

What is Accelerated Reader?

Introduction

At SJMS, we recognize that just like in sports, music, or any other activity, a student's ability to read improves the more they practice reading. Unfortunately, with the old system of book reports, we were requiring our students to only read an average of one book per quarter. We also recognized that we had no way to know whether students were reading books at a level that would maximize their growth.

The Accelerated Reader program is designed to test whether a student actually read a particular book quickly enough that they remember the whole story and with attention paid to detail. AR also levels the books so that students are reading within a range that will encourage growth. We call these ranges a student's ZONE. In order to learn a student's ZONE, we use STAR, also created by Renaissance Learning.

1 – STAR:

We use the STAR test to find a student's reading level and to determine a ZONE for that student. STAR is a computer generated multiple-choice test that looks at a student's vocabulary. We give the test at least three times a year in order to track progress. Each time the test is taken, you should receive a letter home informing you how your student is doing. Students are welcome to request a retake test if they are unsatisfied with their performance (everyone has a bad day).

2 – Find the ZONE:

The teacher's report for STAR gives a current reading level and the recommends a range of reading levels for each student. We call this range the ZONE. The ZONE includes a lower level that is very comfortable and easy for your student to read. The middle range is about level with your student's current reading level. The high range introduces your student to new vocabulary words and more complicated sentence structure. These books help them stretch their reading muscles.

3 – Set the POINT goal:

The points assigned to each Accelerated Reader book are based on the number of words in a book. They have nothing to do with how easy a book is; they just tell you about how long a book is. Thus, a 10-point book will take twice as long to read as a 5-point book. One rule of thumb is, if you can't finish the book in three weeks, it is taking too long. Because the AR quizzes test equally from each part of the book, it is important that a student start with a book that is about 5 points in value and then move up from there.

The AR program uses the reading level given by STAR and sets an individual point goal for each student. This goal is based on a minimum of 30 minutes of reading each day. Most classes read for about 10 minutes together, so a student would need to read for twenty minutes at home to reach their goal. If your student reads more than 30 minutes a day, then they will probably reach their AR point goal quicker.

4 – Set the BOOK LEVEL goal:

The book levels of the AR books are set by Renaissance Learning. The levels are based on the vocabulary of the book and have nothing to do with the age-appropriateness. Book level goals will also be set for the student. This goal is usually their reading level from STAR. This means that students can read some books at the low end of their ZONE or even below their ZONE, and then challenge themselves with something at the highest end to reach their BOOK LEVEL goal.

Step 5 – Choose a book:

We have recently overhauled the AR program and now have all of the available AR quizzes. This list can be accessed on any computer via the internet by going to <http://arbookfinder.com>

If students have a hard time choosing a book, they can ask their friends, their teachers and even the librarian for recommendations. We also have Reading Ladders, which are grouped by different interests. These are available in the library and on the internet

Not only do we have a great selection of fiction AR books, but we also have an extensive collection of nonfiction, including biographies. Any subject your student can think of: countries, history, animals, sports, planets, disease, we probably have a book with a quiz. Non-fiction is especially good reading for students who are reading at or above grade level. It helps them stretch their informational reading skills for the heavier loads of high school and college.

6 – Status of the Class:

Every day, students are required to keep track of their reading in class and at home. Some of the teachers use a form that goes in your student's notebook. Other teachers use a form that doubles as a book mark. As a parent, you should be aware of what your student is reading and how quickly they are finishing.

7 – Take the quiz:

As soon as your student has finished reading their book, they should take the quiz. Our AR program is networked through the reading and language arts departments, so even if your student moves to a new teacher, the information goes with them. The student can take tests in their reading classroom or in the Language Arts classroom, but they are always required to test under supervision.

Quizzes are 5, 10 or 20 questions, depending on the length of the book. They are multiple-choice or fill-in the blank. A common concern is that the questions do not require any higher-order thinking skills. This is not the purpose of Accelerated Reader. The purpose of the quizzes is to show whether the student read the book and paid attention. In your student's class, they will read other books together and work on analysis and synthesis of ideas.

8 – Keep moving up:

Every time a student takes a quiz, a report can be printed. Teachers look at these reports and offer feedback to the students. If a student passes the quiz, the teacher may encourage them to read a book at a higher level, one worth more points, a non-fiction title or something outside their comfort zone. If your student did not pass a quiz, the teacher may counsel them to choose a shorter book that they can finish at a faster pace or to choose a book at a lower level with vocabulary that they can understand better. Some may argue that AR does not develop a student's higher order thinking skills, but this is not the purpose of Accelerated Reader. The purpose of the quizzes is to show whether the student read the book and paid attention. In your student's class, they will read other books together and work on analysis and synthesis of ideas.

9. Understanding AR Cut-Off dates:

There are four AR cut-off dates during each quarter: 25%, 50%, 75%, and 100%. Your student will be expected to have the required percentage of his/her total AR point goal completed by each of these cut-off dates.

Your student's AR points will count toward both his/her Reading and his/her Language Arts grades. It will be 20% of his/her Reading grade and 15% of his/her Language Arts grade. The first cut-off will be 25%. Once the next cut-off occurs (50%), the teacher will go into the grade book and erase the score that was intact for the 25% cut-off. They will do this for every cut-off except the 100%. As long as your student completes his/her full AR point goal by the 100% cut-off date, this AR grade will be fine. However, every cut-off missed will reflect on your student's grade until the next cut-off occurs.

Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4
September 12 25%	November 14 25%	January 30 25%	April 17 25%
September 25 50%	December 5 50%	February 21 50%	April 30 50%
October 17 75%	December 20 75%	March 6 75%	May 15 75%
October 26 100%	January 10 100%	March 20 100%	May 29 100%