Accelerated Reader (AR) Handbook

Accelerated Reader (AR) is used at SJCS to help our students improve their reading ability, enjoyment, and comprehension by engaging them in outside reading and checking for understanding on that reading through online quizzes. The program is available as a database with students able to access the quiz for any available title from campus computers. The URL www.arbookfind.com lists the reading level and points of over 200,000 titles. Books are available in the school library, or parents can assist their student in selecting a title from their local library or store.

Introduction to Accelerated Reader

Reading, like any skill, requires both instruction and practice, but practice is not guaranteed to help students unless it is done correctly. Trainers at the gym design individualized programs to help people reach their goals, and we seek to do the same for our students. On a regular basis, SJCS students will take the **MAP Assessment**, which will determine their individual reading levels and provide us with the information we need to create personalized reading goals for each student.

Proper book choices will be engaging and challenging, while also understandable for students. When making book choices, several factors come into play:

1) **Book Level:** Book level is a measurement of the "readability" of a book, judging its sentence structure, word length, and grammatical complexity. You will find book level expressed by grade (ex. - a score of 4.5 indicates a book with text that could be read by a student with a reading level equivalent that of a 4th grader during the 5th month of school). Please note that most pleasure reading tops out at a 5th or 6th grade book level, so it is entirely possible that as your students get older, they will be reading books below their actual reading level or grade level. This is totally acceptable, as most books that are written at the higher levels are textbooks or manuals of some type.

2) **Interest Level:** Interest level measures the themes and ideas in a book. Some books with short sentences and less-difficult words are still geared to older readers in terms of their content. *The Catcher in the Rye*, for instance, is written at a 4.7 book level, but the content and themes are definitely only appropriate for more mature readers. By the same token, books intended for younger children can vary significantly in terms of their word and sentence complexity. Interest level is expressed in more general terms than book level: "LG" for lower grades (K-3), "MG" for middle grades (4-8), MG+ (grades 6 and up), and "UG" for upper grades (9-12).

3) **Points:** Points are determined for each AR book based on its length and grammatical difficulty. <u>Points do not determine the intellectual or artistic value of a book</u>. For example, a Shakespearean play would be worth far fewer points than a historical fiction novel simply because it has far fewer words. This doesn't mean that AR believes the novel to be of greater literary value than Shakespeare. AR measures student practice with points because this is the easiest way to determine how much volume of reading a student has done.

The regular MAP Assessments will determine each student's reading level and **Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)**: a range of book levels from which the student should be choosing to provide the best practice. This range may extend both above and below the student's current reading level because **"Reading Level"** indicates the *highest* level at which a student can perform but not necessarily the level at which they can read comfortably for hours.

The single most important factor in a student's reading improvement is **comprehension**, and the best growth occurs when students are reading books that allow them to answer a

minimum of 85%-90% of the questions correctly on the AR quizzes. That is why it is important for teachers and parents to help students choose appropriate books based on their ZPD and the three factors listed above.

Based on their reading level and ZPD, students will receive personalized reading goals showing how many points the student should try to accumulate from appropriate books during a quarter in order to be improving as a reader. Teachers will work to adjust these goals even more for emerging readers or high-ability readers.

Individual Grade-Level AR Guidelines

1st Grade
AR is not used in 1st Grade. However, independent reading homework will be assigned by the homeroom teacher.

2nd Grade
During the first semester (August - December) independent reading homework will be assigned by the homeroom teacher. Toward the end of Quarter 2 the 2nd Grade teacher will introduce the AR process to students and families to familiarize them with the AR program.

Accelerated Reader independent reading homework for 2nd Grade begins second semester (January - May) at which point the student and parent will complete an AR agreement. In 2nd Grade AR reading is not part of the student reading grades. Goal setting and reading comprehension strategies are part of the AR process and will be coordinated and communicated by the homeroom teacher. Reading logs support successful independent reading comprehension by requiring parents to record the title of the book and the number of times the book was read prior to taking an AR quiz.

Options for reading books are as follows:
- Student reads books (50% of reading must be this type)
- Parents read books with their child
- Parents read books to their child
- Student uses audio books

3rd, 4th, & 5th Grades
Students should read AR books within their suggested ZPD range although the teacher may approve books outside this range on a case-by-case basis. Consult the Accelerated Reader Book Find website for thousands of choices. www.arbookfind.com as students should make sure each book appears on the AR list.

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- Student reads books (50% of reading must be this type)
- Parents read books with their child
- Parents read books to their child
- Student uses audio books

Students, with the support of the homeroom teacher, will set a new AR point goal at the beginning of each of the four grading periods (quarters). AR goal completion is marked on the report card.

Once each quarter, students may complete book reports instead of taking the quiz. The teacher determines the point value of the book report once it is turned in. At least 50% of a student's earned AR points each quarter must be from personal reading, not books read aloud by the teacher in class.

- Grade 3 book reports must include the name of the book, author's name, main characters, 5-10 sentences about the plot, and the student's favorite part of the story. See below for the template to be handwritten and turned in.

- Grades 4 & 5 book reports must include Grade 3 requirements PLUS a description of each main character and the setting (place and time). A minimum of two handwritten pages is required. (NOTE: A student may type the response with pre-approval from the teacher.)

6th, 7th, & 8th Grades

Middle school students have very busy lives, a multitude of responsibilities inside and outside of school, and a variety of learning differences and preferences. Despite this, it is important for students to make time to read for leisure and pleasure. Enjoying reading and understanding what one is reading will support students in a successful future. Not only is it important for students to read fiction books of interest, it is necessary to increase the love and comprehension of nonfiction reading.

All middle school students will read a minimum of six novels independently throughout the year, two of which are required to be nonfiction. (NOTE: Audiobooks may be used upon approval.) Students will read <u>one</u> book in Quarters 1 and 4 and <u>two</u> books in Quarters 2 and 3. During the first week of each quarter, each Grades 6 - 8 student will be asked to decide whether he or she will complete the AR <u>or </u>AR alternative track for the given quarter. Some students thrive with AR structure and others prefer alternative assessment options. Our goal is to find a solution that allows students to increase their reading comprehension skills, think critically, expand vocabulary, reach their goals in a manageable and efficient way, experience success in meeting a goal, and instill a love of reading that resonates with them in the future.

<u>Option 1: AR Reading for Middle School</u>
AR is a program that allows students to choose a book that is of interest to them and take quizzes online to reach a certain number of points by the end of the quarter. Each quarter students choose a certain number of points as a goal; if the goal is met, the student receives 100% toward their AR grade for that quarter. The minimum quarter goal is set at ten points with students having the option to set the goal at or above the minimum in a given quarter. (NOTE: AR is 10% of the Language Arts quarter grade.)

<u>Option 2: AR Alternative for Middle School</u>
As an alternative to the AR program, any middle school student on the AR alternative plan will choose one (or two in Quarters 2 and 3) at or above reading level book at the beginning of each quarter. Reading levels are determined via the fall MAP testing. Each book must be approved by Mrs. Morris. Students will fill out a Google Form twice a month about the current book they are reading. This ensures that a student is reading independently and allows Mrs. Morris to check progress. This form will require students to articulate elements of story such as characters, plot, setting, and conflict. Students will answer questions based on what they have read in their book at that point. In addition, Mrs. Morris will meet with each student on the AR alternative plan after he or she has finished reading each chosen book. Students will meet with Mrs. Morris at the conclusion of the book(s) for a total of one or two 1:1 meetings per quarter.

AR Reading Log (2nd Grade)

Student Name:_____ Teacher Name: _____

Date	Book Title	AR Book Level	Check appropriate box				Point Value (enter when finished with book)	# of Minutes
			Read to	Read with	Read alone	Audio book		
Totals								

AR Book Report (3ʳᵈ Grade)

Student's Name: _____

Title of book: _____

Author: _____ Number of pages: _____

The main characters in the book are:

_____

_____

Write 5-10 sentences that tell what happened in the book.

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What was your favorite part of the book?

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