

SPEAKING IN DIFFERENT TONGUES



With a student population speaking more than 20 languages, the teachers of Sharonville Elementary school rely on Success for All to get everyone reading on the same page.

THE CHALLENGE

The teachers at Sharonville Elementary school, in Cincinnati, Ohio, have a lot on their plates. As well as facing the usual challenges of ensuring the academic success of more than 500 students, they work with a diverse group of children, more than half qualifying for free or reduced lunch.

“There is also a high turnover of students, with many new arrivals reading far below grade level,” says Success for All Facilitator Eric Sucher. “In just a three-week period in the fall, we had 22 new students.”

The school is also coping with a huge spike in the number of students who are learning English as a second language. The newcomers speak as many as 20 different languages.

“We often get kids coming in with zero English,” explains Sharonville principal Kasi Jordan. “We believe that our area feels very safe and welcoming to immigrants. We are seeing growth in our populations from Russia and Uzbekistan.”

The school also houses two “behavior units,” coping with the needs of children with severe emotional disabilities sent there from all over the district. Most of these students take part in mainstream reading classes for much of the day, adding to the teaching challenge.

THE SOLUTION

Sharonville Elementary implemented the Success for All program in 2011-12, hoping to provide the stability and structure needed by staff to meet the diverse and complicated needs of its student population.

“With the challenges that we have, everyone is still willing to come in the next day and try it all over again,” says Jordan. “People are not defeated. They don’t give up. We know that we have an uphill battle. We’ve tried to be very focused with our SFA Solutions teams, making sure those are really ‘lasered in’ to the challenges and struggles that we see here.”

SFA has proven itself most useful in sparking ideas for unique ways to motivate the full range of students to work together in class and to acquire the discipline to read alone daily. For example, to help students unable to complete their reading assignments at home, the school has paired grade 5 “ambassadors” (reading buddies) with younger students. The 5th graders are authorized to sign their buddies’ Read & Respond forms, ensuring that work is completed.

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THE RESULTS

Implementing the collaborative-learning strategies of SFA has knitted the teaching staff at Sharonville Elementary more tightly than ever. They work together to monitor the performance of all students in the school and share teaching strategies to ensure greater consistency from one class to the next.

The mutually supportive teaching environment has helped to keep staff turnover low, even though the school has had three different administrators over six years. "They stay. It's like Disneyland," says Jordan. "They want to be here. I have a very seasoned staff."

With students improving their reading and academic performance across the board, with the help of SFA, Sharonville Elementary is indeed a great place to teach.



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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