

Target-Setting Best Practices

Understanding ZPD and Targets

The software uses a student's first STAR Reading™ score of the year to estimate a zone of proximal development (ZPD) and to recommend appropriate reading practice targets. These are based on research data and are individualised for each student. *If you do not have STAR Reading, use one of the Target-Setting Charts in Resources.*

ZPD

The ZPD is the optimal level of difficulty for independent reading practice. The software estimates a ZPD based on a student's STAR score. Allow students to read throughout the entire zone. "Stair-stepping" students through their ZPD (three books at 2.0, three books at 2.1 and so on) is not supported by research and can turn students off to reading. Label books with their reading level so that students can easily find ones within their ZPD.

Average-Percentage-Correct Target

The most important target for all students is to average at least 85 per cent on quizzes. This indicates a student is reading with a high level of comprehension, which accelerates reading growth. Averages of 90 per cent are associated with even greater gains.

Point Target

Point targets indicate how much reading students are expected to do. The software provides point targets that are appropriate for each student's reading ability, the amount of time that you schedule for daily reading practice and the length of the marking period. In this way, point targets are individualised, fair and realistic. We do not recommend giving all students the same point target. If a student is frequently absent or if you are not able to schedule reading practice for part of the marking period, lower your students' point targets.

Book-Level Target

The book-level target helps ensure students read at a level appropriate for them as individuals. It represents a minimum level of difficulty. Targets are set at the low end of students' ZPDs to encourage them to read freely throughout an appropriate range.

The Target-Setting Process

Setting targets for reading practice motivates students, differentiates an essential component of an effective reading program and leads to greater skill development. Follow these steps to set and adjust targets:

1. **Review the ZPD and targets provided by the software.** Do they seem realistic for each student—ambitious, yet attainable?
2. **Set initial book-level targets at the low end of each student's ZPD.**
3. **Meet briefly with students one-on-one.** Your objective is for students to take ownership of their targets. Have a conversation in which you and the student talk about how their reading is going and what they would like to accomplish. Make sure students record their targets on their Student Reading Log or a Student Reading Plan. (Click Resources under the Accelerated Reader™ tab on the Renaissance Place™ Home page for reproducible forms.) Show students how to keep track of their progress by viewing the TOPS Report that appears after every quiz.
4. **Each marking period, check the data, adjust targets if needed and confer.** Targets automatically carry over from one marking period to the next. However, as the year goes on, your students will change and you will learn more about their capabilities. Reflect that information in their reading practice targets. Before adjusting targets, review any new STAR Reading scores. Have students' scores gone up significantly? Use the AR Diagnostic Report to review Accelerated Reader data. Compare what students have achieved against their targets. Best practices for adjusting targets are described on the next page.
5. **Recognise students who meet their targets.** Offering recognition based on meeting individualised targets means all students have an equal chance at success. Simple acknowledgments, like posting the names of students who meet their targets on a class bulletin board, are highly motivating.

Best Practices for Adjusting Reading Practice Targets

Common Situations	Best Practices
Student is averaging 85 per cent on Reading Practice Quizzes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Raise the average-percentage-correct target incrementally to 90 per cent.
Student is averaging close to 100% on Reading Practice Quizzes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Raise the top end of the ZPD and increase the book-level target. ▪ Avoid raising the point target at the same time. If you keep point expectations the same, the student will feel more comfortable taking on a challenging book.
Student is unable to maintain an average of 85 per cent on quizzes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ First have the student try shorter books within the ZPD. ▪ If the student still struggles, lower the low end of the ZPD, the book-level target and the point target. ▪ Evaluate the student's reading skills and strategies, and provide support as needed.
Student is unable to meet a point target.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Make sure the student is staying on task. ▪ Provide easy access to the library so the student does not have to wait to find a new book. ▪ If the student is an English as an Additional Language (EAL) learner, you may need to lower the point target. EALs often read more slowly than native speakers.
Student is a high-ability reader.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Do not prohibit the student from reading relatively easy books that are appropriate for his or her year in school but encourage the student to read harder books as well. For example, a 5th-year student who is reading at an 8th-year level will likely want to read the same books her friends are reading. Allow her to do so while encouraging her to also tackle books that will help her reading skills develop. ▪ Use the Target-Setting Chart on the next page to identify a point target that is more in line with the student's year in school. ▪ Emphasise wide reading in a variety of genres.
Student's STAR score has gone up.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ If the student has been consistently scoring 90 or 100 per cent on AR quizzes, raise the top end of the student's ZPD and boost the book-level target while keeping the point target stable. ▪ If the student is averaging below 85 per cent on AR quizzes despite showing gains on STAR Reading, find out why. Has the student been reading books above his ZPD? After finishing a book, has the student waited more than 24 hours before taking a quiz? Does the student lack the comprehension strategies needed for longer texts?
Student's STAR score has gone down.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ If the student has been doing well on quizzes and meeting targets, maintain the targets for the next marking period. STAR scores sometimes fluctuate due to differences in testing conditions.