

# Building Better Readers

*Online literacy program swiftly gets kids up to speed*

Some students at the Consentino School are using a motivating reading program called Accelerated Reader to improve independent reading skills. Accelerated Reader is a personalized reading and practice program for students. The program is available to all K-8 students in Haverhill Public Schools as of this year. Roberta Roffo, a literacy advocate, reading specialist and licensed library media specialist, began using Accelerated Reader to supplement instruction in her reading groups in February. She has seen an increase in books read and reading levels achieved for several students -- which she attributes to the incentive that Accelerated Reader provides.

Participating students choose popular titles from library books to read closely, then take a multiple-choice computer quiz and see their quiz results immediately.

"Accelerated Reader adds a dimension of fun and motivation to reading that makes students want to read and quiz again and again," according to Roffo.

Third-grade beginner English language learner Ariana Reyes Candelario, who moved to Haverhill in the past year from Puerto Rico, has read and passed quizzes on 58 library books since February. Ariana's reading level has increased from a first-grade level in the fall to a sev-

enth-grade level in June (levels G to Z). Ariana often took home as many as four library books a night to read and quiz.

"I love to read and I love doing the quizzes," Ariana said.

Classmates Achraf Aidour and Scarleth Aranda LeBron also love the challenge of reading and taking the quizzes. Achraf, whose family speaks Arabic as a primary language, has read and passed quizzes on 36 books, most recently non-fiction books on the life cycles of a butterfly and a frog.

Scarleth, who moved to the mainland from Puerto Rico, has read and passed quizzes on 23 books so far and prefers fiction stories. In her seven months in the Consentino School, Scarleth has increased her English reading level by two years, from kindergarten level to second-grade level (from below-A to K). Four other students in Roffo's groups have read between 25 and 46 library books in the past four months, passed the quizzes, and significantly increased their reading levels.

Older students also enjoy reading and quizzing. A Consentino seventh-grader who moved here from the Dominican Republic began English reading instruction in January at the kindergarten level and now - within five months - is reading at a second-grade level (from below-A to K). In addition to instruction with Roffo, she has read and passed quizzes on 41 books by starting with very easy books and building her confidence up to complete biography and other nonfiction informa-



Classmates Achraf Aidour, Ariana Reyes Candelario and Scarleth Aranda LeBron improve their literary skills by reading Consentino School library books and taking online book quizzes using the Accelerated Reader program. Courtesy photos

tional books related to the curriculum.

Roffo emphasizes that Accelerated Reader is not just for English Language Learners or below-level readers - it is fun and motivational for students of all grades and reading abilities.

"Accelerated Reader complements student library book reading with a quiz that can only be passed if the student has read closely and carefully - an important test-taking and life skill. Guessing quiz answers is not acceptable; students must go back to the text when necessary, for accuracy."

Roffo, who has taught for 20 years, says, "Reading teachers can teach students the phonics and comprehension skills needed to read, and that's a great foundation. On top of instruction, teachers request that students read at home every night for practice and to increase their skills. But in reality, many students are not doing that - they tell us they do not like to read!"

Roffo believes that middle school is a critical time to transform students. "Students reading well below grade level in middle school may decide to give up and drop out of high school - while students reading near or above grade level will likely succeed in graduating from high school and are more likely to go on to higher education. An in-

centive like Accelerated Reader can help bring students to higher levels in reading by developing students into motivated readers that love books and learning."

Roffo would like to see Accelerated Reader promoted for motivating students in Haverhill to read and quiz in the summer. She hopes that Accelerated Reader will be more widely used in Haverhill K-8 schools and school libraries next year. She has connected with the Haverhill Public Library to demonstrate the program to staff there, and she said the Haverhill Public Schools is putting Accelerated Reader instructions on its website.

Student login for K-8 students is through the Haverhill Public Schools' Launchpad and the RDI icon. Students are familiar with the platform and their unique district user name and password. They can use them to log in and search for a book quiz in the Renaissance Accelerated Reader database.

Roffo envisions that Accelerated Reader has the ability to motivate students to read library books and pass the quizzes, leading to increased confidence in their reading abilities, increased reading levels and test scores, and the potential to revolutionize reading throughout the district. Those interested are invited to contact her at rroffo@haverhill-ps.org.



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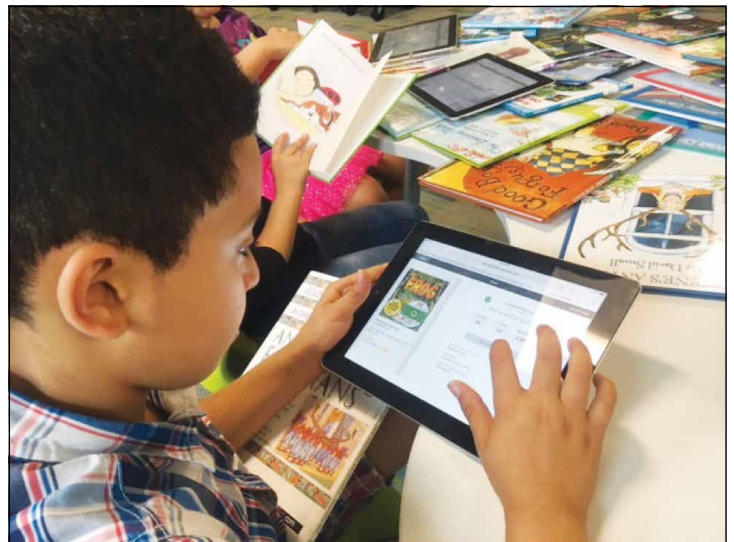
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Achraf Aidour views his online quiz score of 100% on "The Life Cycle of a Frog."



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# Haverhill Life

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