

Florida Center for Reading Research

SuccessMaker Enterprise

What is SuccessMaker Enterprise?

SuccessMaker Enterprise is an educational software program intended to address a wide range of students in grades K-8, including struggling readers, students learning the English language, as well as students in need of extra challenge. Through a blend of literature-based readings and skill activities, this extensive software program is designed to complement a school's core reading program. *SuccessMaker Enterprise* consists of an array of courses in Reading and Language Arts, English Language Development and Math. The focus of this report will be on courses directly related to reading development. Courses fall into two broad categories: foundation courses that focus uniquely on skill building, and exploreware courses that are more open-ended, and involve written and recorded responses. Foundations courses are Reading Readiness (K-1), Initial Reading (1-2), and Readers Workshop (2-5). Exploreware courses include Discover English (K-3), First Adventures Bookshelf (K-2), Reading Adventures Primary (K-2), Reading Adventures (3-6) and Reading Investigations (6-8).

The *SuccessMaker Enterprise* program may be implemented in a variety of settings but is most frequently used in the classroom and/or a computer lab setting. A session, in which a student works individually at the computer can vary in length depending on the course, with an average session as short as 7 minutes or as long as 35 minutes. The developers of *SuccessMaker Enterprise* suggest 3 sessions per week as a minimum for each student, with 4-5 sessions per week as the recommended amount for students to achieve reading gains. Teachers manage the software and adapt settings depending on the individual needs of students.

The extensiveness of the *SuccessMaker Enterprise* courseware is noteworthy and presents teachers with a plethora of instructional possibilities. The courses provide supplemental practice in the development of vocabulary and comprehension, phonics skills, and writing. Based on the concept of mastery learning, the *SuccessMaker Enterprise* program offers students instruction that is individualized and sequenced with immediate feedback. The overriding goal of the program is to increase student achievement through technology by three primary avenues: the use of instructional skills and strategies with a research base; customized instruction that is driven by assessment; and instruction that continually adapts to the needs of each learner. The courses within *SuccessMaker Enterprise* offer students the chance to develop literacy skills along a continuum that builds cumulatively, beginning with basic reading skills and eventually incorporating critical thinking and reasoning skills. A description of the reading courses follows.



The focus of Reading Readiness (K-1) is to develop language and conceptual skills that are precursors to reading. Skill work appears in activities that include letter identification, and visual and auditory discrimination. Oral vocabulary building concentrates on categories, logical relationships, opposites, and descriptive location words such as in, under, and next. Understanding of spoken language is developed through literal and interpretive comprehension activities that focus on details, main idea, and character feelings. Rebus exercises are used in an attempt to stimulate

awareness of spoken language and print. Colorful pictures support the ability to recognize letters of the alphabet as well as oral and written vocabulary. Exercise format resembles a worksheet and is presented on a static screen with little animation. Audio support is repetitive and somewhat monotone. Each session is approximately 7 minutes.

Initial Reading (1-2) is organized into 6 strands that target letter identification, patterns, sight words, and word, sentence and passage comprehension. Students answer literal and interpretive comprehension questions as well as locate details, identify the main idea, draw conclusions and predict outcomes. Colorful graphics support the purpose of each activity on a nearly static screen that simulates a worksheet. Audio support is repetitive and somewhat monotone. A session with a mixture of strands is 10 minutes.

Discover English (K-3) supports English language development through 2 main strands, Listening and Speaking Experiences, Reading and Writing Experiences, and 4 supplemental strands. This course develops aural and written vocabulary, listening comprehension, letter identification, and phonemic awareness through a wide assortment of classic children's literature, poems, stories, and real life situations. Stories are animated with sound effects or told through videos. Vocabulary words are always associated with colorful pictures to better support emergent literacy skills for English language learners (ELL) and other students in need of extra language exposure. If requested, Pearson Digital Learning will customize a Discover English course for second language learners in grades K-5. Session length is approximately 20 minutes.

First Adventures Bookshelf (K-2) includes listening, reading, writing, and speaking activities based on a collection of 22 primary-level books, with Spanish adaptations for 6 of the lessons. Students can choose to listen to an expressive reading of the story, or, they can read the story first. As students read, they may click on a word to hear it pronounced, or they may listen to the entire sentence read before they attempt the reading. Vocabulary building is further enhanced when students click on objects from the story's illustrations to hear the name of the object and read the label of the object. Comprehension activities follow each story. For words that are highlighted, ELL students may use the course's bilingual glossary to hear the word, its definition, and a sample sentence including an illustration. One session is approximately 20 minutes.

Reading Adventures Primary (K-2) consists of eight thematic units with authentic literature that provide the context for a variety of reading experiences. The content of this course is distributed across the three main strands of Phonics, Word Analysis, and Comprehension. Elements of these skill strands are found in pre-reading, during-reading, and after-reading activities. Pedagogical methods are explicit, systematic and include practice that is guided and independent. Students experiencing difficulty with a comprehension skill or concept receive tutorials. This course offers an appealing balance of skill-based activities interwoven with literature-based activities. One session is approximately 20 minutes.

Reading Adventures (3-6) uses fiction and non-fiction books of different genres to provide 100 literature lessons, 25 lessons for each grade level. Two literature lessons per grade level are in Spanish. Three interactive features enhance the literature lessons: vocabulary words with strategies and clues for determining meaning, strategy prompts, and footnotes for additional information. Activities take place before, during, and after reading. A glossary of more than 500 vocabulary words from the course provide a word definition, a sample sentence using the word, a

Spanish translation, and audio support in English and Spanish. The sequencer, web, and story map are tools that help students to visually organize their thinking. Session length is 20 minutes.

The emphasis of Readers Workshop (2-5) is in foundational reading skills and higher order thinking skills. Included in this course are five skill strands: Word Meaning, Word Analysis, Literal Comprehension, Interpretive Comprehension, and Reference Skills; and two integrated reading strands: Passage Comprehension and Thematic Lessons. The Passage Comprehension strand functions as a tutorial by infusing skill exercises previously introduced from the other strands. These activities consist of reading sentences and passages. Exercises in Reader's Workshop are presented on a static screen that highly resembles a work sheet, with very few colorful graphics and no animation. Session length is 15 minutes.

The purpose of Reading Investigations (6-8) is to develop reading comprehension and critical thinking abilities with a balance of fiction and non-fiction literature. This is accomplished in 3 ways: lessons based on excerpts from literature, social studies and science that require students to read, think, and respond; strategy lessons that consist of figurative language interpretation, and analysis of character, word and text structure; finally, vocabulary lessons which draw upon vocabulary from the excerpts. Images on the computer screen are reminiscent of worksheets. A student session is 20 minutes unless flexible session length has been set as an option.

Several distinctive features inherent in the design of the *SuccessMaker Enterprise* program are pertinent to understanding how instruction is monitored, assessed and individualized. One such feature is the software's management system, which enables teachers to choose appropriate models of instruction, or enrollment options in order to best meet the needs of individual students. Another important design feature is a process called Initial Placement Motion (IPM). Due to the software's underlying algorithm, IPM determines the instructional level and best sequence of instruction for each student by assessing the student's performance on a series of activities. Another process called Intelligent Tutoring continuously adapts the presentation of content based on a student's pattern of response. This determines whether the student will advance or move back, thus allowing the student to always work at his/her own level. When students respond correctly to a sequence of activities, the program considers it mastered. An incorrect response to an exercise however, may result in one of three different interventions: sequential practice, which consists of more of the same type of exercise; a tutorial, which gives explicit instructions for answering the exercise; or practice with a prerequisite skill, in which previously learned skills are presented again. After the intervention, the skill is either considered mastered, or it is saved for a process called delayed presentation. Delayed presentation is a strategy used to present difficult material at a later time. Frequent reviews of previously presented skills provide students with an additional means to ensure understanding.

A student session with *SuccessMaker Enterprise* presents itself as a series of exercises from a combination of strands or skill areas called a mixed presentation. The purpose of the mixed presentation is to offer students a balance in foundational skills and higher level thinking skills. Depending on the outcome of IPM and Intelligent Tutoring however, the emphasis of a mixed presentation may change for a student session. Finely tuning the individualization process in this manner results in some strands figuring more prominently than others until mastery is achieved. A vital feature of the *SuccessMaker Enterprise* management system is its ability to generate a variety of reports that are based on the information from the program's embedded,

performance-based assessment. Reports not only provide information on individual performance and overall group achievement, they also alert teachers to objectives that have not been mastered by the students. Additionally, reports can estimate the time required by individual students to reach instructional goals. Monitoring student growth in this manner permits teachers to more effectively adapt and/or modify their own instructional practices.

How is SuccessMaker Enterprise aligned with Reading First?

SuccessMaker Enterprise contains the five components of reading instruction, phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension in amounts that vary considerably. Emphasis of these components changes within the different courses and this is determined in part by the target grade levels.

Phonological awareness activities in Reading Readiness include practice with rhyming words and word discrimination. Phonemic awareness and phonics activities in Reading Readiness and Initial Reading are intermingled and primarily focus on letter identification and initial, medial and final sound discrimination. The individual phoneme is never made explicit in these two courses however; instead, it is inferred. For example, when introducing the short *a* sound, the word *man* appears with the *a* underlined and a voice then states: "The word *man* has the short sound of *a*. Mark the picture that has the short sound of *a*." Most frequently, students are told to find a word that begins with the same letter as the word just pronounced. To be exact, these activities are exercises in letter identification and indirectly relate to phonemic awareness. Discover English is the only course that includes sound identification activities in which the actual sound is explicitly stated and these activities focus uniquely on sound position. When students experience difficulty with a phonics skill in Reading Readiness, Initial Reading or Discover English, it is addressed by repeated practice of the same type of exercise. Error correction in Reading Adventures Primary continuously scaffolds understanding by breaking the task into smaller parts. This is done repeatedly in a variety of interesting ways in an attempt to ensure understanding. Then, to provide extra practice with a sound or blend that has been problematic, the student reads a decodable story. Although a majority of work in phonemic awareness for this program is embedded in phonics exercises, the above description of repeated practice and scaffolding may be helpful for students unable to distinguish individual sounds in words.

Phonic and structural analysis are explicitly and systematically introduced and practiced in Initial Reading and Reading Adventures Primary but not with Reader's Workshop. The word analysis strand in Reader's Workshop refers to work with consonant pattern recognition, vowel pattern recognition, compound word identification, and identification of root words with prefixes or suffixes, to name a few. This is misleading since these activities do not guide students in the appropriate use of phonic or structural analysis to assist them in becoming independent readers. Rather, the student reads a sentence in cloze form and, from a choice of 2 or 3 words, chooses the correct word to fill in the blank. Answer choice depends on the student's understanding of the 2 or 3 words. If a mistake is made, the student is told to try again and the tutorial message that is sometimes present does not scaffold understanding. It is assumed that students learned word analysis techniques to mastery in the Initial Reading course.

Fluent, expressive reading is frequently modeled in the various courses of *SuccessMaker Enterprise*. Students have the opportunity to read by themselves, or to read along with text as individual words or entire phrases are highlighted. There are

no specific activities within the program though, that emphasize repeated reading. Dimensions of fluency are indirectly addressed by the early reading activities that focus on automatic recognition of letters.

Vocabulary and comprehension development are strengths of *SuccessMaker Enterprise*. The literature-based lessons are surrounded by an assortment of skill and strategy exercises that are interesting and engaging. There is a strong emphasis on the development of background information within the *SuccessMaker Enterprise* courses; often this is accomplished by full motion videos. During story reading, students may click on words to hear pronunciations, or, they may click on a highlighted word for the definition and a sentence using the word in context. Story word activities appear before and after the reading. While reading, students are able to access an explanation of how a particular strategy or skill may be helpful; they might be asked to make a prediction about what will happen next; or, they might be given a rhyming word or an antonym to increase understanding of one of the story words. Main idea and details, predicting, retelling, cause and effect, characterization, comparing and drawing inferences are examples of comprehension strategies and skills used in this program. Frequent use of written response occurs in an on-screen notebook that enables students to write a prediction or set a purpose for reading. After reading, students use the notebook to summarize or determine whether or not their prediction was correct. With many stories, the audio-recording icon permits students to record their predictions or ideas rather than writing them in the notebook. Graphic organizers are prevalent in *SuccessMaker Enterprise* and students are led through a step-by-step explanation of their use as a means to increase understanding.

Several considerations are relevant when planning for the most effective implementation of *SuccessMaker Enterprise*. As is true of any reading program, success is highly dependent upon fidelity of implementation. To accomplish this, it bears emphasizing that ongoing professional development with a consultant from Pearson Digital Learning is highly recommended, given the enormity of this program and its staggering amount of options. Teachers need a sophisticated understanding of how to choose from and set up the various instructional options so that students receive maximum benefit from this program. Without this, the myriad possibilities for implementation can be overwhelming and easily overlooked. If teachers adapt the courses and frequently check reports to make instructional decisions, *SuccessMaker Enterprise* appears to have the capability of providing students with a balance of skill work and critical thinking skills. When a program is easy for students to navigate independently, the risk is that teachers become uninvolved. To achieve meaningful reading gains, active teacher participation is essential.

The exercises in the *SuccessMaker Enterprise* courses strongly resemble those found in standardized achievement tests, such as the FCAT. Therefore teachers appreciate the possibility for students to receive extra practice with these skills. Because students in the upper grades are often bored by the worksheet appearance of the static screen, it is important for teachers to closely follow students to control for random checking off of answers so that important instructional time is not wasted.

A final consideration for schools before purchasing the *SuccessMaker Enterprise* courses pertains to their purpose for using the program. If schools are choosing the program as remediation for students scoring at level 1 on the FCAT, for students who are repeating 3rd grade, or for any struggling reader more than 1 year below grade level, the program is not likely to be sufficient. The primary problem is that there is not enough systematic instruction, rather than systematic practice, contained within the computer based activities of *SuccessMaker Enterprise*. Students with relatively

severe reading difficulties need intensive intervention with a strong instructional focus. *SuccessMaker Enterprise* might be helpful for extra support in addition to the intensive intervention, but should not be considered a stand-alone solution for students' intervention needs. Additionally, kindergarten and 1st grade teachers may wish to wait before introducing struggling readers to the *SuccessMaker Enterprise* program. These students might be more successful with the program once they have been introduced to all of the letters of the alphabet during teacher directed lessons.

Pearson Digital Learning offers technical services and assistance in a variety of professional development "bundles" depending on the needs of a school or school district. Guidance is available on multiple aspects of *SuccessMaker Enterprise*, such as implementation, time schedules, reading levels, instructional models, and report generation and interpretation. With the initial purchase of the program, a minimum 3-day package is required, although the company highly recommends more. One or two teachers from a school or district often act as liaisons with a consultant from the company. All professional development packages carry a fee. A consultant with the online help system provides extra support to teachers who have Internet access.

Research Support for SuccessMaker Enterprise

The *SuccessMaker Enterprise* program derives from the early research in computer-assisted instruction led by Dr. Patrick Suppes at Stanford University more than 30 years ago. The idea was to create a software tutor that responded to the individual needs of students and provided teachers with valuable progress information. *SuccessMaker Enterprise*, marketed by Pearson Digital learning was originally sold by Computer Curriculum Corporation (CCC). The program is widely implemented in schools throughout the country and numerous studies have evaluated its effectiveness in terms of standardized achievement tests.

An independent study (Brush, 1998) was conducted in Michigan schools in 1998 to determine the efficacy of CCC's foundations software and exploreware software. The purpose of the study was to determine which of the software courses was more effective in raising student achievement in reading and mathematics, the foundations software, the exploreware software, or a combination of the two types of software. Students (n=1237) in 9 elementary schools, grades 1-5, participated in the study. They were randomly selected from 45 classrooms in the district, 9 classrooms per grade level. Students then were randomly assigned to one of the 3 treatment groups: the foundations group, the exploreware group, and a combination foundations and exploreware group. The Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) (Hoover, Hieronymus, Dunbar, & Frisbie, 1993) was used for pre and post testing of math and reading achievement. Overall, during a 10-week period, students were exposed to 350 minutes of computer time focused on reading skills. A 3X5X2 (CCC group by grade level by gender) ANOVA was used to determine achievement differences. The foundations and exploreware group had significantly higher posttest scores than the group that only received the foundations software. Posttest scores for the exploreware only group were not significantly different than those of either of the other groups. Visual inspection of pre and posttest scores coupled with these analyses indicate that whereas the foundations and exploreware group showed growth across time, neither of the other two groups demonstrated substantial change in scores across time.

Operation Safety Net (OSN) was a longitudinal project conducted in a large Florida school district (Levitt, 2000). Its purpose was to raise the reading achievement scores of students in Title 1 schools listed as "critically low" by the Florida Department of Education by implementing two major interventions, the Success for All curriculum

and two computer-assisted programs. The 44 treatment schools received the Success For All curriculum; treatment schools in the south of the school district received the CCC technology and treatment schools in the north received the technology of Jostens Learning Corporation (JLC). An initial analysis using repeated measures ANOVA revealed no significant differences between the intervention schools and 12 comparison schools on the Reading Comprehension subtest of the Stanford 8 Achievement tests. Follow-up analyses comparing those who received CCC as opposed to those receiving JLC showed no significant differences. In this study, apparently, using the CCC curriculum to support growth of students in the Success for All curriculum did not produce stronger reading growth than the Success for All curriculum by itself.

In sum, the Michigan study, which was a well-designed study that included random assignment, showed that the combination of exploreware and foundations software was more effective than the foundations software alone. It is difficult to tell from this study whether either exploreware or foundations would produce stronger reading gains compared to a group that was not exposed to any of the software, as there was not a control group in the study that did not have experience with at least one form of the software. In the other study of this software available to us, children receiving *SuccessMaker Enterprise* showed no advantage in reading growth over a group that received just the Success for All core curriculum. The next step for *SuccessMaker Enterprise* would be a randomized control trial that evaluates whether exploreware or foundations alone are effective in raising student academic achievement in reading and math.

Strengths & Weaknesses

Strengths of *SuccessMaker Enterprise*:

- The sequence of instruction adapts frequently according to a student's pattern of response, offering course work that is individualized.
- The variety of reports generated by the program enables teachers to closely monitor student progress and respond quickly to problems that may arise.
- Children are not aware of the initial assessment since it is masked through regular course activities.
- The content and objectives of the courses reflect most of the state and national standards in reading.
- Teacher reference materials and additional lesson materials are available online.
- Instruction is explicit and systematic in letter identification, vocabulary and comprehension.
- Numerous vocabulary and comprehension skills and strategies are used and taught within the various courses.
- If teachers thoroughly familiarize themselves with the intricacies of the program, *SuccessMaker Enterprise* courses offer a great deal of flexibility.

Weaknesses of *SuccessMaker Enterprise*:

- Activities in phonemic awareness are mainly embedded rather than explicit.

Which Florida districts have schools that implement SuccessMaker?

Baker County	904-259-0401	Leon County	850-487-7147
Bay County	850-872-7700	Liberty County	850-643-2275
Bradford County	904-966-6800	Madison County	850-973-5022
Brevard County	321-631-1911	Martin County	772-219-1200
Broward County	954-765-6271	Monroe County	305-293-1400
Calhoun County	850-674-5927	Nassau County	904-321-5880
Charlotte County	941-255-0808	Okaloosa County	850-883-3100
Citrus County	352-726-1931	Okeechobee County	863-462-5000
Clay County	904-284-6510	Orange County	407-317-3202
Dade County	305-995-1428	Osceola County	407-870-4008
DeSoto County	863-494-4222	Palm Beach County	561-434-8200
Duval County	904-390-2115	Pasco County	813-794-2648
Escambia County	850-469-6130	Pinellas County	727-588-6011
Flagler County	386-437-7526	Polk County	863-534-0500
Franklin County	850-653-8831	Putnam County	386-329-0510
Gadsden County	850-627-9651	St. John's County	904-826-2100
Gulf School District	850-229-8256	St. Lucie County	772-468-5021
Hardee County	863-773-9058	Santa Rosa County	850-983-5000
Hendry County	863-674-4642	Sarasota County	941-927-9000
Hernando County	352-797-7001	Seminole County	407-320-0000
Highlands County	863-471-5564	Sumter County	352-793-2315
Hillsborough County	813-272-4050	Volusia County	386-734-7190
Holmes County	850-547-9341	Wakulla County	850-926-7131
Indian River County	772-564-3150	Walton County	850-892-8331
Lee County	941-337-8301	Washington County	850-638-6222

For More Information

www.PearsonDigital.com

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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.

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