Success for All in England:

Implementation and Outcomes of a Comprehensive Literacy Reform for Primary Schools

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Success for All is a comprehensive programme for reading instruction designed primarily for schools serving many children who are in poverty. The intention of Success for All is to use strategies known from research to contribute to children's learning to attempt to ensure that children begin with success in the earliest school years and then build on this success throughout their time in primary school.

Success for All was initially developed in the U.S. at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore. The first Success for All school began in 1987. Since then, the programme has gradually expanded to about 1300 schools in 47 of the 50 states, and has been adapted for use in Canada, Mexico, Australia and Israel.

In 1997, David Hopkins, then at the University of Nottingham, introduced Success for All to a small group of schools in Nottingham and led a small study of the programme's effects on student reading achievement. Since then, the model has expanded to a current total (in 2004-05) of 39 schools, located in London, Nottingham, Hull, Essex and Leeds.

The importance of Success for All in the English context is in providing an alternative reform model for schools that serve many children in poverty. The National Literacy Strategy (NLS), which began in 1998, has brought about substantial improvements in the reading performance of English pupils, but in recent years the gains have leveled off, as measured by Key Stage 2 assessments (Earl et al., 2003). Many high-poverty schools remain far below the norm in reading. The English adaptation of Success for All is completely aligned with the NLS, but provides a great deal of professional development, research-based materials and other supports to help schools accelerate their progress toward national norms. It can be thought of as an intensification of NLS, not an alternative to it, for high-poverty schools that are struggling to reach national standards.

This paper describes Success for All, briefly summarises the U.S. and international research on its outcomes and presents research on Success for All in England.

Programmeme Components

Although the materials used in England have been extensively revised to adapt to NLS standards as well as both the language and the cultural content of England, the structural components are essentially the same as they are in the U.S. These are described in the following sections.

Reception

The current version of the Success for All programme for Reception is called *KinderCorner*. This programme focuses on providing a balanced and developmentally appropriate learning experience for young children. The curriculum emphasises the development and use of language. It provides a balance of academic readiness, emphasising phonemic awareness and alphabet awareness. Readiness activities include a programme called Story Telling and Retelling (STaR) in which children retell stories read by the teachers. More formal pre-reading activities begin during the second term of Reception, incorporating a beginning reading programme called *KinderRoots*, described in the following section.

Beginning Reading

Success for All uses a reading curriculum based on research and effective practises in beginning reading (e.g., Adams, 1990; National Reading Panel, 2000) and on effective use of co-operative learning (Slavin, 1995; Stevens, Madden, Slavin, & Farnish, 1987).

Reading teachers at every year level begin the reading time by reading children's literature to pupils and engaging them in a discussion of the story to enhance their understanding of the story, listening and speaking vocabulary and knowledge of story structure. In Reception and Year 1, there is also a strong emphasis on phonemic awareness activities which help develop auditory discrimination and support the development of reading readiness strategies and children are taught alphabet and sound blending in a programme called *FastTrack Phonics*.

KinderRoots is typically introduced in the second term of the Reception year. In Year One, this beginning reading programme is called *Reading Roots*. It uses as its base a series of phonetically regular but meaningful and interesting minibooks and emphasises repeated oral reading to partners as well as to the teacher. The minibooks begin with a set of "shared stories," in which part of a story is written in small type (read by the teacher) and part is written in large type (read by the children). The child portion uses a phonetically controlled

vocabulary. Taken together, the teacher and child portions create interesting, worthwhile stories. Over time, the teacher portion diminishes and the child portion lengthens, until children are reading the entire book. This scaffolding allows children to read interesting literature when they have only a few letter sounds.

Success for All uses a synthetic approach to the teaching of phonics, blending and segmenting. These skills are introduced in an active, engaging set of activities that begins with oral language and moves into written symbols. Individual sounds are integrated into a context of words, sentences and stories. Instruction is provided in story structure, specific comprehension skills, metacognitive strategies for self-assessment and self-correction and integration of reading and writing. Specific adaptations are made for English-language learners being taught in English.

When children reach the Year 2 reading level, they use a programme called *Wings,* an adaptation of Co-operative Integrated Reading and Composition (CIRC) (Stevens, Madden, Slavin & Farnish, 1987). *Wings* uses co-operative learning activities built around story structure, prediction, summarisation, vocabulary building, decoding practice and story-related writing. Children engage in partner reading and structured discussion of novels, poetry or non-fiction texts and work in teams toward mastery of the vocabulary and content of the story. Story-related writing is also shared within teams. Co-operative learning both increases pupils' motivation and engages children in cognitive activities known to contribute to reading comprehension, such as elaboration, summarisation and rephrasing (see Slavin, 1995). Research on CIRC has found it to significantly increase students' reading comprehension and language skills (Stevens et al., 1987).

In addition to these story-related activities, teachers provide direct instruction in reading comprehension skills and children practise these skills in their teams. Classroom libraries of real books at pupils' reading levels are provided for each teacher and children read books of their choice for homework for 20 minutes each night. Home readings are shared via presentations, summaries, puppet shows and other formats once a week during "book club" sessions.

Materials to support *Reading Wings* through to Year 6 are built around children's literature, poetry and non-fiction texts. Beginning in the second term of programme implementation, Success for All schools implement a writing programme based primarily on co-operative learning principles (see Stevens et al., 1987).

Children in Years 1 to 6 are regrouped by reading performance level. The pupils are assigned to heterogeneous, age-grouped classes most of the day, but during a regular 90-minute literacy period they are regrouped by reading performance levels into reading classes of children all at the same level. For example, a literacy class might contain Year 1, Year 2 and Year 3 pupils all reading at the same level. The literacy classes are often smaller than normal class groups because tutors and other certified staff (such as special needs support staff, EAL teachers and teaching assistants) teach reading during this common reading period. Regrouping allows teachers to teach the whole literacy class without having to break the class into reading groups. This greatly reduces the time spent in 'independent work' and increases the time for direct instruction, eliminating workbooks, dittos or other follow-up activities which are needed in classes that have a wide range of reading ability groups. The regrouping is a form of the Joplin Plan, which has been found to increase reading achievement in the primary years (Slavin, 1987; Gutiérrez & Slavin, 1992).

Eight-Week Reading Assessments

At eight-week intervals, reading teachers assess progress through the reading programme. The results of the assessments are used to determine who is to receive tutoring, to change children's' reading groups, to suggest other adaptations in programmes and to identify children who need other types of assistance, such as family interventions or screening for vision and hearing problems. The assessments are curriculum-based measures that include teacher observations and judgments as well as more formal measures of reading comprehension.

Reading Tutors

One of the most important elements of Success for All is the use of tutors to promote children's success in reading. One-to-one tutoring is the most effective form of instruction known (see Wasik & Slavin, 1993). The tutors are either certified teachers or well-qualified paraprofessionals. Tutors work either one-on-one with children or with small groups of children who are having difficulties keeping up with their reading groups. The tutoring occurs in 20-minute sessions during times other than reading or maths lessons.

In general, tutors support pupils' success in the regular reading curriculum, rather than using separate materials. For example, the tutor will work with a child on the same story and concepts being read and taught in the regular reading class. However, tutors seek to identify learning problems and use different strategies to teach the same skills. They also teach metacognitive skills beyond those taught in the classroom programme. Schools may have as many as six or more teachers or assistants serving as tutors depending on school size, need for tutoring and other factors.

During daily 90-minute reading lessons tutors serve as additional literacy teachers to reduce class size for the 90 minutes of literacy. Literacy teachers and tutors use brief forms to communicate about pupils' specific problems and needs and meet at regular times to co-ordinate their approaches with individual children.

Initial decisions about literacy group placement and the need for tutoring are based on informal reading inventories that the tutors give to each child. Subsequent reading group placements and tutoring assignments are made using the curriculum-based assessments described above. Year 1 pupils receive priority for tutoring on the assumption that the primary function of the tutors is to help all children be successful in reading the first time, before they fail and become remedial readers.

Family Support Team

Parents are an essential part of the formula for success in Success for All. A Family Support Team works in each school, serving to make families feel comfortable in the school and become active supporters of their child's education as well as providing specific services. The Family Support Team consists of a parent liaison, assistant head teacher (if any), counselor (if any), facilitator and any other appropriate staff already present in the school or added to the school staff.

The Family Support Team first works toward establishing and maintaining good relations with parents and increasing parental involvement in the schools. Family Support Team members may complete "welcome" visits for new families. They organise many attractive programmes in the school, such as parenting skills workshops. Most schools use a programme called "Raising Readers" in which parents are given strategies to use in reading

with their own children. Family Support Teams also help teachers implement a social skills curriculum, "Getting Along Together," which emphasises peaceful solutions to interpersonal problems.

The Family Support Team also intervenes to solve problems. For example, team members may contact parents whose children are frequently absent to see what resources can be provided to assist the family in getting their child to school. Family support staff, teachers and parents work together to solve school behaviour problems. Also, family support staff are called on to provide assistance when children seem to be working at less than their full potential because of problems at home. Families of children who are not receiving adequate sleep or nutrition, need glasses, are not attending school regularly or are exhibiting serious behaviour problems, may receive family-support assistance.

The Family Support Team is strongly integrated into the academic programme of the school. It receives referrals from teachers and tutors regarding children who are not making adequate academic progress and thereby constitutes an additional stage of intervention for children in need above and beyond that provided by the classroom teacher or tutor.

Programme Facilitator

A programme facilitator works at each school to help oversee the operation of the Success for All model. The facilitator helps plan the programme, helps the head teacher with scheduling and visits classes and tutoring sessions frequently to help teachers and tutors with individual problems. He or she works directly with the teachers on implementation of the curriculum, classroom management and other issues, helps teachers and tutors deal with any behaviour problems or other special problems and co-ordinates the activities of the Family Support Team with those of the instructional staff.

Teachers and Teacher Training

Teachers and tutors receive detailed manuals supplemented by three days of inservice training at the beginning of the school year. Throughout the year, school and classroom follow up visits are made by trainers, and additional in-service presentations are made by the facilitators and other project staff on such topics as

classroom management, instructional pace and co-operative learning. Facilitators also organise many informal sessions to allow teachers to share problems and problem solutions, suggest changes and discuss individual children. The staff development model used in Success for All emphasises relatively brief initial training with extensive classroom follow-up, coaching and group discussion.

Special Education

Every effort is made to deal with childrens learning problems within the context of the regular classroom, as supplemented by tutors. Tutors evaluate pupils' strengths and weaknesses and develop strategies to teach in the most effective way. In some schools, special education teachers work as tutors and literacy teachers with students identified as learning disabled as well as other children experiencing learning problems who are at risk for special education placement. One major goal of Success for All is to keep children with learning problems out of special education if at all possible and to serve any children who do qualify for special education in a way that does not disrupt their regular classroom experience (see Slavin, 1996).

U.S. Research on Success for All

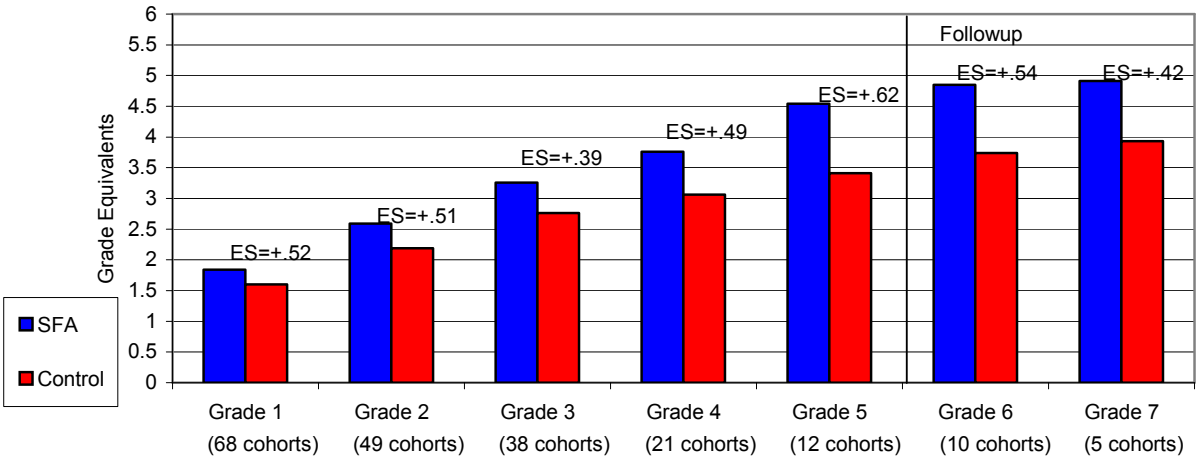
Early Research

The early research on Success for All used a consistent paradigm. In each case, children were pretested (usually on the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test) on entry to kindergarten or first grade and then followed over time with individually administered reading tests given to all children each spring. These were typically scales from the Woodcock Reading Mastery Test and the Durrell Oral Reading Test.

From the first studies, it was clear that Success for All was making a substantial difference. Longitudinal studies of the first five schools in Baltimore found that these schools gained substantially more than matched controls, with effect sizes averaging around 50% of a standard deviation for students in general and more than a full standard deviation (ES=+1.00) for students who began in the lowest 25% of their grades (Slavin, Madden, Karweit, Livermon & Dolan, 1990; Madden, Slavin, Karweit, Dolan, & Wasik, 1993; Madden,

Slavin, Dolan, Karweit, & Wasik, 1992; Slavin, Madden, Dolan, & Wasik, 1996). This paradigm was ultimately followed in schools in 11 districts around the U.S., and the results continued to strongly support the programmes impact (see Dianda & Flaherty, 1995; Livingston & Flaherty, 1997; Nunnery et al., 1997). Figure 1 summarises the impact from studies of various durations, from one to six years. The figure shows that by the end of fifth grade, students in Success for All schools were performing about a full grade equivalent higher than matched control schools on individually administered tests. In addition to effects on achievement, studies found substantial impacts on assignments to special education (Slavin, 1996) and other outcomes (Slavin & Madden, 1996, 2001).

Figure 1
Comparison of Success for All and Control Schools in Mean Reading Grade Equivalents and Effect Sizes 1988-1999



Note: Effect size (ES) is the proportion of a standard deviation by which Success for All students exceeded controls. Includes approximately 6000 children in Success for All or control schools since first grade.

Later Research

After the many studies establishing the basic effects of Success for All, research attention has shifted in different directions. Most importantly, a major national randomised evaluation involving 41 high-poverty elementary schools found positive effects on reading measures (Borman et al., 2005). In addition, a line of research has focused on effects for English language learners, evaluating both a Spanish bilingual adaptation and an English language development adaptation (see Slavin & Madden, 1999; Slavin & Cheung, 2004). Both adaptations have been found to be effective. Research correlating quality and completeness of implementation with student outcomes has been a focus (Nunnery et al, 1997; Ross et al., 1995). A longitudinal followup of students who had been in the original Baltimore schools found that by eighth grade, these students were still performing significantly better on standardised reading measures than former control students, and were substantially less likely to have been retained in grade or assigned to special education (Borman & Hewes, 2003).

Because of demands from policy audiences, some attention has shifted to studies that take data from routine state assessments. Formal studies in Texas (Hurley, Chamberlain, Slavin, & Madden, 2001), and California (Slavin, Madden, & Liang, 2002), have found substantially higher gains for Success for All students than for the state as a whole. Similar analyses have found the same patterns in nearly every state with more than 10 Success for All schools. Such comparisons are less scientific than the longitudinal experiments, but they respond to a desire from policymakers and educators to know how the programme performs on the assessments for which they are held accountable.

As research on comprehensive reform programmes and on reading programmes has taken on greater political and practical importance, a number of reviews of the research have appeared. The American Institutes of Research (Herman, 1999) rated comprehensive reform models and found Success for All to be one of two elementary programmes with the strongest evidence of effectiveness. This conclusion was echoed in a report for the Thomas Fordham Foundation by Traub (1999). A meta-analysis by Borman, Hewes, Overman, & Brown (2003) identified 46 experimental-control comparisons done to evaluate Success for All (including the nearly identical Roots & Wings model), of which 30 were done by third parties. This was the largest number of such

studies for any comprehensive reform model and Borman et al. listed SFA as one of three programmes with strongest evidence of effectiveness. Finally, Pearson & Stahl (2002) evaluated reading programmes and gave Success for All the highest rating for evidence of effectiveness among all core reading programmes.

Research on Success for All in England

As in the U.S., the implementation of Success for All in England has emphasised evaluations of the programmes outcomes. Four very different evaluations have been carried out. The first, by Hopkins, Youngman, Harris, & Wordsworth (1999), focused on the first year in the first five schools to use the programme in England, all located in a disadvantaged neighbourhood in the Nottingham City LEA. The second study, by Tymms & Merrell (2000, 2001), evaluated four schools over a two-year period (also see Hopkins, Harris, & Sinanan, 2002). Russ & Harris (2005) carried out a qualitative study of Success for All in four schools and summarised Key Stage 2 data from all SFA schools in England. Finally, an evaluation of gains from 2001 to 2004 on Key Stage 2 passing rates, using data from the DfES web site, is presented for all of the schools that had begun Success for All by Autumn, 2001.

Hopkins et al. (1999)

David Hopkins, Mick Youngman, Alma Harris and Judith Wordsworth, all then at the University of Nottingham, carried out a preliminary evaluation of Success for All in its five pilot sites in Nottingham. In Autumn, 1998, children in Years 1-6 were assessed on the Early Reading Progress Test (ERP; Youngman & Parkins, 1998). They were then retested in spring,1999. Expected gains were computed by subtracting each year group's score from that of the next higher group. In Years 1-3, Success for All students showed substantially greater gain than expected. Years 4 and 5 also exceeded expectations, although to a lesser degree, but Year 6 students approached the maximum test score and therefore showed a ceiling effect. Qualitative evidence noted positive changes in student behavior, motivation and attitudes. Great variation in quality of implementation was noted, however this variation corresponded with differences in student outcomes.

Tymms & Merrell (2001)

Peter Tymms and Christine Merrell of Durham University conducted a second study of Success for All. This study focused on data from the Performance Indicators in Primary Schools (PIPS), as well as SATs for Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2.

Four SFA schools were involved in this study. Two were primary schools, but one was an infant school and another a junior school attended by children from the infant school. This means that in any particular year goup, there were only three schools represented.

PIPS assessments were administered to all students in all years as a pretest in Autumn, 1999 and then as a post test in spring, 2000 and spring, 2001. Residualised scores (controlling for pretests) at the end of the second year showed positive trends in reading for Years 1, 2 and 6, but negative trends in Reception and Years 3 and 4. Maths scores, of interest only in assessing possible carryover effects of the SFA reading programme, were similarly equivocal, as were science scores in Year 6.

Key Stage 1 data favoured the Success for All groups in reading, writing and spelling (but not maths). However, KS2 data were similar in experimental and control groups.

Reading attitude measures favoured the Success for All schools, but there were no differences in maths attitudes or overall school attitudes.

In sum, the Tymms & Merrell (2001) evaluation found positive reading effects for Years 1 and 2, both on PIPS and on KS1 passing rates, but effects were mixed for other year groups.

Russ & Harris (2005)

Jen Russ and Alma Harris (2005), at the University of Warwick, carried out a year-long investigation of four schools implementing Success for All, two in London and two in Leeds. They examined data, interviewed teachers, head teachers, coordinators, pupils and parents. Their conclusions were as follows.

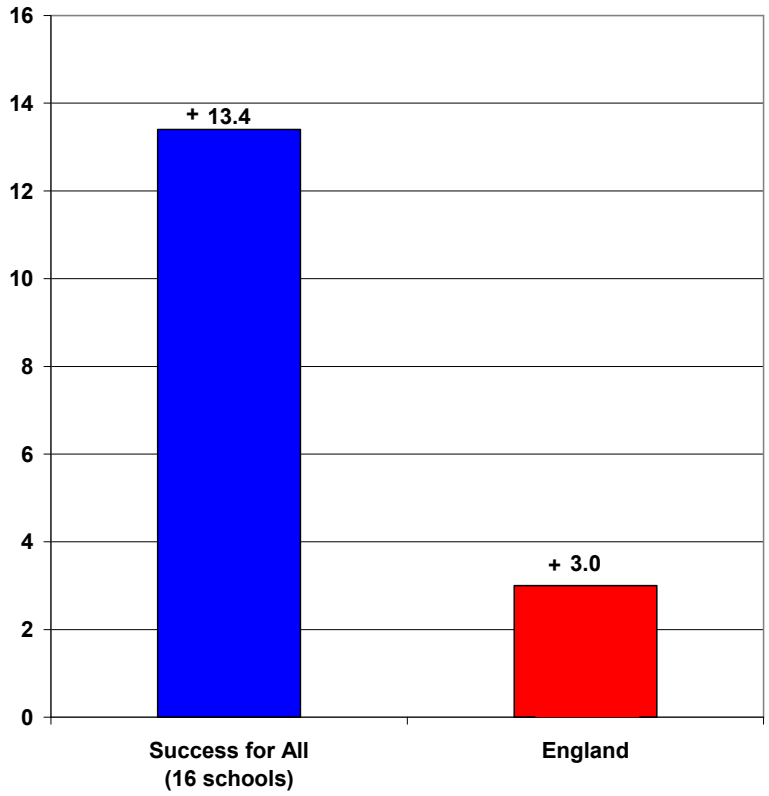
- Schools feel there is a strong fit between Success for All and the learning needs of their pupils
- Teachers feel that SFA offers a "whole book" approach to teaching literacy which the NLS does not

- The strong behavioural component of SFA is seen by schools as an important feature of the programme. It has been extended in all sample schools as a whole curriculum approach to managing pupil behavior.
- The training programme is viewed as high quality and an important medium for implementation
- The training team were considered to be expert practitioners who could model best SFA practice
- SFA has made a difference to literacy levels-in all schools there have been significant improvements, i.e., SAT levels have improved at each key stage
- Pupils have become more confident as learners and critical readers as a result of SFA. There is some evidence that his confidence has extended to personal and interpersonal growth within SFA classes and across the wider curriculum
- SFA has had a positive effect on staff skills and motivation
- Parents feel SFA has had a positive impact upon pupils' willingness to read independently
- There remain some challenges for SFA which largely concern issues of pupils' engagement and progression. Some of the resources are not felt to be sufficiently challenging
- Concern was expressed in relation to delivering the NLS writing targets. However there is evidence that the SFA Team has developed new resources for the SFA programme which match these NLS demands
- Overall, SFA is having a positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning in reading at all four schools.

National Key Stage 2 Gains

Success for All staff routinely track gains in Key Stage 2 passing rates for all schools implementing Success for All in England, using data from the DfES web site. Figure 2 summarises the gains on KS2 for all 16 schools that had begun Success for All by 2001. As the figure shows, Success for All schools averaged a gain of 13.4 percentage points on KS2 from 2001 to 2004, while English schools as a whole gained 3.0 percentage points.

Figure 2
Success for All in England
Gains in Percent Scoring at Level 4 or Above
Key Stage 2, Year 6
2001 to 2004



Conclusion

Success for All has made a good start in England. The programme has demonstrated that it can operative effectively in the English context and each year increasing numbers of schools adopt it. Four studies show variable but promising impacts on student reading performance, particularly on Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, the most important indicators of reading success in the UK.

Success for All has shown enough promise in implementation and outcome to merit a larger-scale, hopefully third party evaluation. An experiment involving at least 20 experimental and 20 control schools,

preferably assigned at random to conditions, would scientifically establish the effects of the programme both on individually-administered measures and on KS1 and KS2 assessments.

The literacy levels of disadvantaged students in England remain too low to permit complacency. In a study of the NLS, Earl et al. (2003) noted that for NLS to move to the next level of impact, teacher and school capacity issues must be addressed, especially in disadvantaged schools. Success for All and other robust, replicable models capable of working at a large scale may offer England's most disadvantaged schools an opportunity to close the gap, to achieve the literacy levels envisioned for all schools in the NLS. It is time to move to the next stage to test this possibility.

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