

Success for All

A Summary of:

“Effects of Success for All on TAAS Reading Scores: A Texas Statewide Evaluation.” *Phi Delta Kappan* (June 2001), 82 (10): 750-756. By Eric A. Hurley, Anne Chamberlain, Robert E. Slavin, and Nancy A. Madden.

Focus

- ✓ Early Childhood
- ✓ Primary School
- Middle School
- Secondary School
- Postsecondary
- Extended Learning

Overview

Begun in Baltimore in the 1987/88 school year, Success for All (SFA) is a program designed to help all students achieve and retain high reading levels in primary education. SFA focuses on reading for ninety minutes a day, using both phonics and meaning-oriented approaches in a curriculum of story discussion, vocabulary, oral skills and comprehension that progresses through a set sequence of reading materials. The reading curriculum couples one-on-one tutoring with reduced class size and regrouping across grades into homogenous reading level classes. Student groups are reassessed and reassigned every eight weeks. Attempts are also made to integrate parents into the reading process at home and in the school. The study summarized here is only one of many published evaluations of SFA.

POPULATION

Almost all of the 111 schools that have implemented SFA in Texas are Title I schoolwide projects in high poverty areas. These schools served a total of 60,000 children. The data in this evaluation focuses on reading scores for students in third through fifth grades. On average, 85% of the children in SFA schools are designated economically disadvantaged (the state average is 45%). SFA schools also have more minority students when compared to the state average. Of the SFA students, 25% are African American, 62% Latino and 13% white (state averages are 14% African American, 35% Latino and 47% white). Students with limited English proficiency are also over-represented in SFA schools (27% vs. 12% statewide). Nationally, more than 1,800 schools in 48 states have implemented SFA. Schools in Australia, Canada, England, Israel and Mexico have adopted variations of the program as well.

Key Findings

Researchers compared gains in the percentage of students meeting the TAAS reading competency from the year before program implementation to 1998 and found that:

- ◆ Overall, SFA schools had greater gains than schools throughout Texas, and gains increased with each additional year of the program implementation. For instance, in schools with one year of implementation, the percentage of students passing the test increased 9.8%, compared to a 5.2% increase statewide. Schools with four years of implementation gained 18.8%, compared to 11% statewide.
- ◆ For African American students in SFA schools, the gains were 5.62 percentage points greater than those in control schools. For instance, in schools with one year of SFA implementation, 12.3% more African Americans passed the test,

compared to 8.4% more for African Americans in statewide schools. For schools with four years of implementation, the gains for African Americans were 22.7%, compared to 17% for African Americans in statewide schools.

- ◆ In addition, the score gap between African American and white students in SFA schools significantly narrowed. At the pretest, African American students in the 1995 cohort trailed white students by 24.6%, while at the post-test (1998) the gap was 6.4%. For African Americans statewide, the gap was 13.8%.
- ◆ Latino students in SFA schools also showed statistically significant gains in relation to statewide Latinos. For one-year SFA schools, the percentage of Latinos passing the test increased by 12.2%, compared to 7.6% statewide. Latinos in four-year schools gained 18.2% compared to the 13.4% gain for statewide Latinos.
- ◆ White students showed the same trends, with students in SFA schools gaining more than other white students, but the difference, when analyzed at the school level, was not statistically significant. White students in the four-year cohort gained 19%, while those in the state as a whole gained 13%.

Program Components

- ◆ In Success for All, students learn with same-age peers for the majority of the day, but they break into cross-grade groups, by reading level, for ninety-minute classes. Teachers and tutors can then instruct at the appropriate levels without stigmatizing students with “all day tracking.” Reevaluation of group assignments every eight weeks also avoids tracking stigma.
- ◆ SFA begins in kindergarten with an introduction to letters and letter sounds through, for instance, interaction with a puppet named “Alphie” who teaches the students a letter of the day. The “Reading Roots” program emphasizes phonetically decodable text, partner reading, creative writing, comprehension instruction and cooperative learning.
- ◆ The SFA program continues through the fifth grade, offering increasingly difficult reading, discussion and comprehension assignments as the students’ reading levels rise. Emphasis is on cooperative learning, meta-cognitive skills, comprehension and writing.
- ◆ SFA costs approximately \$160 per student in the first year and \$60 thereafter. Most schools pay for the program with Title I funds, often supplemented with CSRD grants.

Contributing Factors

Staff Development and Model Fidelity

A program facilitator works in all of the sites to ensure accurate implementation of the SFA design. Three-day summer training sessions and continued on-site staff training during the year further support program implementation. Teachers receive detailed manuals and reading lists. While this contributes to successful replication of the model, some teachers find the structure of SFA restrictive.

Individual Tutoring

Each SFA program evaluated had a tutoring component, with one-on-one tutoring lasting twenty minutes a day. SFA focuses tutoring initiatives on first graders having difficulty reading, but it provides tutoring for other students as well.

Parent Involvement

In some SFA sites parents participate on the program advisory board or as classroom volunteers. A family support team teaches parents to help their children read with “Raising Readers” (or “*Creando Lectores*”) programs and provides support for

students with health or family problems. The family support team includes the school’s Title I parent liaison, vice-principal (if any), counselor (if any), program facilitator and other appropriate school staff.

STUDY METHODOLOGY

The evaluators reviewed statewide data from the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS), including all schools that had begun the program from 1994 to 1997 (111 schools). They compare reading score gains in the TAAS from the year pre-SFA to 1998 (in 1999 the state significantly changed the TAAS administration making comparisons with earlier data unreliable). SFA schools were also compared to all schools in the state. Effect sizes are given to all comparisons and vary between +0.17 (gains for white students) to +0.59 (overall gains). A +0.25 effect size is a moderate effect. The data is aggregate for the state, although researchers observe large variations among SFA schools.

EVALUATION & PROGRAM FUNDING

In 2001, SFA programs were located in 1,800 schools in 48 states and variations of the program had been implemented in Australia, Canada, Israel and Mexico. This study focuses on Texas schools.

GEOGRAPHIC AREAS

SAS serves the Philadelphia public schools.

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