

SUCCESS BUILT ON SUCCESS



As children from Makawao Elementary School move into the middle grades, their reputation as SFA students precedes them.

THE CHALLENGE

When Robyn Honda became principal of Makawao Elementary School, in Maui, Hawaii, in 2010, she saw how entwined Success for All was in the school's culture after more than a decade of partnership.

She notes that SFA's instructional design gives students a solid academic foundation and then incorporates higher learning concepts

so students continually build upon that base and advance.

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Honda says. "The way SFA is set up, you never stop.

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ROBYN HONDA, Principal

The principal also had high expectations that the program would continue to evolve and bring new successes to Makawao's students.



THE SOLUTION

Susan Harper, the school's SFA facilitator, observes that teachers at Makawao see this continual improvement firsthand, not only in their own classrooms but in colleagues' as well. "It's really exciting to take a fifth-grade teacher into a kindergarten classroom and see them realize that they're being successful because kindergarten has laid the foundation for a lot of those collaborative strategies and the basic routines."

Teaching those strategies has extended beyond the classroom by involving parents in their child's learning. Honda and Harper find Read and Respond (which requires students to read nightly for 20 minutes with a family member) an especially valuable tool. "Parents really understand what we're trying to teach [students]. It's not just sight words or memorization," Harper says.

Honda adds: "Reading is our priority here." To that end, administrators take care not to disrupt SFA's 90-minute block, even going so far as to reschedule noisy landscaping work so it will not distract anyone.

Harper is also impressed at how engrossed the students are in the program and credits it with reducing behavior problems: "I noticed very few or none of the students were referred during [SFA] time. I came to realize because this program is so rigorous, students are always actively engaged in the process."

Keeping students actively engaged through cooperative learning is a fundamental SFA concept. "I find that students are a lot more comfortable talking to one another and listening to one another," Honda says, noting that collaboration among peers encourages students to take responsibility not only for their own learning, but also for their fellow students'. "That readily translates into building a bigger community and being part of something larger than yourself."



Preparing for New Standards

Success for All has helped Makawao Elementary School staff and students prepare for impending statewide Common Core State Standards (CCSS). Because the higher-order concepts demanded by the CCSS – such as emphasized oral communication, critical thinking and text complexity – are integrated into the SFA curriculum, school SFA facilitator Susan Harper insists that Makawao is ready. “That children need to communicate orally their answers, even more than just answering a multiple-choice question or writing a response, [SFA] really dovetails” with CCSS, she says. “It’s really going to help student learning.”

SFA also gives principal Robyn Honda the direction she needs to guide teachers in CCSS implementation. “I can be very specific on what I’m looking for and give feedback to the teachers on what is expected of them and what’s expected of students,” she explains. Onsite support, newly updated materials, and ongoing professional development are just some of the resources that SFA provides to help schools prepare.

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SUSAN HARPER, SFA Facilitator

THE RESULTS

Students from Makawao have become known on the island for their academic prowess. Their reputation precedes them in middle schools. Other teachers and administrators can recognize the students “not just in their ability to read and decode, but their ability to talk about reading and talk about themselves in learning,” says Honda.

Adds Harper, “The students seem to really understand the processes they’re using and that they’re not just learning for learning’s sake. It’s more intrinsic than that.”

Makawao’s test scores are turning heads as well. In the 2011–12 school year, Hawaii Content and Performance Standards indicated that 84% of Makawao third graders were proficient in reading – 14 percentage points higher than the state’s average. Fourth and fifth graders also outscored the state’s average by 13 and 10 points, respectively.

Since Honda became principal, Makawao’s enrollment has increased by about 75 students. She credits SFA and the school’s solid reputation in part for the increase. “I’d like to think that a big part of it is because of our SFA program, and now a lot of our community and the state can see the stats on what we’re doing in reading,” she says. “They have really come to recognize that it’s such an important program.”

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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