra Dharsi, Literacy Coordinator, describes how the school have used the programme to engage students and support them with reading.



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**Engaged reading time**

**Incentives**

**Intervention**

**Student Engagement**

**Target setting**

# Achieving one hour of daily engaged reading time in Northwest London

## Informing rewards and catch-ups with Accelerated Reader™ data

Each class has a regular English lesson based in the library, where students will have the opportunity to take quizzes, read, change books, and their teacher will review their reports with them. Students can also take quizzes using library computers before and after school, and at break and lunch times. When we first implemented the programme, we set a strict expectation that students should be reading for 30 minutes per day, whether that's in lessons, tutor times or at home. We set that as homework, and use both incentives and sanctions to encourage students to keep up: if they're below their points target and not reading enough, then they automatically receive behaviour points and have to attend weekly lunchtime catch-up sessions until they're back on track. It's treated just as if they aren't doing their homework.

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We contact parents regularly to share reading age data and to inform them if their child hasn't quizzed or has fallen behind and needs to attend these catch-up sessions. The sessions are very useful – it's another opportunity for us to track reading and convince students that they need to read. It particularly helps when tracking the progress weaker readers are making; we run Accelerated Reader™ reports specifically for the lunchtime group and can set them small targets each week, such as reading a certain number of pages. We review these weekly until they're on track to meet their points target. This makes it much more achievable for lower ability students. For others, the sessions give them a sense of structure and organisation: they won't go to the library to quiz unprompted, so this gives them a focussed half hour in the IT room to focus on reading and quizzing.

Alongside these interventions, the incentives for reading are effective too. Initially we had a raffle for those who met their points targets, with a Kindle as a prize at the end of the year, but have since introduced more regular rewards.

We now run a termly raffle for a place on a reward trip. It's much more tangible and students get excited because it's always something fun, like going to the theatre or cinema, which they wouldn't necessarily be able to do themselves. They all want to go and it's helped to raise the profile of reading in the school.

### **Establishing a tangible outcome from reading**

Since implementing Accelerated Reader™ students read much more regularly and the programme gives us a much clearer picture of their ability. They are reading more for pleasure and are more excited about reading. Some students have set up their own book groups – there's a Harry Potter group for instance and even a Manga club.

The quizzes themselves encourage reading by giving immediate feedback, which rewards them for putting in the effort with their reading. They like that there's something tangible to do with what they have read and to indicate them finishing a book, rather than simply putting it back and selecting another one. Quizzes are a great motivator for weaker readers in particular, because it helps them check how much they understand of what they've read. If they don't pass, they know they haven't understood what they've read; it reminds them that they need to be focussed when reading. This develops their reading skills and it helps them to think about strategies to make sure they succeed next time.

We focus heavily on points targets, but make sure that we fully differentiate these. They are calculated using reading ages and the amount of time we expect them to read for, but they are still personalised. For weaker readers, we might temporarily reduce their expected daily reading time to 15 minutes, to give them a target that they can reasonably achieve and boost their confidence. Similarly, for our more able readers, we might extend it to 45 minutes – and because we incentivise points so much they're motivated to read more challenging books and actively seek them out, which is something we never would have seen before!

### **Monitoring reading age against cross-curricular attainment**

Using Renaissance Star Reading™ to determine reading ages has been very useful, particularly in identifying issues on entry. It's a great tool for pinpointing their understanding, but also makes it really easy to see progress over time. If we have a student in a class with a reading age of 6, that has implications across the curriculum and is something that can be shared with other departments to enable staff to differentiate accordingly within their own lessons. A lot of students initially do have trouble accessing the curriculum – sometimes a teacher can be confused about why a student isn't understanding something – but then you look into their Star results and see that they have a very low reading age and it clicks. That's the biggest barrier for our students and with the increasing focus on classics in the new GCSE English exams, reading age will only become even more important to ensure our students' success.

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