

NO STUDENT LEFT BEHIND



With a culturally diverse population, a Maryland elementary school has used Success for All to address a wide variety of learning needs.

THE CHALLENGE

Langley Park-McCormick Elementary School in Hyattsville, Maryland, doesn't shy away from the challenges it faces: an English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) population around 65% and the highest free or reduced price lunch population – 96% – in Prince George's County.

Principal Amy Stout sought something that could address the school's wide range of learning abilities. "I wanted to be able to reach those students that were struggling, and I wanted to be able to push those students that weren't struggling," she said. "I just really felt like that wasn't happening."

After visiting a school that was using Success for All, Stout was sold. Langley Park implemented the program in fall 2011.

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I LOVE WHAT IT'S DONE FOR MY TEACHERS.
I ABSOLUTELY LOVE SFA.**

AMY STOUT, Principal

THE SOLUTION

Stout and Langley Park administrators were especially eager to implement SFA because it is a research-based method. "SFA speaks for itself," Stout says. "You can't argue with data."

However, the school's budget issues presented an obstacle. So when she learned that the district was eligible for discounted implementation thanks to SFA's federal Investing in Innovation (i3) scale-up grant, Stout jumped at the chance to adopt the method. The grant covered a portion of the cost and enabled the program to go forward.

Teachers were pleased to find that SFA's cooperative-learning strategies placed everyone on the same page, giving them a common language and enabling teachers to distribute their time among all students. Because they now have that common language, not only are students working harder on their own learning, they're encouraging their peers to excel as well.

"The cooperative-learning environment has really upped the ante of student accountability for their work in

tremendous ways throughout the school," says teacher Katie Reese. "The fact that everybody's on the same page, the same expectations are clear across the board, and students are really taking ownership of their ideas and their outcomes is a really fabulous thing to see schoolwide."

SFA's emphasis on critical thinking – paired with that cooperative culture – encourages active communication among students, who learn to question one another and think critically about the curriculum. Both teachers and administrators are pleased to see this collaborative effort. "It [gives] me goose bumps when I'm listening to all of the student engagements," Stout says.

Teachers observe that SFA's strategies extend far beyond reading. Once students learn cooperative-learning strategies, they become second nature and naturally permeate all other subjects.

THE RESULTS

Langley Park implemented SFA in fall 2011, and in just one year, teachers and administrators say they are far better equipped to meet every student's needs and are excited to see what achievements are on the horizon.

The school's Maryland Annual Measurable Objective (AMO) target numbers have held steady, and administrators are optimistic about future results. In 2011, the school's reading AMO was 85.2%. In 2012, the school made a slight gain to 86.5%. With a strong first-year implementation, Langley Park students are on track for even greater success in the coming years.

Reese has noticed that because students are now comfortable and confident, they love to read. "It's every



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teacher's dream that when the bell rings, all the kids go, 'Time's up already?' As long as I've been teaching SFA, that happens every single day."

Not only are students eager to read, they're eager to progress. The school's SFA facilitator, Gerri Toure, notes that SFA "creates a sense of ownership for the kids." She's found that students are excited to move up and approach her about what else they can do to advance.

Imparting a sense of responsibility is yet another benefit that staff has noticed. The morning begins with the 90-minute reading block, and students independently make their way into the correct classrooms without a teacher escort – something they find novel.

With the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) just around the corner, Reese is pleased that her students are already thinking critically and crafting in-depth questions and answers. Because these concepts are used daily as part of the SFA model, teachers are confident that students will be able to make the transition well into CCSS. "We really feel like we have a leg up on some other schools that don't have this in place because we're already in that Common Core collaborative learning," says Reese. "We already go for the depth."

In only one year, Langley Park-McCormick Elementary School has seen a palpable change in students and teachers alike. "I want to be able to say at the end of every day I touched every child's life, and I'm making a difference," says Stout. With SFA, she's coming closer and closer. "I love what it's done for my kids. I love what it's done for my teachers. I absolutely love SFA."

Teaching the Teachers

Success for All gives students the tools to learn, and it gives teachers the tools to be effective educators. Professional development is built into the model, and coaches and facilitators provide teachers with ample support.

"I think especially in that first year, without the (32 professional-development sessions), I don't know if we would have been able to get off on such a smooth start as we did," says Langley Park-McCormick Elementary School teacher Katie Reese.

SFA provides teachers with a framework but allows them to tailor their teaching styles based on the school's and each student's individual needs, something Langley Park teachers appreciate given the school's diverse population. "It's really best practices to see (when) these kids need more activation on background knowledge," says teacher Alicia Kalberer.

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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