

evaluators are used during the program creation and development. Very little input has been added from external evaluators. The dilemma surrounding this critique is that internal evaluators, like SFA creators Slavin and Madden, are going to be prone to make decisions that favor their own program model.

My Own Critique of Success for All

*Who is writing the critiques?
What is their research background?*

Does the curriculum help learners acquire the problem solving they will need now and in the future?

I felt that the curriculum is not necessarily the tool that provides the outright skill base necessary for success now and in the future. The materials that the students use are not the missing links that provide for success. Rather, it is the methodological approach to learning that push students to succeed and improve academically. The cooperative learning is a piece to this puzzle, however ultimately it is the nature that students are held accountable for their improvement that holds the entire puzzle together. In a typical classroom, students are not assessed enough to know when they are not achieving. In the SFA structure the students are assessed often. If they seem to not be showing signs of improvement in their reading they receive one-on-one tutoring and a family support intervention. The combination of all of these factors make it possible for students to acquire the skills they will need both to finish their schooling, but also as they enter the careers of their future.

*good insight about the cooperation
But what about "problem solving"?*

Do some of the planned goals relate to the society or the community within which the curriculum is being implemented? >??

The goals presented within the SFA curriculum are that every child can and will learn to read at grade level by the third grade. This is the goal for all children, and there are no exceptions. Generally the SFA curriculum is implemented in lower

socioeconomic areas where people are struggling to improve. However, this does not mean that they do not want to improve their lives, they are just struggling. When the SFA curriculum is implemented it is often used as a last resort before drastic measures are taken by the State. Schools and teachers usually enter the program with desperation, and they latch on to the philosophy of the curriculum quickly and with steadfast reason. They too want to see their school succeed. Yet, more importantly they want to see the children of their community succeed and be able to give back to their communities.

Are the appropriate instructional methods (or modes of teaching) used to attain the purposes and goals of the curriculum?

I feel that the instructional strengths within the curriculum are both the cooperative learning techniques used, and the questioning techniques used that focus on Bloom's Taxonomy. Students are asked to work in groups and discuss the literature at a higher level than the typical lower level thinking comprehension questions teachers typically ask. It is this combination of instructional techniques that make SFA such a rich and challenging curriculum for students.

Are the instructional activities meaningful and authentic for the students?

I questioned this area greatly when evaluating the SFA curriculum. I think the activities are meaningful for the students overall. They are intended to solidify skills and phonetic structures in the early years. In the higher years they are intended to develop critical thinking skills. However, there is a level of repetition that might possibly seem mundane after a while. I wondered whether students ever get bored of the same 3 to 5 day lesson cycle. I also considered the possibility that students might begin to lose interest and take the academic rigor of the activities less seriously if they continually follow the same lesson format.

Yes!
There are tremendous gains in early primary - fewer increases in upper elementary