

Implementation Guide

Literacy paves the road to learning

When students leave high school, they walk into a diverse world of reading. To succeed in life, they need to handle all kinds of texts, from the weekly news stories to classic works of literature to IRS tax forms. That's what rigorous standards are about—getting kids ready to be good college students, good workers, and good citizens. And that's what Renaissance Accelerated Reader 360® (AR 360™) is about, too.

Accelerated Reader 360 supports all your literacy goals. It builds vocabulary, develops fluency, advances comprehension of text of increasing difficulty, and gives students the opportunity to communicate their ideas verbally and in writing. Moreover, it motivates students to read. And as every teacher knows, kids learn best when they are excited and engaged.

Let's get going

On the following pages, we explain the basics of an effective AR 360 implementation. If you are new to AR 360, this information will get you off to a good start. If you have been using Renaissance Accelerated Reader® (AR) for years, you will discover new capabilities that will enrich your literacy program and energize your students.

And remember, we are here to help. Schools that achieve high levels of growth monitor how well they are using AR 360 and look for ways to improve. We offer a variety of professional learning opportunities to support you in this endeavor. Contact your Renaissance representative or call (800) 338-4204 for information.

If you have the version of Accelerated Reader that only includes the features for guided independent reading practice, please see pages 4 to 9.

AR 360's Instructional Focus



Build skills and motivate students with high-interest nonfiction articles

What aspect of your literacy instruction do you most want to bolster? Are you eager to develop your students' close reading skills? Do you want them to have more experience with nonfiction text? Are you concerned about their lack of motivation to read? Perhaps your biggest challenge is differentiating for a wide range of reading levels.

AR 360 can help with all of these needs. It includes hundreds of high-interest nonfiction articles that students read on a computer or tablet. The articles come from high-quality partners, like Smithsonian, Cricket, and the Associated Press, and are reviewed for readability, length, and appropriateness. Then they are "re-leveled" to be accessible to students reading at different achievement levels. AR 360 also includes a bank of read-aloud articles for emergent readers that build vocabulary, background knowledge, and critical thinking skills.

As a teacher, you can find articles in two ways. If students are assessed with Star Reading®, place them in achievement-based groups using Star Reading data as a guide. The software will then identify the skills each group is ready to learn next and suggest AR 360 articles for practice with those skills. Or you can select articles by topic—for example, animals, culture, science, or technology—and refine your choice by grade level, readability level, and skill.

Alternatively, students can select their own articles based on their interests and reading level. Students love reading about contemporary topics, and the differentiated collection ensures their experience is successful and motivating. We add new articles monthly for all grades to keep interest high.

With each article, you have the option of including an assignment focused on a specific skill, such as analyzing an argument, summarizing the main idea, and identifying cause and effect. So that students practice the central strategy of close reading, assignments require them to cite evidence from text with digital highlighting and respond to prompts in writing. You can use an article with a skills assignment for modeling, for small-group practice, or for independent work. Many articles are supported by videos.

After students complete an assignment, they take a short quiz to assess their overall comprehension. If you wish, you can also score assignments and use the data to analyze your students' strengths and weaknesses with specific skills.

Start simple: read and quiz

Find an article on a topic that your students will enjoy. Check the ATOS® or Lexile® measure to be sure it is written at a difficulty level all students can handle. Choose the assignment called "Read and Take Quiz."

Project the article on a whiteboard in the Preview view and read the article together. Then take the quiz together.

Follow up by allowing students to select an article to read on their own. Recommend they choose one within their individualized zone of proximal development, or ZPD, for independent practice. (See page 5 for information about ZPD.)

Next: move on to skills

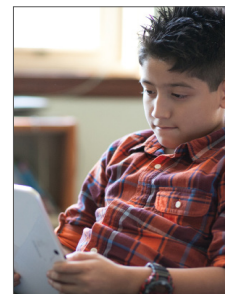
Create small groups within the software based on performance. If you use scores from Star Reading, the software will identify skills students are ready to learn. If you don't have Star Reading, create groups using scores from another assessment or your professional judgment. Find an article by topic and select an assignment for the skill you would like to focus on.

Model the skill. You can use text that's part of your curriculum, or you can use an AR 360 article in the Preview view. Project the article. As you read, describe how you apply

Two examples of AR 360 in action

Motivational independent nonfiction reading

Ms. Henderson wants her students to have more experience with nonfiction text. She also wants to stimulate their overall interest in reading. At one of her centers, students can select an AR 360 article, read, and take the AR quiz for fun and practice. Ms. Henderson also browses AR 360's ever-changing collection for articles related to her content-area instruction. Because the articles are high-interest and deal with contemporary topics, she often uses them as a springboard for discussion and further reading. Now her students are hooked on nonfiction. She notices that more of her students are choosing nonfiction books for their guided independent reading practice.



Small-group close reading instruction

Ms. Siegel has placed her students in three literacy groups based on their Star Reading scores. The software identifies skills each group is ready to learn next and suggests AR 360 articles with assignments that provide practice with those skills. With each group, Ms. Siegel models a skill with an AR 360 article. Then she assigns an article for practice. After completing the assignment, students take the AR quiz, and Ms. Siegel grades their skill work through the software. She uses the data to analyze strengths and weaknesses and plan follow-up activities. During guided independent reading practice, Ms. Siegel helps students apply the skill to their own reading. (See p. 9.)



the skill, and show students how to highlight text digitally and write short responses to the questions in the assignment. Take the comprehension quiz.

Assign articles to small groups for practice. In some cases, you may want to do one or more articles with a group before asking students to complete assignments independently.

Discuss the assignment. What text evidence did students highlight to support their answers? Do some questions have more than one correct answer?



Reinforce instruction with practice for college and career readiness

Hundreds of research studies tell us that students' reading skills grow when you (1) give students copious amounts of practice reading books, (2) allow students to choose the books themselves according to their interests, and (3) make sure the books are written at a level that is right for them. But in today's busy classroom, who has time to personalize reading practice in this way? This is where Accelerated Reader steps in. It recommends a range of reading levels appropriate for each student. With short quizzes, it checks students' comprehension of what they read. And it provides data so you and your students can easily keep track of what they are reading and how well they are reading it. Moreover, with Accelerated Reader, you set growth goals with your students that are realistic for them as individuals. We have found that when you give students successful and rewarding encounters with books, encourage them to share responsibility for their progress, and make their success visible, they get excited about reading and want to read more. Follow the steps on the next few pages to set your students on this course.

Learn more from Renaissance Smart Start



A Look Inside a Classroom



For software instructions, click the question mark within AR 360 to access Help.

Daily checklist

- Set aside 20 to 30 minutes for guided independent reading practice.** Put it in the class schedule and make it a priority.
- Give students ready access to your class or school library** so they can quickly select their next book.
- Have students record what they are reading,** pages read each day, their quiz scores, and their progress toward personalized goals on a student reading log. This makes it easy for you to monitor their work during a daily check-in. Go to software Resources for reproducible logs.
- Briefly check in with students** while they are reading and review reading logs. Is each student reading at the right level of difficulty (the zone of proximal development or "ZPD")? Is the student reading at a good rate? Does the student comprehend what he or she is reading?
- Make sure students take quizzes within 24 hours** of finishing a book. This ensures you're assessing comprehension and not memory.
- Review a student's quiz data and progress toward goals** as soon as the student finishes a quiz. Catch problems early and offer guidance on the next book choice.

Four steps to a reading practice program that works

1 Ready, set, read

Just about everything goes more smoothly when we do a bit of preparation. Below are essential tasks for getting your reading-practice program off to a good start. If you are already using AR for guided reading practice but want to energize your implementation, check to see if you have all of the following in place.

Get your classroom and school ready	Get your students ready	Get yourself ready
<p>Schedule a set time for reading practice, schoolwide if possible.</p> <p>Develop a pass system for going to the library.</p> <p>Label school and class library books with their ATOS (difficulty) level or Lexile measure, interest level, and point value.</p> <p>Assemble enough computers and mobile devices so students can quiz within 24 hours of finishing a book.</p>	<p>Test students with Star Reading or another reading assessment and identify their ZPDs—their individual reading ranges. (See details below.)</p> <p>Explain how AR works and why individualized practice is important.</p> <p>Make sure students know their ZPD and personalized goals and write them on their log.</p> <p>Teach students how to maintain their reading log and how to take quizzes.</p>	<p>Take a few quizzes so you know how they work and can teach students how to quiz.</p> <p>Learn key concepts for guiding students to books (see below).</p> <p>Plan routines for settling down to read, asking to take a quiz, going to the library, and sharing quiz results.</p> <p>Primary teachers: Find older students or adult helpers to read to emergent readers.</p>

2 Personalize practice

To ensure students work at the right level of difficulty, do the following:

1. Test independent readers with Star Reading and go to the Star Reading Range Report to view suggested ZPDs for each student.
2. Go to the Record Book and Goals area of AR to set goals.
3. Set an average-percent-correct goal. (To start, we recommend the default goal of 85% for all students.)
4. Select the number of minutes you provide every day for dedicated independent reading practice.
5. The software then looks at each student's Star score, the amount of time you provide for practice, and the length of the marking period, and recommends personalized point goals. These are based on extensive research that tells us how much reading, as measured by points earned, students of different reading abilities can accomplish within various amounts of time and achieve growth.
6. Set a book-level goal near the low end of the ZPD to give students flexibility when choosing books.

Learn more from Renaissance Smart Start



Set an Average Percent Correct Goal
Tips on Setting and Monitoring Goals

Don't have Star Reading? To identify ZPDs and point goals, use GE scores from any reading assessment and the [Goal-Setting Chart](#).

Important terms and ideas

ZPD (zone of proximal development). The level at which optimal learning takes place—neither too hard nor too easy. Look for a range of book levels within which a student can average 85% to 95% on quizzes.

ATOS BOOK LEVEL. Text difficulty as measured by the ATOS readability formula. This measurement is based on sentence length, word length, and vocabulary grade level. It does not reflect the suitability of the content. AR can also report text difficulty with Lexile measures.

INTEREST LEVEL. The age group for which a book is appropriate, based on its themes and ideas.

- LG = Lower Grades, K–3
- MG = Middle Grades, 4–8
- MG+ = Middle Grades Plus, 6 and up
- UG = Upper Grades, 9–12

POINTS. A measure assigned to each book based primarily on its length. Points make it easy to see how much reading practice a student has successfully completed; they do not reflect a book's literary value. If a student reads a 10-point book and scores 100% on the quiz, the student acquires 10 points. If the student scores 90%, the student acquires 9 points, and so on. On most quizzes, a student must score at least 60% to earn any points.

3 Use data to monitor progress

The aim of reading practice is greater reading achievement. The goals you set each marking period for average percent correct, points, and book level help ensure students maximize that achievement. But simply setting goals is not enough. You and your students must monitor their progress toward those goals to make sure they succeed and grow. See Help for instructions on how to access data on-screen and with reports.

Student data

After students take a quiz, they see immediate results. Have them write their score on their reading log. They can also note their current goal progress on their progress page to see if they are on track. Have students share this information with you during daily check-ins.

Answer questions such as:

Are students tracking and taking ownership of their reading practice?

Are students actively reading and quizzing?

Quiz scores at a glance

The Record Book provides an at-a-glance view of a student's data. The Record Book is also where you can create, adjust, and monitor goals.

Answer questions such as:

When did students last take a quiz?

Did students pass their latest quiz?

Where can I set or adjust reading practice goals?

Diagnostic Report (Summary Diagnostic Report)

Check the Diagnostic Report (Summary Diagnostic Report) weekly to see summary data for your whole class. This report allows you to see goal progress and identifies students who may need assistance.

Answer questions such as:

Are students on track to meet their goals this marking period?

Do I have students who struggle to average 85% correct on quizzes?

Which students do I need to investigate further for assistance?

Digging in deeper

When you need to view the specific book/article choices that a student is making, review the Student Record Report (Student Performance Record Report).

Answer questions such as:

Which books have the student been successful with?

How much nonfiction is this student reading?

Is the student choosing books/articles that are too easy or difficult?

What patterns can I find in the student's reading that I need to address?

4 Take action to drive growth

When we examine the reading achievement of students who use AR, we find that those who maintain high scores on quizzes make the most gains. In other words, “just reading” is not enough. Students must understand what they are reading and they must understand it well. The greatest gains are made by students with quiz score averages between 85% and 95%. Difficulty level is important, too. We don’t want students to languish reading too-easy books. When a student’s average quiz score tops 95%, it’s time to nudge the student into trying some higher-level or longer books. (However, we don’t recommend methodically “stair-stepping” kids into harder and harder books, which tends to wring the joy out of reading practice.) Finally, quantity of reading also matters. That’s what points are all about—not something to simply accumulate but to show how much a student is reading and help you evaluate whether it’s enough, on an individual basis, to make a difference.

Average below 85%? Ask yourself ...	Actions
Is the student reading within his ZPD?	If not, make sure the student records his ZPD on his log and knows what it means.
Is the student an English learner?	Help the student find books on subjects with which she is familiar so the vocabulary load is not too heavy.
Is the student reading hard or long books just to earn points?	Establish a personalized point goal based on the student’s reading achievement level.
Does the student need help with comprehension strategies?	Teach strategies such as visualization, previewing, and summarizing. Reinforce them during the daily check-in.
Not meeting point goal? Ask yourself ...	Actions
Has the student been absent?	Adjust the point goal to reflect actual in-school practice time.
Is the student failing quizzes?	See the actions listed above.
Is the student an English learner?	Adjust the point goal to reflect a lower reading pace.
Is the student finding books that interest her?	Offer help finding books. Make sure she sees “Top Book Ideas for You” in the software.

Encourage a growth mindset

When students take charge of their own learning, they learn more and feel better about it. This is reinforced by research that shows when teachers cultivate a growth mindset by reinforcing effort rather than innate ability, students are more motivated, get better grades, and score higher on tests.

- Always individualize goals. This “levels the playing field” and means all students have an equal chance at success and get equal recognition for making good progress.
- Set goals with students, not for students.
- Make effort visible by using reading logs and TOPS Reports. Direct students to their Progress page in the software.
- When students do poorly on a quiz, ask, “What do you think went wrong? What can you do to be more successful with your next book?”
- Act like a coach. Teach reading strategies and help students practice them.
- Don’t focus on top point earners. Instead, celebrate individual progress toward goals—with high-fives, bulletin board displays, class and school ceremonies, and letters home.



Bring in the joy

We have seen over and over again that once students experience the joy of reading, they willingly and happily read. That’s why, at its heart, AR is not about the quizzes, the points, or the technology, it’s about turning kids on to reading. So read great books to your students, start a book blog, connect with an author online, and most importantly, take the time to help students discover the magic in books that will inspire them to read for a lifetime.

Help students apply skills through the daily check-in

To grow as readers, students must utilize the skills they work on during instruction when they read independently. Encourage this important transfer as you check in with students during reading practice time by asking them to look for examples in their own books. For example, suppose students are working on the skill of inferencing, and they have just completed an AR 360 assignment or another instructional activity for that skill. As they settle down to read, say, “We’ve just looked at how sometimes you can ‘read between the lines,’ or make an inference, based on a key detail. As you read your book, look for a spot where you can make an inference. When I come around, be prepared to tell me the inference you’ve made and show me the key detail in the text that led you to make it.” This check-in also helps you evaluate how well individual students understand the skill and identify who might need follow-up instruction.

Analyze instruction and practice data together to gain insight

We’ve seen how AR 360’s instructional data helps you answer important questions: How well do my students comprehend nonfiction articles? How well do my students utilize specific close reading skills? We’ve also seen how you can use AR 360’s practice data to answer key questions: At what level of difficulty can my students read independently? Are they reading enough text at the right level with sufficient comprehension to make progress? To gain even deeper insight, take your analysis a step further and examine instruction and practice data together. Here are some examples.



What the data shows	Possible issues and solutions
Student has low scores for nonfiction articles but does well with fiction books within her ZPD	If the articles are written at a level above the student’s ZPD, she may need scaffolding to read them. Or the student may need help specifically with nonfiction reading strategies, like reading with a purpose, asking questions while you read, using text features, and rereading the hard parts. The student may also need more modeling of specific skills with AR 360 articles.
Student comprehends AR articles well but has a low average on quizzes for books read independently	The student may need help with longer text. Teach strategies like reviewing the previous chapter before reading and using text features like chapter titles, headings, and subheadings. Check in with the student every day during reading practice and ask such questions as, “What have you learned so far? What do you think you’ll find out next?” Ask the student to review the book with a classroom aide or a buddy before taking the AR quiz.
Student scores low on quizzes for both nonfiction articles and nonfiction books read independently but comprehends fiction well.	The student likely needs more instruction on nonfiction reading strategies and more guided practice with them. If the student is an English learner, specialized vocabulary or limited background knowledge may be a barrier. With English learners, slow the pace when modeling or discussing nonfiction skills. Help the student glean meaning through context. When meaning cannot be derived from context, preteach vocabulary.

Using AR 360 in the primary grades

Many teachers assume that AR 360 can only work in classrooms in which all students are reading on their own. But AR 360 brings to emergent readers the same benefits it brings to independent readers. The reading practice features give students the opportunity to develop their skills at their own pace with authentic literature they choose themselves—either to read on their own or have read to them. AR 360 also provides a bank of read-aloud articles for grades K through 2 that engage students in more challenging text to expand vocabulary, build knowledge, and develop close-listening and critical-thinking skills.

Reading practice: what's different for emergent readers

Students follow a developmental progression. Primary students move from having a book read to them, to reading with a partner, to reading independently. We refer to this as TWI. All three types of reading are part of reading practice.

ZPDs are estimated. Estimate ZPDs by reading to your students and monitoring quiz scores. If students average between 85% and 95%, you know they are working within the ZPD. Since listening comprehension outpaces reading comprehension in the early grades, students will likely have different ZPDs for T, W, and I.

Helpers are essential. Volunteers, paraprofessionals, or older students can read to or with students. They can also monitor quiz-taking and help students check out books.

Gradually teach students how to quiz. After reading a book aloud to the class, ask students some of the questions on the AR quiz. Begin with only two answer choices and then move on to three. Later, break the class into groups and show them the quiz on the computer. At first, click the answer choice yourself. Then ask students to do it. When they're ready, have students take Recorded Voice Quizzes individually or have a helper read quizzes to them. (Helpers only read questions and answer choices; they do not assist with answers.) Individual quizzing provides data so you know when a student needs help or is ready to advance.

Set more generalized goals. We recommend one or two books a week read to or with emergent readers for individualized reading practice. Aim for an average quiz score of 85% to 95%.



Using read-aloud activities in grades K–2

AR 360's read-aloud feature is built for the teacher. It includes a bank of nonfiction articles selected to engage and challenge K–2 students and give them a rich, purposeful reading experience. Each article contains an assignment focused on a specific comprehension skill, such as main idea and sequencing, and are tied to a learning progression. This enables you to tailor your choices to your students' needs and interests.

To get started, find an article by topic, and select K–2 as a grade choice. Choose a read-aloud assignment focused on a skill your students are ready to practice. If you are beginning work on a skill, use the assignment to model how to apply it. If students are ready to practice the skill, follow these steps:

1. Project the article. Read it aloud all the way through.
2. Continue the assignment, pausing for each activity. Follow the instructions at the top of the page. Ask students to respond by citing evidence from the text. Highlight the text students cite. Type in their answers to the writing prompt.
3. To check each student's overall comprehension, have students take the comprehension quiz with trained helpers as described above.