

Reading Program at Bakersfield Elementary Middle School

In the fall of 1998 Bakersfield Elementary Middle School began using the Success For All reading program in kindergarten through sixth grade. The previous spring, the teachers in the school voted by over 80 % to adopt the program after the Superintendent was introduced to it and some teachers had the opportunity to observe it in action in Montreal. It is a research-based reading program that was developed by Nancy Madden and Robert Slavin nationally known educational researchers. The program has evolved over time and continues to incorporate strategies gleaned from new research.

KinderCorner

Kindergarten is a full day program at our school. SFA in kindergarten has literacy activities spread all through the day. Research shows that children of that age do better when new information is presented in short bursts of instruction and when hands-on activities are integrated with direct instruction.

- Phonemic awareness and phonics instruction is called Stepping Stones and is imbedded throughout the kindergarten day. Letter names and sounds are introduced in a sequential manner.
- Stories are read to the children and then the teacher checks for knowledge of Concepts About Print while teaching new vocabulary words and cooperative learning strategies. In the second half of the year students are introduced to the KinderRoots books where they learn to Partner Read, practice early reading skills and strategies as well as develop successful cooperative interactions.
- Learning Labs are hands-on activities. They are also an opportunity for students to make choices, practice academic and social skills and engage in problem solving which promotes learning.

- Writing time taps into a child's natural desire to write and share ideas. It is a time for students to use skills learned during Stepping Stones instruction. SFA promotes a developmentally appropriate process designed for kindergarten.

Roots

Roots is the next step in the SFA program. There are numerous facets of teaching beginning readers how to be successful and these are addressed by SFA. Students read phonically correct books numbered from 1 to 48 and have a 90-minute reading block of time every day.

- Using the books and Fast Track Phonics many long and short vowel sounds as well as consonant sounds are taught and reviewed in sequential order.
- Oral language development is a critical part of literacy and it helps students with speaking, listening, reading and writing.
- Fluency is another important feature of reading and Roots' teachers monitor the students' reading during Partner Reading. The goal of fluency isn't speed but rather to read like the child would talk or tell a story. When he is reading fluently he can listen to himself and understand what he is reading.
- Partner Reading also allows teachers to teach reading strategies and skills as they work through the initial reading of a text. It is adapted to meet the individual needs of each student.
- Comprehension is monitored constantly. When children are partner reading, one child reads a page then the other partner summarizes the page to the one who just read it, and then they switch roles. Teachers circulate and make sure this is being done correctly.
- Writing in Roots is a response to story questions and helps increase reading comprehension.

- Tutoring is provided for students in grades 1 and 2 if they need extra reading instruction. A team of teachers chooses the tutoring students. Trained paraeducators or certified teachers work one-on-one with each student for 20 minutes three to five times a week.
- Teachers of Reading Roots lay the foundation of the reading strategies that are developed and applied in Wings, the next level of Success For All.

Wings

Reading Wings is the strand of SFA that focuses on second through sixth grades. It takes place in a 90-minute block of time. Quality novels of different genres and about diverse topics are used as reading books. Targeted Treasure Hunts, which outline the lessons for the five-day cycle of instruction, are obtained from the Success For All Foundation.

- Vocabulary acquisition occurs when students are introduced to the new words that are pulled from the reading selection for the week.
- Partner Reading and discussion enables students to share their experiences and build on prior knowledge. Fluency is practiced during the oral partner reading time. The speed isn't as important as the prosody (expression, tone of voice and accuracy) of the reading. Partner discussion also enhances the quality of the students' written responses.
- Meaningful Sentence writing requires students to write sophisticated and complex sentences using the vocabulary words for the week and synonyms for those words.
- Comprehension skills are improved through the understanding and use of the strategies of clarifying, summarizing, questioning and predicting while reading texts. These strategies can be easily used when reading other texts during the school day.
- Literary devices such as main ideas, sequencing, compare/contrast, cause/effect, and problem/solution are

taught, reviewed and practiced during the five-day cycle of the Targeted Treasure Hunt.

Reading First Grant

In June of 2003, **Vermont** was notified that it had received the Reading First grant. This is a federal grant created to help support the requirements of the *No Child Left Behind Act*. Informational meetings were held to alert schools and supervisory unions about the grant. A school or supervisory union could apply for a sub-grant if it could show need and if it complied with the grant that was written by the state. Bakersfield Elementary Middle School was one of the four schools in the supervisory union that qualified. We were below the standard in the state assessment of writing. We were notified that we were awarded the sub-grant in the first round of applications.

Being a recipient of the grant required the school to comply with the guidelines put forth by the state agency that is administering the grant. Our school has an approved research based reading program in the school, Success For All. The grant pays for a half-time Reading Coach and ongoing professional development for classroom and reading teachers. The money that the supervisory union receives in a year also supports early intervention and supplemental programs for students in grades kindergarten through third grade. The grant will be in effect until the end of the 2009-2010 school year.

All the students in kindergarten through third grade are tested in late September, January and in May. Those test results are sent home to parents along with a letter explaining the tests and what the scores mean. The test results are also sent to the state Reading First Coordinators but no student names are attached to the results.

In the near future Bakersfield Elementary Middle School will have to decide what pieces of the grant we want to sustain when the grant money is no longer available.

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Reading First Coach