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# **Summary of Research on the Success for All Reading Programs**



## Introduction

Success for All is the most extensively and successfully evaluated of all reading reform models. Studies in many locations by many researchers have found that Success for All increases students' reading performance, reduces special education placements, and has many other important outcomes. On the basis of this research, an independent U.S. Department of Education-sponsored review of twenty-two comprehensive reform models by the Comprehensive School Reform Quality Center at the American Institutes for Research gave Success for All the highest rating awarded for research quality and outcomes (CSRQ, 2005). Earlier reviews by Borman, Hewes, Overman, & Brown (2003), Herman (1999), Traub (1999), and Schacter (1999) came to similar conclusions. A review of twenty-two reading programs by Pearson & Stahl (2002) found Success for All to have the strongest research base of all core reading programs.

Research on the achievement outcomes of Success for All is summarized here. For more complete reviews, see Slavin & Madden (2001, 2006).

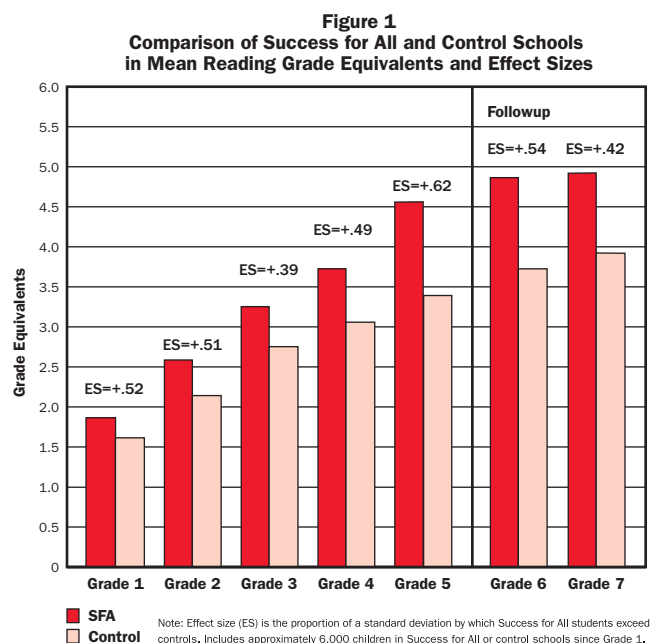
## National Randomized Evaluation of Success for All

The definitive evaluation of the reading outcomes of Success for All was a United States Department of Education-funded evaluation involving forty-one Title I schools throughout the United States. Schools were randomly assigned to use Success for All or continue with existing programs in grades K–2. At the end of the three-year study, children in the Success for All schools were achieving at significantly higher levels on all three reading measures used (Borman, Slavin, Cheung, Chamberlain, Madden, & Chambers, 2005; Slavin, Madden, Cheung, Borman, Chamberlain, & Chambers, 2006). This study was described by Grover Whitehurst, director of the Institute of Education Sciences at the United States Department of Education, as “a sophisticated study that uses everything the evaluation field has come to recognize as high-quality” (Viadero, 2005).

## Studies Using Individually Administered Reading Measures

Many studies have compared Success for All and matched control schools on standardized tests designed to be given individually, especially the Woodcock Reading Mastery Test and the Durrell Analysis of Reading Difficulty. These studies (e.g., Madden et al., 1993; Ross et al., 1995; Ross et al., 1997) followed children in Success for All and control schools starting in kindergarten or first grade into the later grades. They were carried out by three research institutions in high-poverty schools in eleven school districts, including Baltimore, Philadelphia, Memphis, Tucson, Ft. Wayne (IN), and Modesto (CA). About 6,000 SFA and 6,000 control children were tested.

Figure 1 summarizes the results of the studies using individually administered measures. The figure shows that reading grade equivalents for Success for All first graders were almost three months higher than for control first graders. This difference increased to slightly more than a full grade equivalent by fifth grade. A Baltimore follow-up study (Slavin & Madden, 2001) found that this difference maintained into sixth and seventh grades, when students were no longer in the Success for All or control schools, and another follow-up study that followed students to the eighth grade found continuing significant effects on standardized reading measures and reductions in special education placements and retentions (Borman & Hewes, 2003).

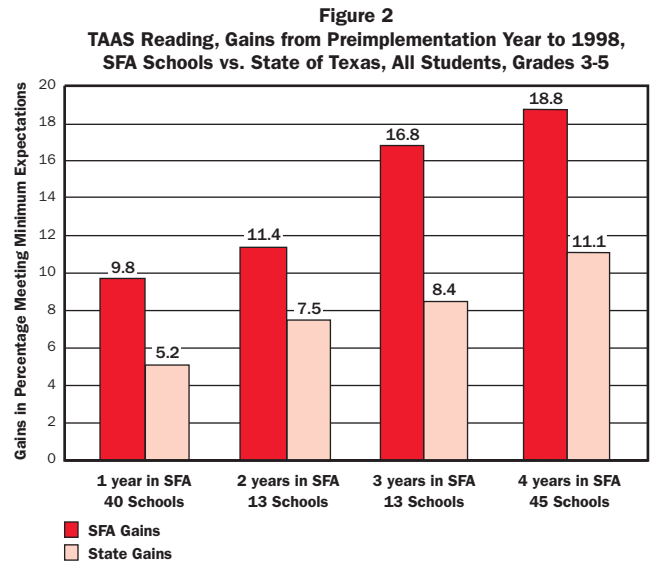


## Effects on District-Administered Standardized Tests

While individually administered assessments are far more accurate than district-administered tests and are much more sensitive to real reading gains, educators usually want to know the effects of innovative programs on the kinds of group-administered standardized tests for which they are held accountable. There are hundreds of test score reports from individual Success for All schools showing dramatic gains on standardized tests. District test score data can produce valid evaluations of educational programs if comparison groups are available. To obtain this information, researchers have often analyzed standardized or state criterion-referenced test data comparing students in experimental and control schools. Examples of this kind of research appear below.

### State of Texas

The largest study ever done to evaluate achievement outcomes of Success for All was done by Hurley, Chamberlain, Slavin, & Madden (2001). Using data available on the Internet, Hurley et al. compared every school that ever used Success for All anywhere in the state of Texas during the period 1994–1998 (n=111 schools). Gains in these schools on the percent of students passing the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) reading measures for grades 3–5 were compared to gains in the state as a whole; in each case, gains from the year before program inception to 1998 were compared. Figure 2 shows the overall results. Gains for Success for All schools were significantly greater than for the rest of the state for every group of schools. Gains were greatest for African-American and Hispanic students in SFA schools, compared to African American and Hispanic students in the rest of Texas. An update to 2002 found that the differences favoring the Success for All schools were still statistically significant.



### State of California

Another large-scale evaluation using state accountability data involved SAT-9 reading data from Success for All schools in California (Slavin, Madden, Cheung, & Liang, 2002). The ninety-one Success for All schools that had begun implementation by 1998 gained significantly more than other California schools by 2001. The same was true of the 136 schools that had started by 1999 and the 153 schools that had started by 2000. Similar differences favoring Success for All were found on the state's Academic Performance Index, or API.

### Other States and Cities

Gains made by Success for All and other schools have been compared by independent researchers in states and cities throughout the United States. For example, a study by Muñoz & Dossett (2004) in Louisville, Kentucky and a study of New York City's Chancellor's District by Phenix, Siegel, Zaltsman, & Fruchter (2004) reported higher achievement on standardized tests in schools using Success for All than in matched control schools. In addition, the Success for All Foundation routinely collects data from state websites on gains made by Success for All schools in comparison to those made by schools in the rest of their state. As of January 2006, state reports based on 2005 state test data have been

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completed for all states with ten or more Success for All schools. In each of these cases, Success for All students have gained more than other students on state reading tests. Reports of this kind are constantly being updated; current reports appear on the SFAF website, [www.successforall.org/research/index.htm](http://www.successforall.org/research/index.htm).

## English Language Learners

Success for All has two adaptations for English language learners, a Spanish bilingual version and an English language development supplement to the English version. In six studies, both versions have been found to be significantly more effective in helping children read than traditional approaches used with English language learners (Slavin & Madden, 1999; Cheung & Slavin, 2005).

## Other Outcomes

Beyond the many evaluations of reading achievement, Success for All has been found in several studies to reduce assignments of students to special education (Borman & Hewes, 2003) and to increase the achievement of students already in special education for learning difficulties (Slavin, 1996). It has been found to increase student attendance and reduce retentions (Slavin & Madden, 2001). Studies of teachers' attitudes have found

that teachers favor Success for All and feel that it is effective for their children (Datnow & Castellano, 2000; Muñoz & Dossett, 2005; Rakow & Ross, 1997). For example, in San Antonio, a new superintendent required teachers in schools implementing a variety of reform models to vote to retain or drop their model. The vote in twenty-four Success for All schools averaged 81.1% positive, while that for four other models in thirty-seven schools averaged 36.5% positive.

## Conclusion

The quantity and quality of research on Success for All, and the positive outcomes found in almost all studies by more than fifty investigators in eighteen different research institutions worldwide, clearly establish that Success for All is highly effective in increasing student reading. The effects can be quite substantial, averaging more than half of the national white-minority achievement gap and almost a full grade equivalent by second grade (see Slavin et al., 2006). In a time when educators are increasingly being asked to use proven programs, Success for All is the best demonstration in existence of the idea that rigorous research on practical programs can be done and can show substantial positive effects. Every child should have a right to participate in a program with this level of evidence.

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### **For More Information**

For more on research evaluating Success for All, visit the SFAF website, [www.successforall.org](http://www.successforall.org), or write to the Success for All Foundation at 200 W. Towsontown Blvd., Baltimore, MD 21204 (tel. (800)548-4998).

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