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An Independent Three-Year Evaluation Shows that Success for All Helps Students, Especially Disadvantaged Ones, Improve their Learning Skills

Baltimore, Maryland—Once again, a third-party evaluation has shown the Success for All (SFA) Foundation elementary school program helps students achieve better reading skills – even in an era characterized by budgetary cutbacks and staff reductions. This evaluation repeats the findings of earlier studies, done by many researchers.

MDRC – a nonprofit, nonpartisan education and social policy research organization – recently completed a three-year study of the scale-up demonstration of SFA’s innovative reading program. The Foundation was the recipient of a \$50 million Investing in Innovation (i3) scale-up grant – the highest one possible – from the U.S. Department of Education, helping to expand its comprehensive school improvement program.

The experiment examines the impact of Success for All in five school districts, over a three-year period (from 2011-12 to 2013-14). The study involved 37 schools, with 19 randomly chosen schools adopting SFA in all grades, and 18 control schools, which continued to use their existing reading programs. Students in SFA schools gained significantly more than those in the control group on measures of early reading.

“The scale-up findings show that, for a modest investment, SFA reliably improves the reading skills of students in kindergarten through second grade, and it is especially beneficial for kids who begin in the lower half on those skills,” says Nancy Madden, SFA CEO. “By the end of our i3 grant, we will have reached almost 400,000 additional students in 540 additional schools. That’s remarkable in an era of recessionary cutbacks in the education system.”

In implementing the SFA programs, the 19 schools made classroom level and school-wide changes. For example, they used cooperative learning strategies more often to engage students in their learning, and they grouped students by reading level across classes and grades for reading instruction. Implementing a comprehensive model presented challenges, but 93 percent of the principals and 67 percent of the teachers surveyed agreed that SFA had helped their schools improve.

A cost analysis revealed that it costs only an extra \$119 per student to implement SFA.

“The question is fast becoming, can schools afford not to invest in SFA?” says Robert Slavin, SFA Chairman. “The power of Success for All to change outcomes for disadvantaged children cannot be overemphasized. Put simply, the world is open to those who read and closed to those who cannot. We remain committed to opening up the worlds of as many students in as many schools as we can.”

MDRC's final report can be viewed [here](#).

Founded in 1987 by Slavin and Madden, researchers at Johns Hopkins University, the Success for All Foundation is dedicated to ensuring that every child, from pre-kindergarten to grade 8, becomes proficient in reading. Its innovative reading programs especially target high-poverty schools, where more than half the children are at risk of illiteracy.

For more information about Success for All, please visit www.successforall.org, email sfainfo@successforall.org or call 800-548-4998.