

Success for All and Academically Talented Students

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Success for All (Slavin & Madden, 2001) is a comprehensive reform model that uses research-based curriculum and instructional strategies, extensive professional development, tutoring, family support, and other strategies to enhance the achievement of all students. Begun in 1987, Success for All now serves more than 1300 schools in 46 states. Success for All has been extensively evaluated by many researchers, who have compared the progress of students in Success for All and matched control schools on a variety of achievement measures. Independent reviewers have consistently placed Success for All among the most rigorously and successfully evaluated of all reading reform models (see, for example, CSRQ, 2005; Borman, Hewes, Overman, & Brown, 2003).

Because it is primarily used in high-poverty schools and has a focus on placing a high floor under the achievement of all students, Success for All is sometimes seen as a “remedial” program, or one only for students who are at risk. Yet this is not the case. Success for All has been used successfully in all kinds of communities with all kinds of children. Even though it has been most often used with high-poverty schools, there are more than 100 middle class schools using the program as well.

With respect to academically talented children, Success for All provides a very appropriate and effective program. Research on programs for gifted and talented students find that programs emphasizing *acceleration* are far more effective than *enrichment* programs (Kulik & Kulik, 1997; Olszewski-Kubilius, 2003). Acceleration programs are ones that allow capable students to go on to higher-level material than they would have seen at their grade level. This is precisely the approach used in Success for All. During a 90-minute reading period, students in Success for All schools are regrouped according to

reading level, regardless of age. For example, a class reading at the fourth grade level could include second or third graders reading above their grade level as well as fourth graders reading on grade level and students in fifth or sixth grade who are reading below level. This grouping takes place just during reading time; the rest of the day, students are in their regular homerooms.

At the highest reading levels, students are provided with books, plays, poems, and other materials that may be at middle or high school reading levels, but contain content appropriate to the upper elementary grades. Success for All provides extensive materials through the eighth grade reading level, and is building materials at the high school level.

In addition to providing materials appropriate to students' achievement levels, Success for All uses many strategies recommended by researchers studying gifted education. This includes extensive use of cooperative learning, which has long been advocated for gifted students (Feldhusen, 1998; Holloway, 2003; Renzulli, 1994; VanTassel-Baska, 1998). It includes a focus on writing, reports, and other open-ended assignments, which are also emphasized in the upper-level Reading Wings classes that are part of Success for All.

The effects of Success for All for high achievers are very positive. A three-year longitudinal study of Success for All by Slavin, Madden, Karweit, Dolan, & Wasik (1992) found that in comparison to control schools, three times as many students in five Baltimore elementary schools were reading two or more years above grade level.

Success in Success for All is defined in terms of maximizing the potential of all children. Accommodations to the basic structure to meet the needs of academically talented students can be entirely appropriate. These might include assigning more

advanced work to be done independently, such as library or internet research, oral histories, or plays. Success for All provides a structure that is intended to facilitate appropriate adaptations to the needs of all students.

Because of its flexible grouping, use of acceleration, use of cooperative learning within groups all reading at one reading level, focus on meeting the needs of all students, and proven results for children at all levels, Success for All is an appropriate program for academically talented students.

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