

## RETURN TO GREATNESS



After achieving outstanding results with Success for All a decade ago, a Texas school comes back to reach new heights.

# YOU SEE A LOT OF STUDENT ENGAGEMENT. KIDS ARE PARTICIPATING. THERE'S A LOT OF DISCUSSION. YOU HEAR THEM SPEAKING IN COMPLETE SENTENCES.

BERTHA RUBIO, Principal

## THE CHALLENGE

Administrators at David Crockett Elementary School in San Antonio have been fans of Success for All (SFA) for many years. When the school first implemented the method more than a decade ago, Crockett not only became a Texas Education Agency-recognized campus, but also saw improved test scores and more students developing a love for reading. Eventually, the school was forced to change programs because of funding shortages.

So when the district became eligible for a federal Investing in Innovation (i3) grant from the Success for All Foundation in 2011, administrators jumped at the chance to apply. “We had experienced success when we initially had [SFA] ten years ago, and so we wanted it again,” says Crockett’s longtime principal Bertha Rubio.

Disappointed in their Texas Primary Reading Inventory (TPRI) scores at the end of the 2010–11 school year, Crockett administrators were eager to return to SFA’s whole-school reform strategy. They wanted to address the special needs of a student population with a high number of economically disadvantaged pupils – 99% of students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch, and 99% of the population is Hispanic.



## THE SOLUTION

Crockett turned to SFA not only to boost test scores, but to instill a love of reading. Prior to implementation, Rubio observes that students read only because they were required to. “Not only did we want them to become good readers and better readers, we wanted them to enjoy reading.”

To implement SFA, a school must have at least a 75% majority staff vote. At Crockett, 100% – all 43 teachers – voted to bring in SFA, showing their dedication to improvement. Rubio says Crockett’s teachers “fell in love” with SFA because of its clear framework. “They followed the instructions carefully, and they started seeing results in the children,” she says.

Grade 5 teacher Barbara Casarez found that SFA’s structure makes it “easier for the teachers to teach. It leaves little room for error and provides us with feedback.”

That solid structure extends throughout the entire school. During the schoolwide 90-minute reading block, “you see a lot of student engagement. Kids are participating. There’s a lot of discussion,” Rubio observes. “You hear them speaking in complete sentences. And we know that if children can discuss, they can write.”

By placing students in groups according to their reading levels, teachers aren’t being pulled in several directions and are instead able to center their efforts. SFA “allow[s] me to focus on the needs of the students who are at the same ability, rather than a differentiated lesson that must meet the needs of students at many different levels,” Casarez says. “This allows me to focus specifically on the targeted objectives and provide quality instruction.”

SFA’s fundamental strategies, such as cooperative learning, extend into the rest of the school day and other areas of study. “Now they know how to work in groups, how to take turns, knowing that different comments each individual has are valued,” says Rubio.

# IT'S VERY MOTIVATIONAL. I HAVE FOUND THAT STUDENTS ARE MAKING MORE OF AN ATTEMPT TO TACKLE DIFFICULT VOCABULARY RATHER THAN SKIMMING OVER IT. SFA ADDRESSES MANY OF THE NEEDS OF OUR STUDENTS BASED ON OUR DATA.

BARBARA CASAREZ, Teacher

## THE RESULTS

At the beginning of the 2011-12 school year, just 30% of students were reading on or above grade level. At the end of the school year, that number had jumped to 62%. In 2011, TPRI data rated 34% of second-grade students as “developed.” In 2012, that number had more than doubled to 71%.

Rubio says, “More than anything, [teachers] started seeing the success in kids because the kids were reading at the level where they need to work.”

Now students are excited when they finish a book because they are anxious to move on to another. Rubio has found that SFA’s phonemic-awareness activities and use of sight words give students fundamental skills that they’re able to build upon, making them more confident.

Casarez has observed this firsthand. “I have found that students are making more of an attempt to tackle difficult vocabulary rather than skimming over it,” she says. “SFA addresses many of the needs of our students based on our data, including making inferences and drawing conclusions.”

David Crockett Elementary’s renewed partnership with SFA has the school poised for greatness. Rubio is optimistic that the school will exceed state standards and have high-performing students who will go on to be successful in school and life. With SFA, she says, “we’re going to get there.”

## Support Beyond the Classroom

Success for All’s Leading for Success Schoolwide Solutions teams – various groups focused on supporting specific nonacademic areas – are designed to help teachers and administrators educate the whole child by addressing issues that get in the way of learning. David Crockett Elementary School principal Bertha Rubio used the Parent and Family Involvement component to organize a parenting class at the school, encouraging more active participation in their kids’ education. She was amazed when more than 50 parents showed up for the 12-session class. Upon completion, each parent was awarded a certificate.

Parents are also pleased that they can observe their children’s improvements from data collected for them through the SFA Member Center tool. They like the program “because the children are experiencing success. Their grades are better,” Rubio says.

Crockett also used the Schoolwide Solutions Attendance team to address low attendance on Fridays and Mondays. To reach their goal of 96% attendance, the team helped to set up tools, such as phone reminders, and incentives such as classroom ice cream breaks, draws for bicycles and breakfasts for parents. Their efforts paid off: the school met its attendance goal in 2012.

**FOUNDED IN 1987**, the nonprofit Success for All Foundation is dedicated to ensuring that every child, from pre-kindergarten to grade 8, becomes proficient in reading and learning – opening up new doors for a lifetime of achievement. Not only has SFA been proven time and again to help with student reading ability and math performance, it also addresses non-academic concerns, improving behavior, attendance and parental involvement. Please contact us for more information.

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