

# Florida Center for Reading Research

Success for All

## What is Success for All?

*Success for All* (SFA) is a comprehensive reading, writing, and oral language development program for kindergarten through third graders. It can be used as a stand-alone curriculum or in conjunction with other basal curricula. Its underlying premise is that all children can and should be reading at grade level by the end of third grade. Several key features of the program work toward achieving this end. Initial reading instruction, delivered in 90 minute daily blocks, is thorough and research-based, and immediate intervention with tutors who are certified teachers is given each day to those students who are having difficulty reading on a level with their classmates. Furthermore, Family Support Teams and full-time *Success for All* Facilitators at each school work to support classroom instruction by encouraging parental involvement, working to decrease absenteeism, training teachers, overseeing student assessments, and assisting with decisions about group placement and tutoring. KinderRoots and ReadingRoots comprise the K-1 reading instructional program. The 2-3 grade components are called ReadingWings. A typical 90-minute instructional session for both levels would be a 50-55 minute lesson set between two 20-minute periods.

In KinderRoots and ReadingRoots, during the initial 20-minute period, called StaR (Story Telling and Retelling), popular children's literature selections are used in whole group instructional time. The purpose of this time is to help children understand the conventions of print and of reading, to appreciate the pleasures of literature and reading, to develop higher order thinking skills through teacher questioning and class discussion, to enhance oral language development, and to teach both listening and reading comprehension strategies.



The 50-minute Shared Story session is designed for children to read decodable books in conjunction with the teacher. That is, the student reads the lines of student text on each page that he is equipped to decode, and the teacher reads smaller print lines on each page that add interest and richness to the stories. Each shared story is designed to be taught across a 3-day span and the teacher is provided with detailed lesson plans that cover a wide range of instructional activities. Children often work in pairs. In this way, phonemic awareness, phonics, handwriting and letter formation are directly taught and immediately incorporated into applied textual reading. The final 20 minutes of the Roots level program is an oral language development component (Language Links) designed to promote oral language and writing skills and to develop social skills.

In the ReadingWings level of the program, the focus of the first 20-minute period is developing listening comprehension. During the 55-minute core instructional time, students work in cooperative teams comprised of 4 or 5 students each. Instructional packets called "Treasure Hunts" are available for the teams to work on, with a separate Treasure Hunt created for each of a wide variety of children's literature books, anthologies of children's literature, and traditional basal stories. Each Treasure Hunt is geared toward the group cooperatively working on comprehension, study of

literary aspects, vocabulary, fluency, and writing skills. Cooperative learning skills are taught and reinforced, such as holding each team member accountable for information learned, ensuring the active participation of each team member, developing strong social skills to maximize other team members' performance as a team player, justifying thoughts and responses, and listening to and appropriately critiquing others' contributions. The final 20-minute segment in ReadingWings is BookClub, during which students read silently books of their choice.

There are several unique features of the *Success for All* program:

- Students are grouped by reading level/ability, not by grade level. Therefore a single reading class might consist of children of a variety of ages.
- Students are assessed every eight weeks, so that groups remain fluid and children are monitored and moved appropriately on a frequent basis.
- Cooperative learning between students and individual accountability are strong components of the program, maximizing children's opportunities for involvement and responses.
- Support teams are in place not only for immediate intervention when necessary, but also to help with such impediments to reading as the need for eyeglasses, etc.
- *Success for All* requires whole-school involvement, including strong leadership from the principal and administration.

### Is *Success for All* aligned with Reading First?

The components of *Success for All* are aligned with the five essential components of Reading First. Phonemic awareness activities are introduced at the kindergarten level through songs, games, and rhymes, and are further developed with blending, segmenting, and sound manipulation activities. A systematic, synthetic phonics program, with a new element as of the 2002-2003 school year, Fast Track Phonics, is used to teach beginning readers basic letter/sound combinations. Decodable texts are used to allow the children opportunity to practice their emerging decoding skills. In addition, children work in pairs on "Shared Treasures", which give children practice with phonemes, decodable words, sight words, and brief sentences, all coordinated with the decodable stories. Vocabulary is developed through working in thematic units, and in grades 2 and 3, with a listening comprehension and structured writing program that is integrated with the stories read in Reading Roots and Reading Wings. Fluency is strengthened through paired and repeated readings. Comprehension is a pivotal part of the *Success for All* program, as there is a pronounced emphasis on teaching children metacognitive comprehension strategies such as retelling, asking questions, sequencing, making predictions, and using graphic organizers. Beginning in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, children begin participating in pairs or teams in "Treasure Hunts," which are comprehension and writing activities based on books from children's literature and stories from traditional basal reading programs. Comprehension skills such as finding the main idea, fact vs. opinion, cause and effect, and figurative language are incorporated at this level.

*Success for All* provides an extensive professional development program. Before implementation, the principal and facilitator from the school attend a week-long training session to become thoroughly acquainted with the program. At the school site, there is a 3-day training for all teachers given in August. Not only does this training prepare teachers to teach with the *Success for All* program and materials, but it

educates them as well about reading development, causes of reading difficulties, the essential components of reading instruction, and the use and interpretation of assessment. In subsequent years, schools receive follow-up on-site training and consultation. The principal and facilitator attend monthly Leadership Academy sessions.

### Research Support for Success for All

*Success for All*, developed in 1987, was founded on principles of reading instruction that were showing or had been shown through scientific research to be effective in teaching children to read. These principles favored an approach in which phonics skills are taught explicitly. This approach has continued to be validated since the program's inception. *Success for All* is supported by current reading research trends and outcomes.



From its early stages, *Success for All* has been keenly interested in monitoring its effectiveness through research. As a result there are many years' worth of studies that have been conducted with *Success for All (SFA)* schools and matched control schools. In general, schools have been matched in terms of poverty level, historical achievement level, and ethnicity, among other factors. The majority of studies used the following reading measures: Woodcock Reading Mastery Test (Word Identification, Word Attack, Passage Comprehension), and the Durrell Analysis of Reading Difficulty (oral reading scale). Pretest scores were used as covariates in analyses of variance that were employed to analyze the data gathered. Although many of the studies have been conducted by the authors or others affiliated with Johns Hopkins University, where the program was developed, there have also been many studies conducted by third party investigators. These are concisely reported in "Research on Achievement Outcomes of Success for All: A Summary and Response to Critics," by Slavin & Madden (2000). Selected studies and results are reported below.

An early study (Slavin, Madden, Karweit, Livermon, & Dolan, 1990) examined the outcomes of a first-year implementation of *SFA* in a Baltimore area school in which *SFA* was anticipated to be a five-year project. The study encompassed preschool through grade 3. Seventy-six per cent of the school's children qualified for free lunch. After one year of implementation, participants were measured using the assessment tools described above. In addition, scores from the group-administered reading comprehension and reading vocabulary on the California Achievement Test were analyzed. At the kindergarten level, *SFA* students scored significantly higher than control students on several language and reading measures, including subtests of the Test of Oral Language Development (TOLD) and Merrill Language Screening Test. The strongest effects were seen at the third grade level, but when averaging across all measures and grades 1-3, *SFA* students outscored control students by an average effect size of +0.50. An effect size of .50 is generally considered to be a strong, educationally significant effect. There were no significant differences on the CAT scores. However, on individually administered measures, the average effect size was +0.63 (+0.80 for the lowest achieving 25% of students). Additionally, in this pilot school, both the number of referrals for special education and the number of special education placements decreased compared to previous years.

Researchers from the University of Memphis used a quasi-experimental design to conduct a study comparing the performance of students at two *SFA* schools with

that of students at two matched control schools on both individually administered reading tests and state-mandated standardized tests (Ross, Smith, & Casey, 1997). Students were first through third graders in racially and ethnically mixed school populations from lower and lower-middle socio-economic homes. The investigators were interested in relationships among the following variables: program (*SFA* vs. control), ethnicity (minority vs. nonminority), performance level on a language pretest (above vs. below 25%), and grade level. Specific results at each grade level with regard to each factor are given in the article, but, to summarize, *SFA* schools outperformed control schools on both individually administered and standardized tests in grades 1 and 2. In grade 3, there was not a significant difference between the two programs. Researchers noted the higher tendency of minority students to “close the gap” between current performance and average readers in *SFA* classes. Also noted was the finding that program effects in the first two years of implementation were considerably stronger for all grades than they were in the third year of implementation. Factors considered to be possible contributors to this effect were steadily improving reading instruction in the control schools, and decreasing quality of implementation of the program in the *SFA* schools.

In sum, *Success for All* is well-supported by research in two ways: its instructional features are founded on instructional practices in phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension that are strongly rooted in scientific research, and there is an abundance of research that demonstrates the effectiveness of *Success for All* at the first through third grade levels when there is reasonable fidelity in its implementation.

## Strengths & Weaknesses

### Strengths of *Success for All*:

- *Success for All* is a literature-rich curriculum, with an abundance of high-quality children’s books available to and used by the children.
- The *Success for All* Shared Treasures and Treasure Hunts can be used with the reading stories of any basal reader series, making it compatible with readers that the school may already have.
- The cooperative learning feature is well-structured so that the time and the learning that that time yields are maximally effective for the students.
- *Success for All* uses all available resources within the administration, the community, the family, and the faculty to meet the needs of all children as they learn to read. The *Success for All* goal is to have all students reading on or above grade level by the end of the third grade.
- There is an established, sturdy research base underlying both the efficacy of the *Success for All* program and the principles upon which it has been written.
- Teacher manuals are well organized, very well written, and contain detailed lesson plans for teachers to follow. There would be a minimum of confusion for any teacher or administrator desiring to implement the program, even though there are multiple components to the program that require coordinating.

### Weaknesses of *Success for All*:

- Although this is not a weakness of the program per se, schools who are considering implementing *Success for All* should be fully aware that it is a whole-school model for preventing reading difficulties. Consistent commitment to its successful implementation by all teachers, and at every leadership level, are considered essential for its success.

## Which Florida counties have schools that implement Success for All?

Alachua County	352-955-7527
Brevard County	321-631-1911
Clay County	904-284-6510
Dade County	305-995-1428
Dixie County	352-498-6131
Lafayette County	386-294-1351
Lake County	352-253-6510
Okaloosa County	850-833-3100
Orange County	407-317-3202
Polk County	863-534-0500
Putnam County	386-329-0510
Seminole County	407-320-0000
St. Lucie County	772-468-5021

### For More Information

[www.successforall.net](http://www.successforall.net)

### References

Ross, S.M., Smith, L.J., & Casey, J.P. (1997). Preventing early school failure: Impacts of Success for All on standardized test outcomes, minority group performance, and school effectiveness. *Journal of Education for Students Placed At Risk*, 2 (1), 29-53.



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Slavin, R.E., Madden, N.A., Karweit, N.L., Livermon, B.J. & Dolan, L. (1990). Success for all: First-year outcomes of a comprehensive plan for reforming urban education. *American Educational Research Journal*, 27 (2), 255-278.

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Important Note: FCRR Reports are prepared in response to requests from Florida school districts for review of specific reading programs. The reports are intended to be a source of information about programs that will help teachers, principals, and district personnel in their choice of materials that can be used by skilled teachers to provide effective instruction. Whether or not a program has been reviewed does **not** constitute endorsement or lack of endorsement by the FCRR.

For more information about FCRR go to: [www.fcrr.org](http://www.fcrr.org)

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