A Missouri school rallies around Success for All to improve student reading scores.
**THE CHALLENGE**

Richards R-5 elementary school in West Plains, Missouri, is an example of an entire school culture that is wholly dedicated to reading. Richards has been using Success for All since 1998, and through the longstanding partnership, SFA evolved into “an entire campus philosophy,” according to reading facilitator Sherry Brotherton.

More importantly, the SFA schoolwide philosophy has allowed everyone to be on the same page in their approach to teaching reading. This was not the case prior to implementation of SFA. “Before we were using basals, and every teacher was doing their own way of teaching reading. There was not a great deal of consistency,” says Brotherton.

**THE SOLUTION**

Of course, the transformation at Richards did not happen overnight. The SFA program was “overwhelming” at first. The staff had to collectively rethink their way of teaching. “We had to learn to manage our time, to do less speaking, and let the children become teachers with the cooperative-learning component,” explains Brotherton.

In collectively streamlining their approach to reading instruction, however, the teachers at Richards began to see the value of SFA instruction. “It had important reading components in its approach to reading aloud and monitoring as well as good questioning and comprehension strategies,” recalls grade 4 teacher Cari Thompson.

The common instructional strategies of cooperative learning allowed teachers to easily trade advice and exchange ideas. Professional learning community meetings helped to unite all teachers in their push to achieve success for every child. “The staff became one unit,” explains Brotherton. “People had mastered different areas of the program, so when we had component meetings, professional discussions got really strong.”

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**THE ART TEACHER, THE COMPUTER SCIENCE TEACHER, THE GYM COACH – THEY ARE ALL PITCHING IN TO TEACH READING. THE PARENTS HAVE ALSO PRIORITIZED READING AT HOME**

*Sherry Brotherton, SFA Facilitator*
The Results

By pulling together, and creating a consistent culture of learning achievement, the Missouri school has gone from strength to strength over the years. Richards made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in 2010 and has outscored the state average in reading proficiency despite the fact that the number of students who qualify for free or reduced lunch is 15% higher than the state as a whole.

“The art teacher, the computer science teacher, the gym coach – they are all pitching in to teach reading,” says Brotherton. “The parents have also prioritized teaching reading at home.”

“Everyone is trying to do what they need to do for the kids,” echoes Thompson.

Like most schools that embrace SFA, Richards has mastered the program enough to tweak certain aspects of the instruction to its individual needs while still adhering to the instructional framework. For example, the school has added some extra emphasis to teaching authorial intent and poetry within the 90-minute SFA reading block.

For Brotherton, such fine-tuning reflects the philosophy of a school that is unified behind the concept of continuous improvement:

“There’s always a ‘we can do better’ philosophy.”

The Staff Became One Unit. People had mastered different areas of the program, so when we had component meetings, professional discussions got really strong.

Sherry Brotherton, teacher and full-time SFA Reading Facilitator