



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is Success for All (SFA)?

Success for All (SFA) is a research-based, whole-school improvement model designed to ensure every child is successful and achieves at the highest academic levels. SFA integrates structured literacy instruction with school-wide support systems, cooperative learning, and targeted interventions.

How long has SFA been around, and what makes it different?

Founded in 1987 by Johns Hopkins researchers Robert Slavin and Nancy Madden, SFA, a mission-based nonprofit, has been at the forefront of research-based literacy instruction for over 40 years. Unlike stand-alone reading programs, SFA is a comprehensive model that aligns instruction across grade levels and includes built-in tutoring and data-driven support.

How does SFA align with the Science of Reading?

SFA has been rooted in the Science of Reading since its inception. Phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension are explicitly taught by teachers using SFA's proven instructional process.

What evidence supports SFA's effectiveness?

SFA is one of the most extensively researched literacy programs, with over 50 independent studies confirming its impact. Research shows that schools implementing SFA gain the equivalent of 203 additional days of instruction each year, leading to significant improvements in reading achievement.

Who publishes your science of reading-based literacy component?

Success for All isn't just the creator of our research-based programs—we're also the publisher! As a mission-driven nonprofit, our team of educators, researchers, and writers develops, refines, and publishes all of our own materials. This ensures that every lesson, resource, and tool aligns with our evidence-based approach and our commitment to student success.

Program Design + Implementation

Is SFA a curriculum, an intervention, or a whole-school model?

SFA is a whole-school improvement model that includes a structured literacy curriculum, leadership development, school-wide instructional strategies, and built-in interventions like tutoring. It's designed to prevent common barriers to learning - like absenteeism, disengagement, to create a culture of engagement, improvement, and success across an entire school.

What grades does SFA serve?

SFA serves students from Pre-K through middle school. Key components of the literacy curriculum include:

- **Curiosity Corner** (Pre-K)
- **KinderCorner** (Kindergarten)
- **Reading Roots** (Grade 1)
- **Reading Wings with Word Power** (Grade 2)
- **Reading Wings** (Grades 3-6)
- **The Reading Edge** (Grades 6-8)
- **Tutoring with the Lightning Squad and Tutoring with ThemeReads** (Targeted interventions for grades 1-8)



Can schools implement parts of SFA, or is it all-or-nothing?

Implementation of Success for All's full, comprehensive framework is the gold standard. However, schools can implement specific components, such as tutoring programs. We do, however, recommend schools adopt the entire model in order to achieve the highest learning outcomes for every child.

How does SFA support struggling readers?

Due to its skill-based approach, SFA works for the entire range of readers in a school, ensuring foundational support to struggling readers and enrichment opportunities for advanced readers. For struggling readers in particular, the core, 90-minute reading block produces the greatest gains. For those that need additional practice, research-based interventions including SFA tutoring programs, which have received a strong ESSA Tier 1 rating, are provided.

Is your literacy curriculum scripted?

Success for All provides structured, research-based guidance to ensure all students receive high-quality, effective reading instruction. However, it is not a rigid script. Within the framework of each lesson, teachers have the flexibility to bring their own style, creativity, and expertise to engage students in meaningful ways. Students, too, have opportunities for discussion, collaboration, and critical thinking—making learning interactive and dynamic. The goal is to provide a strong foundation while allowing teachers to adapt to their students' needs and make learning come alive in their classrooms.

Comparison to Other Programs

How does SFA compare to other reading programs?

SFA is a partnership. Schools that use SFA experience significant literacy gains, but there's a lot of schoolwide mindset-, structure-, and practice-building that happens in order to achieve that. Unlike most reading programs, a dedicated SFA coach works alongside educators in a school to implement critical structures for student and teacher success, for example integrating data conversations into team meetings, building schedules to allow for skill-based grouping, and implementing solutions to increase attendance. In addition to these structures, teachers are trained on our proven cycle of effective instruction—because how students are taught is as important as what they're taught. The cycle of effective instruction includes strategies like writing and cooperative learning, which provides students needed practice time while also building social-emotional competencies.

Is SFA another balanced literacy program?

No. While SFA incorporates engaging reading strategies, it is firmly rooted in **structured literacy** and **explicit phonics instruction**—core elements of the Science of Reading.

What makes SFAs phonics model different from other phonics programs?

A significant difference is the cohesion between SFAs phonics model and the reading lesson. By integrating phonics instruction with reading and comprehension lessons using cooperative learning, and structured interventions, students are both engaged and achieving.



Effectiveness + Impact

What student outcomes have been achieved in SFA schools?

Research shows that SFA significantly improves reading achievement, reduces special education referrals, and lowers grade retention rates—saving schools time and resources while ensuring students stay on track.

Does SFA work for multilingual learners and students with disabilities?

Yes. SFA's structured literacy approach, explicit instruction, and data-driven interventions are particularly effective for multilingual learners and students with disabilities, helping them develop strong foundational reading skills.

Adoption + Cost

How can a school or district adopt SFA?

Schools can reach out directly to SFA for consultation, training, and implementation support. Additionally, our **School Success Scholarship** provides funding assistance for eligible Title I schools.

How much does SFA cost, and are there funding options?

Costs vary based on school size and implementation level. We're a small, friendly team who works with school teams to identify grants and funding sources, including federal and state literacy initiatives.

Does SFA offer professional development and ongoing support?

Yes! SFA provides extensive and on-going training, coaching, and implementation support to ensure success.

Addressing Misconceptions

Was SFA ever associated with three cueing or balanced literacy?

No. SFA has always been grounded in **reading science** and explicit phonics instruction.

Has SFA evolved in response to new literacy research?

Yes. While always rooted in research, SFA continuously updates its methods and resources to reflect the latest findings in the Science of Reading and Science of Learning.

What does SFA say to critics who argue that scripted programs limit teacher autonomy?

SFA provides structured lesson plans to ensure consistency and effectiveness, but it also allows for teacher adaptation, creativity, and includes student-driven discussions, making lessons engaging and responsive to student needs.