

RIDING THE WINDS OF CHANGE



Years of hard work implementing Success for All following Hurricane Katrina pays big dividends for a New Orleans charter school.

THE CHALLENGE

When Edward Hynes Charter School in New Orleans reopened in 2006, after Hurricane Katrina, the teachers decided to adopt the instructional framework and materials provided by the Success for All whole-school improvement program, to get their students' reading up to speed. They hoped the rigorously-evaluated program developed at Johns Hopkins University would provide the structured curriculum, professional development, data tools, and intervention strategies required to succeed.

"SFA is a template for learning and teaching; in a 90-minute lesson, it's got all of the effective strategies for balanced delivery of a good reading lesson," says principal Michelle Douglas. "We felt that with SFA, we were so well trained and moving on our way to reform that we couldn't imagine teaching children the old way."



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MICHELLE DOUGLAS, Principal

THE SOLUTION

The SFA approach prides itself on putting students on the path to success and intervening as early as possible when a child's reading development falters. "The foundation offered in first grade and kindergarten is unbelievable," says the school's SFA facilitator Joan Reilly. "It's very rich in phonics and language development, which lead to later success."

The collaborative-learning model incorporates rich discussions of texts, writing and other active-learning strategies to build vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. With the help of SFA trainers, the Hynes teachers improved students' discussions and, ultimately, deepened their learning.

The Hynes staff were confident that they could also help the parents of struggling students to provide more academic support at home. The SFA parental-involvement program provides gradual positive outreach to empower parents to nurture home learning. The Hynes staff members coached parents to get the most out of SFA's 20-minute Read-and-Respond homework assignments, which require both parent and child read together.

This direct engagement of parents eventually brought struggling students back up to grade level. Even so, Hynes remains focused on continuing the momentum, combating tendency for scores to taper off as students progress to fifth grade, where, according to Douglas, the LEAP statewide test carries less importance among educators.

THE RESULTS

When it came time for fourth graders at Edward Hynes to take the state reading test recently, the teachers knew the students were well prepared, perhaps more so than children in other grades at the New Orleans school. The students proved them right when 100% of the class met or exceeded the grade-level standard on the LEAP test.

Students throughout the K–8 school have benefited in the LEAP results: 91% of eighth graders met grade-level benchmarks, a significant improvement over previous scores.

But Douglas downplays standardized tests as a true measure of success. What's more important to her, the Hynes staff, and SFA is the creation of a learning environment where all students can succeed.

“It’s not just about the test scores,” she explains. “Success for All Foundation brought in the collegiality and the collaborative approach to instruction. And the Foundation is always kicking it up a notch, making sure we sustain our growth, but always digging deeper to improve learning for all our kids.”

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JOAN REILLY, SFA Facilitator



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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