AR and Reading at Home

Aims for today:

- Understand how Accelerated Reader works.
- Understand how children choose appropriate books.
- Learn how to support reading at home.
- Discover ways to develop reading enjoyment and confidence.

Why is reading so important?

1. Vocabulary: Reading exposes children to new words and language.
2. Comprehension: Children develop their ability to understand, interpret and question what they read.
3. Writing: Reading helps children develop their vocabulary, sentence structures and understanding of different writing styles.
4. Knowledge and imagination: Books introduce children to new ideas, experiences and perspectives.

Reading helps across the whole curriculum and is a core life skill – children who read for pleasure end up with better life prospects, a longer life and increases overall life satisfaction by 20% (according to a Yale study in 2016!)

What is Accelerated Reader (AR)?

- AR is a computer-based reading programme.
- It helps children find books that are appropriately challenging.
- Children read books and then complete quizzes to demonstrate their understanding.
- It encourages regular reading and helps children develop comprehension skills.

Accelerated Reader doesn't teach children to read by itself. It supports the reading that happens in classrooms and at home.

How does it work?

STAR Reading Assessment > Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)

> Choose a book > Read the book > Complete a quiz > Repeat

How does the STAR assessment work?

- 33 questions. Get one correct – the next question is slightly harder. When a child gets one wrong, it modifies the next question. Eventually reaches a level where a ZPD can be given.

Try these questions!



Emerging reader - retrieval

Sam has a little red ball. He takes it to the park. His dog, Max, runs after the ball. Max brings it back to Sam.

Question: What colour is Sam's ball?

Choose one answer.

- A. Blue
- B. Red
- C. Green
- D. Yellow

Developing reader - inference

Lily looked at the dark clouds gathering above the playground. She had been hoping to play football at lunchtime, but the wind was beginning to blow and the first drops of rain landed on her shoes. She sighed and carefully put her football back into her bag.

Question: Why does Lily put her football away?

Choose one answer.

- A. She has forgotten how to play football.
- B. She is worried that her football might get lost.
- C. She realises that the weather is unsuitable for playing outside.
- D. She wants to play a different game with her friends.

Greater Depth reader – authorial intent, figurative language

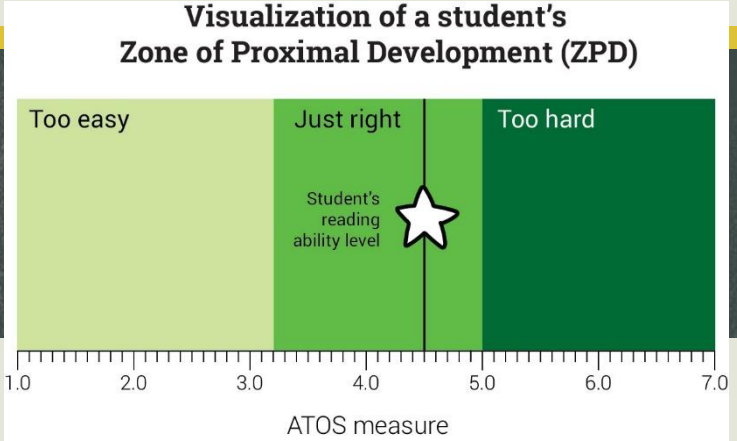
The old railway station had stood empty for decades. Weeds pushed through the cracked platforms, and the rusted signs swung gently in the wind. Once, the station had been alive with hurried footsteps and excited conversations. Now, silence settled over the buildings like a heavy blanket. Yet, as Eleanor ran her fingers along the faded timetable, she imagined the countless journeys that had begun there.

Question: Why does the author describe silence as settling over the buildings "like a heavy blanket"?

Choose one answer.

- A. To suggest that the buildings are physically covered in fabric.
- B. To emphasise how the station feels deserted, still and lifeless.
- C. To show that the station is warm and comfortable.
- D. To suggest that the station is protected from the weather.

How do we use the ZPD/ why it helps.



- Not a ranking system!
- Helps teachers identify the “sweet spot” where children are improving reading skills but not discouraging by overstretching comprehension and vocabulary exposure.
- Not an exact science – teachers know their readers, this is a tool we use to refine reading at the correct pace for the child.
- If a child picks a book at the lower end of the ZPD, it should be an easier challenge than a book close to the top end – the children can choose the level of challenge while still improving reading. No expectations to pick a book they don’t want!

What are the quizzes?

- Once your child has read the book at home, they complete a low-stakes quiz of 5-20 questions (depending on the length of the book) to gauge understanding.
- The ZPD automatically updates based on pass rates so your child is constantly in that sweet spot.
- Important that the book has been read and understood - if a child is not comprehending, best to change!

How can you support reading at home?

- Aim for 15–30 minutes of reading each day (don’t stop a voracious reader, though!)
- Find a comfortable, quiet place for them to read.
- Encourage children to read independently where appropriate.
- Continue reading with and to older children.



Questioning – the comprehension secret weapon!

Before reading	During reading	After reading
What made you choose this book?	What do you think will happen next?	What was your favourite part?
What do you think it might be about?	Why do you think the character did that?	Would you recommend it?
Have you read anything similar?	What does that word mean?	How has the character changed?
What are you hoping to find out?	Can you explain what's happening?	What would you have done differently?

The Ultimate Goal – Building a Love of Reading

- Let children choose books that interest them.
- Read together rather than always expecting independent reading.
- Explore different formats, including comics, magazines and audiobooks.
- Take turns reading pages or paragraphs.
- Connect books to their interests (football, animals, gaming, sport, history).
- Visit libraries and bookshops together.
- Praise effort and persistence rather than just reading achievement.
- AR is NOT reading – it's a tool teachers use – reading should be a pleasurable past time!

Any questions?

