

# I AM PART OF THEIR STORY

**The Hurlingham Academy,**  
 Fulham, England

The Hurlingham Academy forms part of United Learning, a multi-academy trust of over 50 schools nationally. Having implemented Renaissance Accelerated Reader in 2016 across KS3, the school's Assistant Principal Tamsin Grainger and Librarian Elizabeth Gardner discuss how they've used the programme to reinforce the cross-curricular significance of literacy, while changing student attitudes towards reading.

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## How to embed literacy across the curriculum

### Implementing Accelerated Reader and focusing on daily reading

When Accelerated Reader was first brought in, we were both fairly new to the academy. We received initial online training but also invited the English team, literacy and library teams, and Teaching Assistants to an onsite training session. This was a useful introduction and we covered a great deal of ground, looking at topics including intervention targets and growth tracking, while examining the variety of reports and quizzes. We also discussed initial ways to use the programme to motivate students to read and how to inform rewards and guide book choices.

We began by allocating one weekly 45-minute library lesson to Accelerated Reader, which combined quiz-taking, silent reading and book discussion. We still use that time slot but have since dedicated the time to silent reading and we further support silent reading with two 30-minute tutor sessions each week. Students take quizzes and swap books in the library before and after school and during breaks. We also use the programme within our year 6 induction where children sit a sample quiz to prepare them for our reading approach when they start in year 7.

“Our daily engaged reading time in year 7 has increased dramatically to 33 minutes per day!”



**Incentives**

**Motivation**

**Reading culture**

**Cross-curriculum**

**Curriculum access**

Our English homework policy is focused around home reading and students are expected to read a book at an appropriate level of challenge and pass its quiz every fortnight.

### **More time spent reading and improved literacy attitudes**

Following these actions, our daily engaged reading time in year 7 has increased dramatically to 33 minutes per day. Students in years 8 and 9 are also reading heavily: 24 and 26 minutes per day respectively.

Students' attitudes towards reading have improved incredibly in a relatively short space of time. Historically, many students haven't particularly enjoyed reading but the satisfaction and instant feedback from Accelerated Reader quizzes have engaged previously reluctant readers. They're also more open minded when it comes to what they read. When they know a book has a quiz available and it falls within their difficulty range it makes that book seem much more achievable. We've challenged them to read 6 different genres which has encouraged students to try new, challenging things rather than the same authors and series (which even our top sets tend to do at times).

Students now realise that reading doesn't need to be a chore. We notice far more children organically recommending books to one another, and have found that Accelerated Reader offers a very tangible goal for each book, particularly for reluctant readers. We don't share students' reading ages with them; that's not the currency that motivates them. Instead, they are excited by their own progress including seeing the number of quizzes they've passed or when they've moved up a difficulty band. When someone finishes a library book there will be a waiting list of others wanting to read it and students are rushing to the library before school to take a quiz on a book they finished the night before.

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“Our expectations are clear and simple: students read a book and pass its quiz each fortnight, and achievement beyond that is heavily rewarded. This has definitely helped students make informed, guided choices and finish the books they start.

We try not to over-emphasise a relationship between reading and vocational or academic success, but present it as something intrinsically valuable; the chance to access new worlds and expand vocabulary. Our expectations are clear and simple: students read a book and pass its quiz each fortnight, and achievement beyond that is heavily rewarded. This has definitely helped students make informed, guided choices and finish the books they start.



### **Celebrating and recognising reading accomplishments**

In terms of rewards, we primarily use a house system across the school which Accelerated Reader feeds into. Every week, the house which gains the most Accelerated Reader points is awarded 100 house points. This is announced in a whole school assembly every Monday morning.

“Everyone talks more about reading now, which helps students understand just how important it is.”

We also name the top reader in each house, which is very hotly contested as only 4 winners emerge overall! Heads of houses have been very proactive at encouraging students to keep up with reading or complete a given book quickly to be counted in that week's competition.

We make sure to emphasise World Book Day celebrations as much as possible. This year we had all staff dressing up as book characters, which isn't always the case at secondary level, along with the year 7 students and student librarians. Book related competitions ran across the school, we doubled the house points all week, and we ran Shakespearean workshops in years 8 and 9 while all staff shared their personal book recommendations.

### A reading culture supported across the school

We've worked closely with staff school-wide to bring them on board to support reading culture. We all ensure we're currently reading a book and we promote this through posters on our doors and 'I'm currently reading...' slides in assembly; students do ask us about the books as a result. It helps when they see that it isn't just the librarian who reads; it's everyone from their science teacher to their youth club worker. Everyone talks more about reading now, which helps students understand just how important it is.

Our staff have a very strong understanding of students' reading ability. While we don't expect staff outside of the English Department to log in and navigate the software, we do notify tutors of some priority students and if they aren't making reading age progress or we know parents aren't reading with them at home we ask tutors to read one on one with them during tutor periods.

Teaching and learning in all subjects has gained a renewed focus on the innate ability of a student to read. We recently shared data on the reading ages of exam papers with staff, which helped reinforce the point that while a given student may be excellent at maths and numerical reasoning for instance, their ability to decode and comprehend may still be lower than average and it's important to address that to succeed in any subject.



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