**The Purpose of Accelerated Reader**

**at Oak Forest Elementary**

At Oak Forest Elementary we utilize the Accelerated Reader (AR) program to help students improve in their reading abilities. The system is first and foremost a tool for teachers to identify student strengths and weaknesses for instructional purposes, and secondarily a motivational tool to encourage students to read independently. The program has two parts: STAR testing (not to be confused with the State STAAR tests) and AR Quizzes.

STAR Test and Results

STAR testing is the cornerstone of AR at Oak Forest. This test is administered at minimum three times a year for all students in grades 1-5. It is a computer based test that assesses a students’ reading fluency, comprehension, and language skills. The test is adaptive, it is personalized to meet a students’ individual reading abilities as it is administered.

The STAR test results are then utilized by teachers to help each student’s reading skills grow. Teachers are able to help students choose books that will maximize their learning and focus on the individual skills each student needs to improve. Because the test is administered multiple times throughout the year, teachers are able to monitor student progress to ensure that the teaching methods being utilized are effective and to make adjustments as needed.

After each STAR test, results are sent home so that you can monitor your child’s reading growth. These reports contain the following information:

* **PR**: *Percentile Rank* compares your student to students in the same grade across the nation. For example, a student with a 50 reads at a level greater than 50% of other students in the same grade nationally.
* **PR Range**: *Percentile Range* tells the range of scores your student is likely to have earned if they took the test multiple times.
* **IRL**: *Instructional Reading Level* is the grade level at which a student is at least 80% proficient at decoding and comprehending.
* **ZDP**: *Zone of Proximal Development* is the level range of books that are likely to be appropriately challenging for your student. **This is only an estimate.** Interest and prior knowledge have a heavy influence on a child’s ability to read and understand a text.

Accelerated Reading (AR) Quizzes

AR Quizzes are taken throughout the year after a student has thoroughly read a book. The AR system keeps track of what students test on and provides reports summarizing their test results. *These quizzes only test reading comprehension for the book*, and do not provide a detailed view of your child’s ability or progress.

While all students are provided with time to test during the school week, **every classroom teacher sets up his or her own routines and expectations for AR Quizzes**.

AR Awards

Each AR Quiz has a point value assigned based on the complexity of the book. After completing a quiz, students earn points based on their comprehension of the book. For example, if a student reads a book that is worth 1 point and receives a comprehension score of 80%, they will receive .8 points for the title. No points are earned for scores of 60% or lower.

Points are accumulated throughout the school year. At certain point milestones, awards are earned in the library. AR Awards take place in the library on Thursday afternoons. The Thursday AR Awards are not a big event, they are a simple recognition of your child’s dedication to reading and success with comprehension. Parents are not able to attend Thursday AR awards, however you are encouraged to celebrate with your child at home.

The points required for each award level increases from grade to grade. For more information on AR points, please contact your child’s teacher.

As a general goal, students should aim to achieve one award level per quarter. This means that by the end of the year, a student is doing great if they are at the Super Star level. That being said, every child is different. For some, the Accelerated level may be as far as they get. This is OK, the program is meant to encourage reading – anything that takes away from this is detrimental to a student’s progress. Your child’s teacher will work with your child to create the right goal for him or her.

What AR is Not

AR is not a competition or race.It is not something that students (or parents) should stress over. AR Quizzes are not part of the Oak Forest curriculum and will never take precedence over classroom instruction or activities.

AR is a fun way to encourage students to read and guide them to make book choices to help them develop their skills. It is a way for students to monitor their own reading comprehension and growth. It is designed entirely to help students improve.

If you have questions specific to your child about STAR testing or AR at Oak Forest, please contact your child’s teacher.

If you have general questions about the program, please contact the OFE librarian, Kersten Ficke, at kficke@houstonisd.org.