

SUCCESS STORIES

CREATING A COMMON LANGUAGE AND COOPERATIVE CULTURE



For over 20 years, Glade Hill Elementary School has used Success for All to create consistency and continual achievement across its reading curriculum.

THE CHALLENGE

Before embracing Success for All (SFA), Glade Hill Elementary School there was no common program from Kindergarten through 5th Grade. As students moved from one grade to another, they were required to relearn the language and classroom strategies of whatever reading program the teacher was using. As a result, reading test scores were low, as was teacher morale and communication. With individual classrooms as educational silos, teachers and administrators lacked a shared culture to develop pedagogical connections. Glade Hill needed to create a culture of consistency and cooperation that would engage its very diverse student body from across a wide swath of Virginia's affluent and rural communities and inspire collaboration among its teachers.

THE SOLUTION

In 1997, the school's then-principal turned to SFA to create a robust, research-based reading program across each grade. SFA gave Glade Hill the consistency and common classroom language its students and teachers sorely needed. The school community – teachers, administrators, students and families – quickly adapted to the program's structure and components. In a few short years, Glade Hill was making leaps and bounds in its reading scores and had created a thriving, collaborative culture for teaching and learning. An unexpected bonus for administrators and teacher was how effortlessly and successfully SFA's cooperative learning strategies could be used beyond the reading curriculum but throughout the entire academic day. SFA conferences inspired Glade Hill's school wide behavior plan.

GLADE HILL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL'S SFA APPROACH

SFA has completely changed how new teachers acclimate to the Glade Hill classroom. Designed to require little preparation, the SFA approach allows new teachers to use the manual and classroom scripts as a guide. Immediately, teachers can begin using the school's shared language for reading and student assessment, behavior expectations and achievement.

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For both new and veteran Glade Hill teachers like, the SFA program enables them to spend more time teaching and less time on preparation and planning. The school’s vibrant teacher mentoring program – again, a common classroom language engenders community – provides peer feedback and teachers are able to add their own flair to the SFA components.

Glade Hill uses the SFA program as the foundation for its rich customization program. By testing students early at the Roots level, Glade Hill can place each student according to his or her reading ability and specific skill sets. The school’s daily intervention enrichment time provides 40 minutes per day of targeted reading and math skills outside of the 90-minute daily blocks for reading and math. At monthly SFA meetings, teachers further identify students in need of support and create a customized approach. Every nine weeks, the school hosts a reading assembly to celebrate student achievement.

Building self-confidence in reading and oral presentations is one of Glade Hill’s shared classroom objectives. Using SFA tools and techniques and a peer-evaluation program, teachers build a safe, kind classroom environment where students can take intellectual risks. The program is also a hit with SFA parents, providing consistent reading homework expectations across the grades and engaging families in shared reading habits and goals.