

Achieving Success for Every Student

with Direct Instruction

PO Box 11248 | Eugene, OR 97440
877.485.1973 | www.nifdi.org



**National Institute
for Direct Instruction**

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NIFDI Press™

Special Thanks

The National Institute for Direct Instruction would like to thank Principal Angela Keedy, the staff and students at Union Colony Elementary in Greeley, Colorado for their willingness to share their classrooms with us. All photos in this publication were taken on-site at Union Colony Elementary.

What is Direct Instruction (DI)?

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WHAT IS DIRECT INSTRUCTION (DI)?

Direct Instruction (DI) is a teaching model that emphasizes well-developed and carefully sequenced lessons designed around small learning increments and clearly defined and prescribed teaching tasks. DI is based on the theory that clear instruction eliminating misinterpretations greatly accelerates learning for all students. Its creator, Siegfried Engelmann, and his colleagues have demonstrated that DI greatly improves both academic performance and affective behaviors. Over 40 years of research has proven that DI dramatically increases academic performance of students of all backgrounds.

WHY DOES DI WORK?

There are four main features of DI that ensure students learn faster and more efficiently than any other program or technique available:

1. Students are placed in instruction at their skill level.

When students begin the program, each student is tested to find out which skills they have already mastered and which ones they need to work on. From this, students are grouped together with other students needing to work on the same skills. These groups are organized by the level of the program that is appropriate for students, rather than the grade level the students are in.

2. The program's structure is designed to ensure mastery of the content.

The program is organized so that skills are introduced gradually, giving children a chance to learn those skills and apply them before being required to learn another new set of skills. Only 10% of each lesson is new material. The remaining 90% of each lesson's content is review and application of skills students have already learned but need practice with in order to master. Skills and concepts are taught in isolation and then integrated with other skills into more sophisticated, higher-level applications. All details of instruction are controlled to minimize the chance of students' misinterpreting the information being taught and to maximize the reinforcing effect of instruction.

3. Instruction is modified to accommodate each student's rate of learning.

A particularly wonderful part about DI is that students are retaught or accelerated at the rate at which they learn. If they need more practice with a specific skill, teachers can provide the additional instruction within the program to ensure students master the skill. Conversely, if a student is easily acquiring the new skills and needs to advance to the next level, students can be moved to a new placement so that they may continue adding to the skills they already possess.

4. Programs are field tested and revised before publication.

DI programs are very unique in the way they are written and revised before publication. All DI programs are field tested with real students and revised based on those tests before they are ever published. This means that the program your student is receiving has already been proven to work.

DI PROGRAMS

Only a select group of published instructional materials meet the rigorous standards for true DI programs according to the *Rubric for Identifying Authentic Direct Instruction Programs* (<http://zigsite.com/PDFs/rubric.pdf>). The main DI programs for schools starting a DI implementation, most of which are published by McGraw-Hill, are listed below. (Names of other publishers appear in parens.)

Reading

Reading Mastery Signature Edition, Reading Strand
Corrective Reading, Decoding and Comprehension Tracks
Horizons
Funnix (published by Funnix.com)

Language & Writing

Reading Mastery Signature Edition, Language Arts Strand
Expressive Writing
Essentials for Writing
Cursive Writing

Math

Connecting Math Concepts
Connecting Math Concepts: Comprehensive Edition
Corrective Mathematics: Addition; Subtraction; Multiplication; Division; Basic Fractions; Fractions, Decimals, and Percents; Ratios and Equations
DISTAR Arithmetic
Essentials for Algebra

Spelling

Spelling Mastery
Spelling Through Morphographs

Other Programs

Understanding US History (published by the University of Oregon Bookstore)
Direct Instruction Spoken English (published by Sopris West)
Español to English

Why DI school wide?

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DIRECT INSTRUCTION IS DESIGNED FOR CORE INSTRUCTION

There is a common misconception that Direct Instruction (DI) programs were not developed or intended for core instruction. Often, DI is relegated to the role of intervention for low-performing students. However, as described below, DI was designed from the beginning to provide core instructional programming in reading, math and language arts to all students. DI has been widely used and validated to be effective as core instruction for a wide range of learners as noted in the following section, *What Results Can Schools Expect?* The developers of DI advocate for a comprehensive, full-immersion model using DI as the core instructional curriculum for all students—with all interventions conducted within the DI core.

DI Designed as Core Programs

As mentioned previously, Direct Instruction programs incorporate a unique, step-by-step approach to learning that requires placing students in the program matching their current skill level and teaching students to a high level of mastery daily. Students are provided with carefully designed, clear instruction that teaches skills at the point where students place. Students with fewer skills are placed at a lower point in the program and given additional practice on critical skills as needed. Students with more skills are placed at a higher point in the program. Students can be provided with instruction on a Fast Cycle/Skip Schedule to accommodate an accelerated pace based on their rate of mastery. In the DI math program, *Connecting Math Concepts: Comprehensive Edition (CMCCE)*, additional “parallel” lessons are provided for students who could benefit from extra practice.

Direct Instruction programs are not designed to be used in conjunction with other programs. Mixing other instructional approaches in the same subject matter with DI can confuse students because of the specific strategies used in the DI programs. For example, *Reading Mastery (RM)* initially teaches students the sounds letters make, rather than the names of the letters. Students learn letter names later in the program after they have mastered the sounds. Many students, especially at-risk students, may become confused if they receive instruction in *RM* for part of the day and then receive instruction in another program that teaches letter names. This ultimately slows students' overall progress in learning to read.

Because of its design and proven effectiveness with a wide range of students (discussed below), many educational organizations agree that DI programs are appropriate as core instructional programs. From the Florida Center on Reading Research: "*Direct instruction is appropriate instruction for all learners, all five*

components of reading, and in all settings (whole group, small group, and one-on-one)." (See <http://www.fcrr.org/Curriculum/curriculumInstructionFaq1.shtm>)

DI Core Programs as Part of the Comprehensive DI Reform Model

Since the late 1960s, DI programs have been incorporated into an integrated, systemic approach to reforming schools—the comprehensive Direct Instruction reform model (also called the full immersion Direct Instruction model). Schools adopting the comprehensive DI model implement DI programs as the core programs in most or all major subject areas (reading, language arts, spelling and mathematics). This allows for students to receive effective instruction with Direct Instruction throughout the day as a means for accelerating their performance in all major subject areas. For a description of the comprehensive Direct Instruction model, see the Developer’s Guidelines:

http://www.nifdi.org/images/stories/documents/developer_guidelines.pdf.

The comprehensive Direct Instruction model has been recognized by such organizations as the American Association of School Administrators (AASA), the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP), the National Education Association (NEA), New American Schools (NAS) and the Coalition for Comprehensive School Improvement (CCSI). Federal funds have been used to implement the comprehensive Direct Instruction model for decades. Hundreds of schools implemented the Direct Instruction model for literacy as part of Reading First, a federally funded program focused on implementing proven early reading instructional methods in classrooms. Currently, the comprehensive DI model is being implemented in approximately 300 schools in the U.S. Over the years, thousands of schools have implemented the Direct Instruction model with DI programs used as the core programs for instruction.

Differentiating through Direct Instruction

Teachers in non-DI classrooms are faced with the dilemma of providing instruction to accommodate a wide spectrum of student skill levels. In an attempt to customize curriculum and instruction, teachers often use differentiated strategies, which require them to design and present variations of lessons at different skill levels. Direct Instruction is designed to accommodate varying levels of student skills *without the need for designing several variations of the same lesson*.

In the DI model, students are grouped homogeneously by skill level in all subject areas. This allows teachers to work with groups of students with similar skill sets and avoids the need to design separate activities or “teach to the middle”. With DI, students receive lessons at different places in the same instructional

sequence – with each student at his/her appropriate instructional level. All students eventually cover the same material; high performing students are placed higher in the instructional sequence and receive the content before lower-performing students.

With students grouped homogeneously, teachers can more easily adjust instruction to meet all students' needs. Teachers may offer additional practice in specific skills to low performing students to ensure mastery prior to moving on to more advanced material. In contrast, teachers may follow a “skip-schedule” of lessons for high performing students to allow them to reach more challenging material more quickly. Additionally, DI groups are flexible in order to respond to changes in student performance. Students who require additional practice can be moved to a lower performing group while those students who are ready for more advanced material can be moved to a higher performing group. In this manner, instruction becomes more efficient, as students at all performance levels master more material in a shorter time than in mixed-ability groups.

Adjusting instruction in DI is facilitated through in-program mastery tests, which appear every 10 lessons in most DI programs. The high frequency of these tests provides timely information to teachers about student mastery of critical skills and concepts taught in the DI programs. This allows teachers to respond quickly to students' needs and tailor instruction to individual students. By analyzing the tests, teachers can identify problems of student mastery quickly and correct errors before they become habits. In contrast, teachers using non-DI programs often only receive information on student mastery of critical skills and concepts through end-of-chapter or end-of-unit tests. In the meantime, students may develop serious misunderstandings about the skills or content presented in the program.

Using DI Effectively as an Intervention Only

Quite often, schools implement DI to support students who are struggling in the core program. Unfortunately, this usually requires students to utilize competing strategies, which is difficult for students, especially at-risk children. Dual-program instruction also presents problems for teachers, who must learn two different programs, two different instructional approaches and possibly two different assessments. Administrators must monitor and provide support for the two programs. And they must develop a system for determining when the second program is to be used, for how long, and with which students.

Teachers and administrators may have difficulty determining when and how a second program should be used, especially when the two programs are not compatible. The cost of two programs adds unnecessary expense to school budgets because DI programs contain all of the components teachers need to be successful with students representing the full range of learners. Any diversion

WHY DI SCHOOL WIDE?

from the DI programs will lead to less impressive results than a full, undiluted, comprehensive DI implementation.

For DI to be utilized successfully with struggling students, schools need to implement DI as a replacement core so that the students receive instruction in DI exclusively until they complete the DI program sequence. For example, if a student is placed into Reading Mastery, he or she needs to complete the program through the highest level, Grade 5, before returning to the regular program. Students are often not successful if they are returned to the regular program before completing the DI series, which can cause students, teachers and administrators to become frustrated.

Early identification is critical to meeting the needs of struggling students with Direct Instruction as a replacement core. Students should be identified for Direct Instruction as early as possible in the school year or in their school career. If possible, students should be identified for DI in the summer before school starts. If students receive DI only after they fail to keep up in the regular program for several weeks, months or even years, their learning will be delayed in comparison to those students who are placed directly into DI. This represents lost instructional time – instructional time students and teachers will never get back.

DIRECT INSTRUCTION MEETS THE COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

Users of DI programs can be assured that DI programs align closely with the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). In recent years, the Common Core State Standards have become a universal language for schools across our nation and play a significant role in instructional decisions made in schools, including curriculum selections. The CCSS were developed with the intent to provide a clear framework of what students are expected to learn and to ensure consistent standards, regardless of where students attend school. The standards are organized by grade level into two categories: English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics.

An evaluation of *Reading Mastery Signature Edition (RMSE)*, a well-known and commonly used DI program, has been conducted by McGraw-Hill to determine the alignment of the program's content with the English Language Arts common core standards. Overall, *RMSE* met 95% of the ELA Standards prescribed in the CCSS. Only 23 out of 427 standards are not covered by the program. Moreover, the standards that are not covered by *RMSE* can be met through lessons and activities teachers regularly promote in their classrooms. For example, the following Kindergarten standard is not met through *RMSE*: "With guidance and support from adults, explore a variety of digital tools to produce and publish writing, including in collaboration with peers." Teachers routinely introduce digital



WHY DI SCHOOL WIDE?

tools, such as computers and word processing, to their students within other subject areas and contexts during the school day.

The newest addition to the DI math family of programs — the 2012 edition of *Connecting Math Concepts: Comprehensive Edition (CMCCE)* — was specifically designed to meet the Common Core State Standards and has a 100% alignment. The first three levels of the program are available now and the remaining three levels will be available during the 2012-13 school year. This program not only meets the CCSS, but also provides a number of improvements to the previous edition, including extensive oral practice on problem types before students work them independently.

Schools using *RMSE*, *CMCCE* and other DI programs can be assured the coverage in each of those standards addressed is superior to traditional texts. In DI, students are expected to master the concepts presented to them and are routinely tracked on their performance to ensure mastery. As a result, students don't just cover the standards that DI programs address — they master them!



What results can schools expect?

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WHAT RESULTS CAN SCHOOLS EXPECT?

THE DIRECT INSTRUCTION RESEARCH BASE

Over 40 years of scientific research has documented the success of Direct Instruction. Many studies in a wide variety of settings demonstrate that children who receive Direct Instruction have significantly higher achievement, make more rapid educational progress and have higher levels of self-esteem than students in other programs. These results are demonstrated:

In all of the DI curricula

- Reading
- Math
- Language

In all types of settings

- Rural
- Urban
- Suburban
- International

With all types of assessment measures

- State test scores
- Curriculum-based measures
- Norm-referenced tests

With students from all types of backgrounds

- Majority
- Minority
- Low income
- High income
- English language learners

With students of all ages

- Preschool
- Elementary
- Middle school
- High school
- Adults

THE NIFDI ONLINE RESEARCH DATABASE

The National Institute for Direct Instruction (NIFDI) sponsors a Research Database of abstracts covering the various areas of interest listed above. With over 200 articles, and more being added every month, NIFDI's research database is an excellent resource for researchers, educators and students alike. You can search the database by keyword, subject area, author and more! Check out the database for yourself at <http://www.nifdi.org/di-research-database>.

EVIDENCE OF DI'S EFFECTIVENESS AS A CORE

The effectiveness of DI as the core program has been validated through a vast body of research on the efficacy of DI. A recent meta-analysis of research on the achievement effects of widely implemented comprehensive school reforms found similar support for Direct Instruction. The meta-analysis, conducted by Borman, Hewes, Overman in 2003, examined studies of 29 comprehensive school reform models, including the comprehensive Direct Instruction model. The authors found significantly more evidence available for the Direct Instruction model than for



other models, with 49 studies and 182 different comparisons for the DI studies. Of the 29 reform models researchers evaluated, only three models were identified as having “clearly established, across varying contexts and varying study designs, that their effects are relatively robust and that the models, in general, can be expected to improve test scores.” Direct Instruction was one of these three models. For the full report, see: <http://www.csos.jhu.edu/CRESPAR/TechReports/Report59.pdf>.

Project Follow Through

Direct Instruction was one of the models evaluated in Project Follow Through, the most extensive educational experiment ever conducted. Beginning in 1968 under the sponsorship of the federal government, it was charged with determining the best way of teaching at-risk children from kindergarten through grade 3. Over 200,000 children in 178 communities were included in the study and 22 different models of instruction were compared for their effect on student performance in math, reading, spelling, language and affective measures (self-esteem). The participating communities spanned the full range of demographic variables (geographic distribution and community size), ethnic composition (white, black, Hispanic, Native American) and poverty level (economically disadvantaged and economically advantaged). Parent groups in participating communities selected one approach they wanted to have implemented, and each school district agreed to implement the approach the parent group selected *on basic skills as well as higher order skills*.

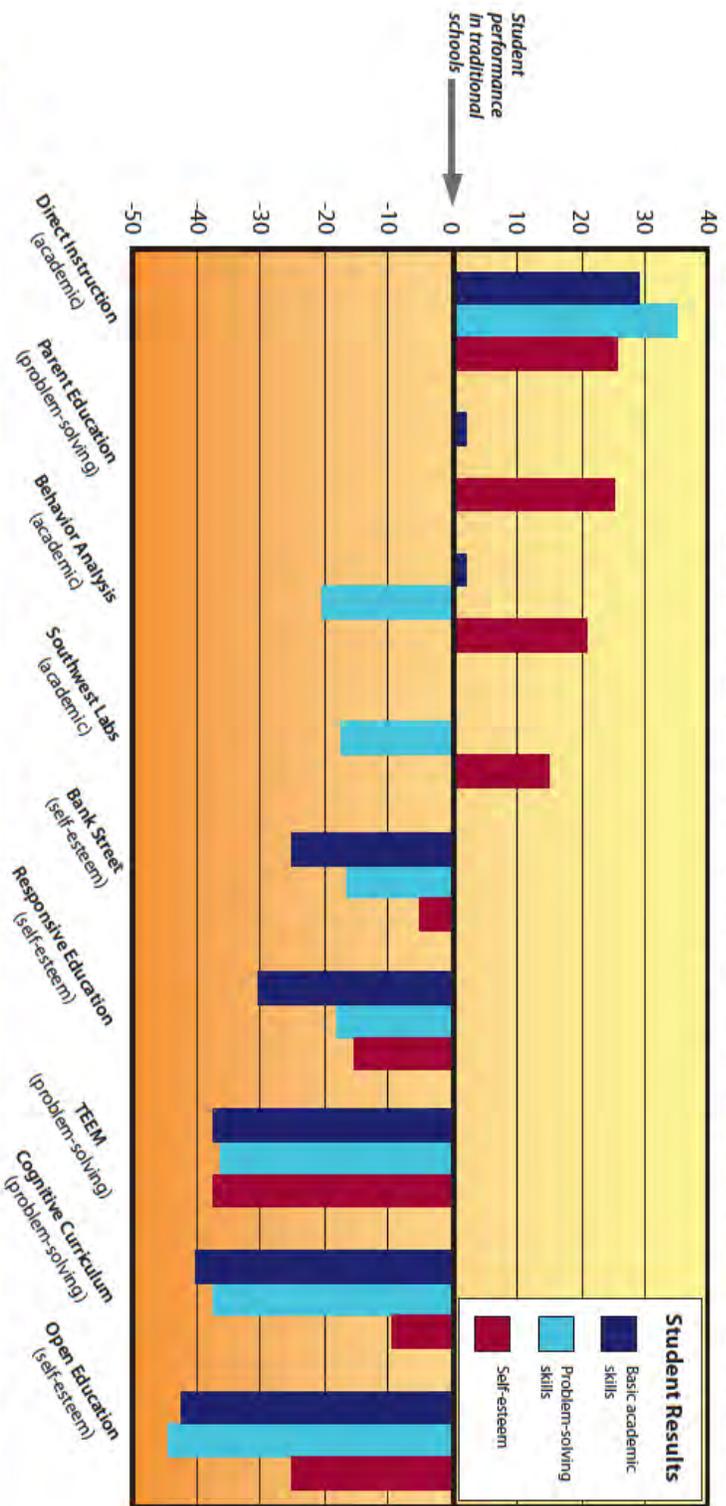
Evaluation of the project occurred in 1977 — nine years after the project began. The results were strong and clear. Students who received Direct Instruction had significantly higher academic achievement than students in any of the other programs. They also had higher self-esteem and self-confidence. As the graph on the following page shows, no other program had results that approached the positive impact of Direct Instruction on student outcomes.

Other Examples of DI Used as the Core Instructional Program

Two examples of large-scale use of Direct Instruction's Reading Mastery as the core reading program took place in Texas and Florida. In 1997, the Rodeo Institute for Teacher Excellence (RITE) began the implementation of DI in six Houston area schools in an effort to provide explicit instruction for severely at-risk K-2 students. In four years, the program expanded to 20 schools. An external assessment of the program found that students in the program out-performed their peers in comparison schools and were significantly more likely to score above the 50th percentile on standardized assessments than below the 25th percentile. They also noted an increase of 14% of students passing the 3rd grade Texas Assessment of Academic Skills by the third year of the implementation.

Project Follow Through, 1967 - 1977

Nine models of teaching K-3 compared in history's largest educational experiment



Findings:

- Nine models grouped into 3 broad teaching approaches: Academic focus, problem solving focus, or self-esteem focus.
- Three categories of results were measured: Basic academic skills, problem-solving skills, and changes in self-esteem.
- Direct Instruction produced the best results in all areas: Basic skills, problem solving, & self-esteem.
- Most other models were less effective than traditional schooling, yet many remain in use today!

Source: Barbash, Shepard. *Clear Teaching: With Direct Instruction, Siegfried Engelmann Discovered a Better Way of Teaching*. The Education Consumers Foundation. <http://www.education-consumers.org/ClearTeaching.htm>.

WHAT RESULTS CAN SCHOOLS EXPECT?

A study conducted by researchers at the Florida Center for Reading Research and Florida State University compared *Reading Mastery* and several other core reading programs. In the study, *Examining the core: Relations among reading curricula, poverty, and first through third grade reading achievement* (2009), the authors tracked the performance of 30,000 Florida students in first through third grades. The authors found very favorable results for Reading Mastery:

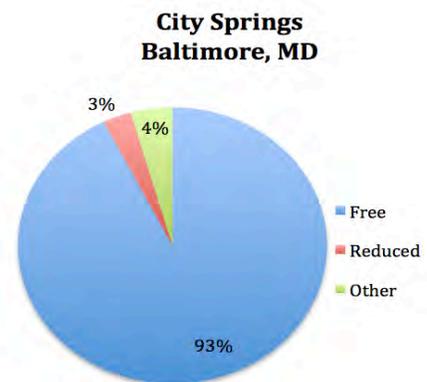
"Overall, students in the Reading Mastery curriculum demonstrated generally greater overall oral reading fluency (ORF) growth than students in other curricula. Also, they more frequently met or exceeded benchmarks for adequate achievement in first, second, and third grade."

CASE STUDIES OF NIFDI SCHOOLS

Below is a sampling of schools that implemented DI with NIFDI support. In every case, student performance improved significantly.

Urban: City Springs School, Baltimore, MD

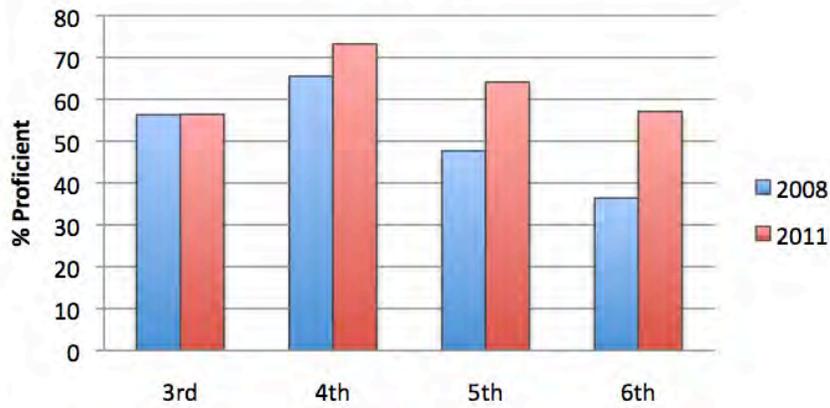
Rhonda Richetta is the current principal of City Springs Elementary/Middle School, a high-poverty school in Baltimore, Maryland with a student population that is 99% African American. City Springs School is a Baltimore City Public Charter School operated by the Baltimore Curriculum Project (BCP), a non-profit organization providing guidance to four public schools as they implement Direct Instruction (DI). Ms. Richetta is in her fifth year as principal of City Springs Elementary/Middle School.



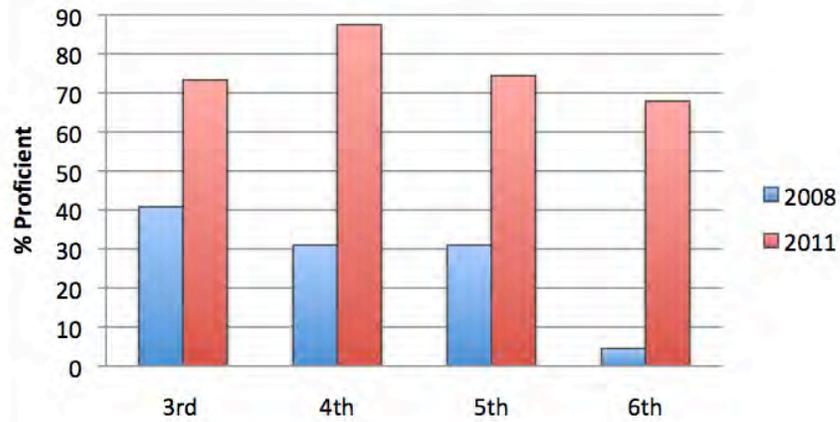
During her term as principal, City Springs has made extraordinary gains in student achievement through the implementation of Direct Instruction (DI). Before Ms. Richetta became principal, almost all students at City Springs were functioning far below grade level. In 2007, only 26% of first through sixth graders were functioning *on grade level* in reading (even less in math). Through the full implementation of the DI model starting in 2008, City Springs dramatically increased student academic performance in three years. In 2010, 72% of the students were *on grade level* in reading. (See graphs on next page.)

WHAT RESULTS CAN SCHOOLS EXPECT?

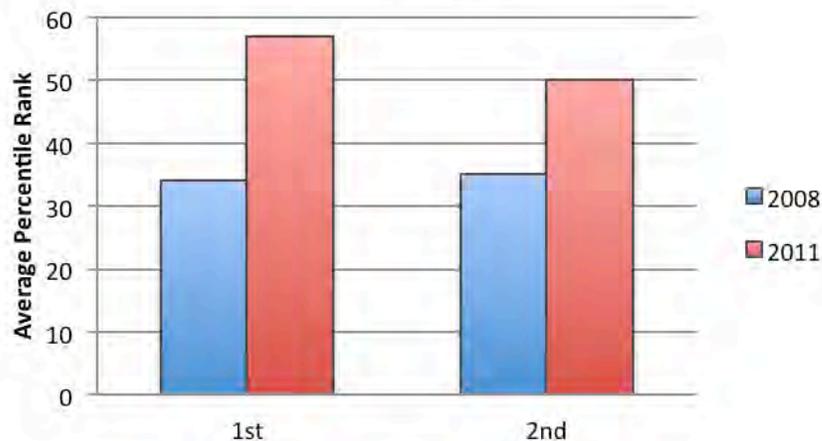
City Springs School Maryland State Assessment Results *Reading*



City Springs School Maryland State Assessment Results *Math*



City Springs School *Stanford 10*



Rural: Schuyler Elementary, Schuyler, NE

Students at Schuyler Elementary have made significant progress in closing the achievement gap between their performance and the average performance of schools around the state. In 2010, Schuyler’s third graders scored 21 points below the state average in reading. The next year, however, third graders at Schuyler Elementary posted scores 23 points higher, coming within two points of the statewide average score of 71. Impressive results also took place in fourth grade where Schuyler’s students narrowed the gap between the school and the state from 26 points to 15 (see Figure 1).

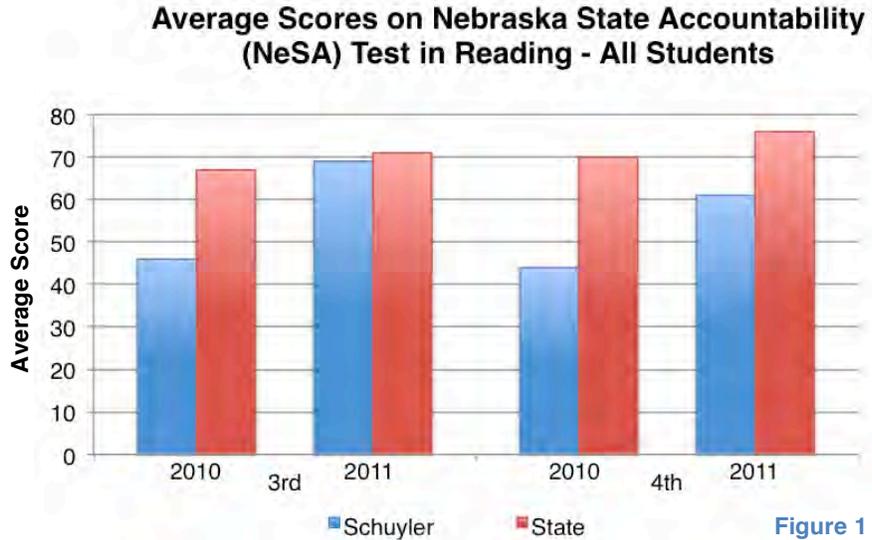


Figure 1

Driving these gains is the progress made by Schuyler's Hispanic students, who *comprise nearly ninety percent of the school's population* (see Figure 2). In 2009-10, a mere 39% of Schuyler’s Hispanic students in 3rd grade passed the NeSA. Not a single one exceeded. In 2010-11, 57% of 3rd grade Hispanic students met and eight percent exceeded the standards, totaling 65% of the school's Hispanic population in 3rd grade meeting or exceeding the rigorous state assessment goals (see Figure 3).

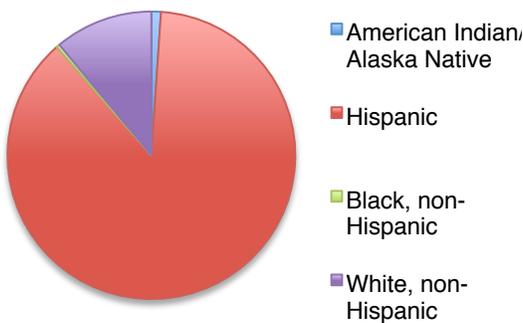


Figure 2

Performance of Hispanic Students at Schuyler Elementary on Nebraska State Assessment (NeSA) in 3rd Grade Reading



Figure 3



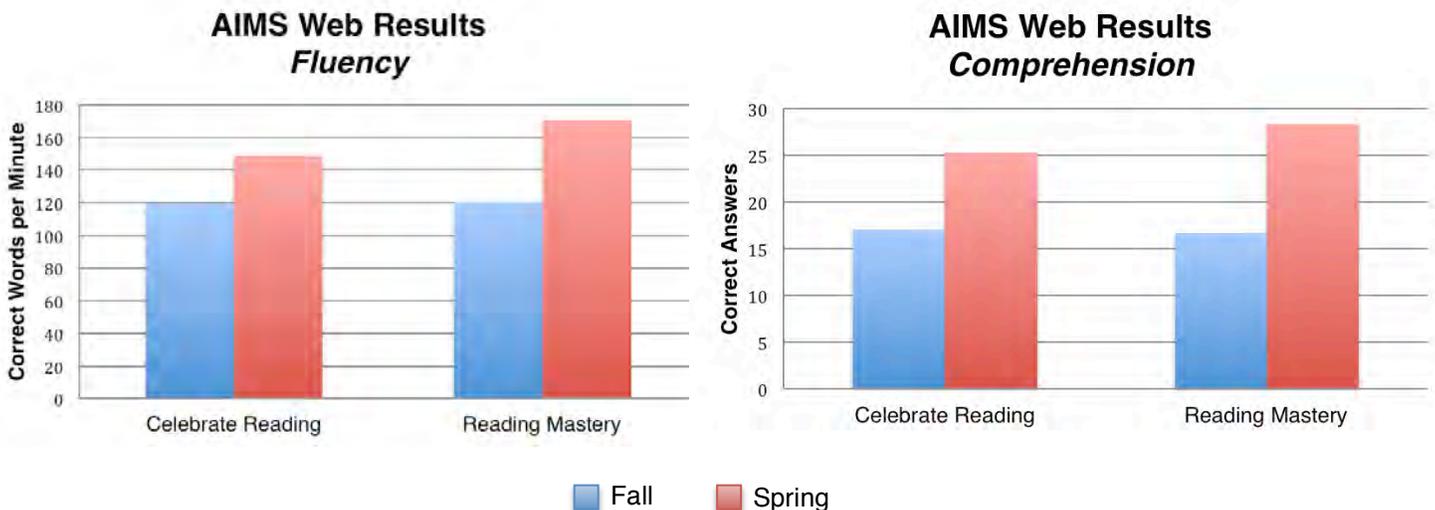
High Performers: Mt. Carmel Elementary, Mt. Carmel, IL

Leaders at an Illinois school asked researchers to compare the effectiveness of the program they had been using for the past eight years, Scott Foresman’s *Celebrate Reading*, with Direct Instruction’s *Reading Mastery*.

In the study, researchers examined fluency and comprehension gains over one academic year with high-achieving (Tier 1) 4th graders as measured on AIMSweb. The school of approximately 400 students was relatively high-SES with about only one-third of students in the study qualifying for free-and-reduced lunch. All of the students participating were white.

Students were assigned in equal numbers to one of two groups in the study. On average, students in each group were reading approximately 120 correct words per minute at the start of the study; however, by spring, students in *Reading Mastery* were out-performing the students in *Celebrate Reading*. The *Reading Mastery* students gained over 50 correct words per minute, while the students in *Celebrate Reading* gained 30 correct words per minute on average – just over half of the gain experienced by students receiving instruction in *Reading Mastery*! Not only did the *Reading Mastery* students do well in comparison to their peers receiving the alternate program, but they gained 1.52 words per week, which exceeds a common expectation of .85 to .90 words per week growth. In fact, the gain exceeded the standards for ambitious achievement, which ranges from 1.1 to 1.5 words per week!

Students in *Reading Mastery* also experienced an impressive growth in their comprehension skills. By spring, the *Reading Mastery* students had gained an average of nearly 13 points, while students receiving instruction in *Celebrate Reading* gained only eight points on average.



What does NIFDI provide?

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THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR DIRECT INSTRUCTION (NIFDI)

The National Institute for Direct Instruction (NIFDI), a non-profit organization based in Eugene, Oregon, is the world's foremost support provider for DI school wide implementations. NIFDI was founded in the late 1990s by the creator and senior author of DI, Dr. Siegfried Engelmann, for the purpose of demonstrating the effectiveness of implementing DI school wide as the core approach in all major subject areas.

NIFDI has extensive experience providing support for implementing DI in a wide variety of settings. NIFDI has its roots in the University of Oregon Direct Instruction Follow Through model, which was conceived at the University of Illinois in the late 1960's and implemented in schools around the country from 1967 to 1995. NIFDI began as the Accelerated Student Achievement Project (ASAP) in 1993. ASAP negotiated with the state of Utah's State Department of Education and the Utah Learning Resource Center to implement DI in four elementary schools. The positive acceleration of student achievement as a result of the ASAP implementations led to its adoption in Baltimore and elsewhere.

INTERLOCKING SERVICE COMPONENTS

NIFDI works with schools to establish a comprehensive, undiluted implementation of Direct Instruction school-wide and across all grade levels, beginning with the first year of school entry. With an emphasis on student performance at a high level of mastery, a successful implementation of DI accelerates all students and trains teachers in structural and instructional details that enable acceleration to occur.

Gradually, NIFDI equips schools and districts with tools, training procedures, and skills to maintain the implementation after NIFDI assistance has faded. District-employed personnel are trained to provide on-site support and coaching, and a management team takes over the coordination of the DI implementation after three to five years of NIFDI support.

NIFDI services are interlocking components. Every component addresses a specific aspect of the implementation and without any one component, the overall effect on students' learning suffers. NIFDI's primary interest is working with schools to develop fully realized Direct Instruction schools where all children succeed. For this reason, NIFDI does not generally provide the components separately. An exception is made for pilot programs that could build toward comprehensive implementations of DI.



TRAINING

Assessment Training

Assessment training of staff and placement testing of students in the (DI) programs are important first steps in implementing any model of DI. The individual assessment results allow for the grouping and placement of students in specific DI programs. Assessing and placing students in late spring allows DI to start on the first day of school. This initial assessment also provides a basis for ordering specific levels of the DI programs in reading and language and to determine which levels of the programs teachers need training in. Since the instructional skills used to teach different DI levels and programs vary greatly, it is vital teachers be trained in the specific program levels that they are going to teach.

Based on the size of the school, assessment training and student testing is usually scheduled for three to five days in the late spring. A group of six to ten staff members are trained to administer and record the placement test results. Testing staff needs to be excused from school duties to have time to test students during the school day. After the initial training, the NIFDI trainer monitors individual testing to ensure that results are reliable and to answer questions about unique student responses. School staff members continue to administer the tests until all students have been tested—even if the trainer from NIFDI has departed.

The placement tests appear in the Teacher's Guides that are available through SRA/McGraw-Hill. Most tests take approximately five minutes to administer although this may vary greatly from student to student based on the child's skill level. Tests are administered to individuals and/or groups depending on the program and level being tested. For example, the Level 1 Reading Mastery test is administered to individuals only while the Level 3 Reading Mastery Test has both an individual and a group component.

NIFDI supplies materials for the trainer (overheads and handouts) and a master set of placement tests for all levels of the DI programs to be used at the school. The school makes the appropriate copies from the master set for each student to be tested. Completed placement tests are shipped to NIFDI, which analyzes the protocols and forms student lists for the initial homogeneous instructional groupings.

Preservice Training

A common misconception is that DI programs are easy to teach because they are composed of scripted lessons. Nothing could be further from the truth. Mastering the instructional skills needed to teach DI programs is difficult.

WHAT DOES NIFDI PROVIDE?

Preservice is the start of the learning process for teachers, teaching assistants and administrators to master these skills.

A thorough and timely preservice training in DI methods ensures all teachers are prepared to start teaching DI effectively the first day of school. Within a few weeks of the start of school, a preservice training in DI methods lasting three to five days is provided on site to teaching personnel (teachers and assistants) and administrators. The preservice training focuses on the application of DI techniques through simulated practice. Preservice participants are given a program overview and are shown the rationale behind the lessons. More importantly, they learn the instructional skills needed to teach the specific exercises they will use with their students during the first few weeks of school. Participants learn DI presentation techniques (following the script, quick pacing, signaling) and monitoring and correction techniques (part-firming and delayed testing). They also learn additional procedures for assessing, placing and motivating students. Teachers receive individual feedback from the NIFDI trainer during preservice and teachers are assessed by the NIFDI trainer on DI techniques on the last day of the session.

Sessions are offered for different levels of the program as the techniques for different levels differ radically. For example, the first level of the Reading Mastery program involves formats for rhyming and phonemic awareness that are not needed in higher levels of the program. For this reason, it is critically important that students are assessed accurately in the spring and teachers attend the sessions on the specific program levels they will be using with their students. A preservice training can be shared by more than one school if the schools are in close proximity to each other. Regardless of the size of the trainings, session sizes are kept small so trainers can devote sufficient attention to each participant.

In-Service Training

Throughout the year, NIFDI provides staff development through in-service training sessions for schools implementing DI. These in-service sessions resume where the preservice training leaves off by preparing participants to teach formats that appear later in the program and expanding on techniques covered during preservice. The NIFDI Implementation Manager initially conducts the in-services. The building coordinator and grade-level coaches (with the support of the NIFDI Implementation Manager) begin conducting training sessions after they have completed the first level of the coaches' training program and gained some experience teaching the DI programs.

In-service sessions can involve just the teachers or aides teaching a specific level of a program, or they can involve the whole staff. The sessions may focus on a specific technique or format for a small group of teachers, such as a rhyming format for Kindergarten teachers, or on a more general topic for the



WHAT DOES NIFDI PROVIDE?

whole staff, such as motivating students. In-services can last anywhere from 30 minutes to a whole day depending on the topic and the number of staff members participating. As with the preservice training, in-service training sessions usually focus on the direct application of DI techniques through simulated practice to ensure that teachers and aides can perform these techniques in their classrooms.

Session topics are based on student and staff needs, not a predetermined schedule. Sources for session topics include classroom observations by the NIFDI Implementation Manager and the building's coaching staff, teacher reports of student problems and student performance data. Although there are some recurring in-service topics such as using specific praise effectively, teaching to mastery and providing appropriate think time for students to respond to tasks, the in-service sessions for each school are unique and designed to address problems specific to each situation.

Coaches Training

Building leadership capacity through the development of peer coaches is one of the keys to achieving high levels of success with a school wide DI implementation. Peer coaches can provide much needed support to teachers and administrators when consultants from NIFDI are not on site. NIFDI consultants provide the bulk of coaching the first year of implementation, after which coaching responsibilities begin to shift to school-based coaches.

Ideally, a teacher at each grade level is trained to become a peer coach. Peer coaches are selected the first year of the implementation by the school's leaders —with NIFDI input—based on how well they implement DI techniques, how well they communicate with peers and whether they are willing to take on peer coaching responsibilities. Peer coaches have the potential to be extremely effective because they teach the same programs as their peers. This enables them to develop an expertise in specific levels of the programs and establish a close rapport with their peers because of shared experiences with DI.

Under the NIFDI model, coaching is non-evaluative. The focus is on student performance and student behavior. Peer coaches reinforce what's working well and ask their colleagues to change only those teaching behaviors that make a difference with children. With peer coaches, teachers know that they can turn to a close colleague with problems and questions, which helps foster a collaborative atmosphere in the school.

Peer coaches receive four levels of NIFDI coaches' training over the course of two to three years. The first level, which is usually scheduled during the first year of implementation, focuses on analyzing student performance data. During this stage, the peer coach's primary role is to identify and describe problems of student performance in enough detail to permit the building coordinator and NIFDI personnel to implement an appropriate solution. The next two levels of

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training prepare peer coaches to perform 5-minute and extended observations of instruction with students present. The last level of coaches' training prepares coaches to lead grade-level meetings focusing on student performance and participate in data analysis and problem-solving sessions with the rest of the school's leadership team.

COACHING

In-Class Coaching

In-class coaching helps prepare teachers to become master DI teachers. It is intended to improve teachers' mastery of DI techniques at the same time that it builds teachers' confidence in their abilities to effect positive changes in student performance. Coaching involves observing teachers instructing groups, providing specific feedback on what was observed, demonstrating parts of lessons and modeling entire lessons.

Two levels of consultants from NIFDI provide the bulk of coaching the first year of implementation: an Implementation Manager (IM), who comes on site between two and four days a month (depending on the size of the school) and a Project Director (PD), a senior DI expert, who comes on site less frequently. Both consultants participate in the weekly phone conference calls. Teachers who participate in the NIFDI coaches training series assume coaching duties in subsequent years.

The NIFDI coaching visits are non-evaluative. The focus is on student performance and student behavior. Coaching visits are designed to provide useful feedback to teachers and the building coordinator about what's working well for students and what needs improvement. NIFDI consultants reinforce what's working well and ask staff to change only those teaching behaviors that make a difference with children. The orientation of the coaching visits is that learning problems should be solved jointly between NIFDI and the school. By its very nature, the coaching process has the potential to be disruptive to the classroom. NIFDI strives to minimize interruptions and thereby maintain the flow of teaching as much as possible. Before entering the classroom for the first time, NIFDI consultants meet with teachers to explain the coaching process. When possible, the process is also explained to the students. After each visit, NIFDI consultants provide written feedback on what they observe and what they recommend. Common problems that NIFDI consultants observe become the focus of in-service training sessions.

Virtual Visits

Coaching is an essential element to achieving high levels of success with a school wide implementation of Direct Instruction. Coaching improves teachers'



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mastery of DI techniques at the same time that it builds teachers' confidence in their abilities to effect positive changes in student performance.

Schools that have already received extensive on-site support can benefit by arranging remote coaching over the Internet with a consultant from NIFDI. With the proper hardware and software requirements in place, NIFDI consultants can observe teachers instructing groups remotely and provide specific feedback on what they observe. Except for demonstrating lessons or parts of lessons, these "virtual visits" can provide full coaching support to teachers.

Virtual visits can be used to target specific instructional problems, student behavior problems or specific classrooms. A virtual visit for as short as 15 minutes can be effective and far less costly than bringing in a consultant. In addition to hardware and software requirements, virtual visits require a peer coach or building coordinator to operate the laptop and position it where the presentation book, the teacher and most of the children's faces are visible. With remarkable clarity, the technology enables the NIFDI consultant to provide feedback to the coach through audio and text messages in real-time!

OFF-SITE SUPPORT

Data Analysis

Individual student performance in DI programs is dynamic. Some students outperform other students in their group. Other students have problems learning specific skills or concepts. An effective DI implementation adjusts instruction to facilitate student learning by providing more practice and support for students who are struggling and by moving students who find their current placement too easy to higher instructional groups. Knowing where and how to adjust instruction requires data. Schools implementing DI with the support of NIFDI assure optimal student success by making decisions based on observational data generated by NIFDI consultants or school coaches and student performance data on student mastery and progress through the DI programs.

The NIFDI data analysis system provides a comprehensive look at the performance of all students in all DI subjects every week across a school implementing DI. The system requires relatively little effort on the part of teachers to record and submit the data for review by the NIFDI consultants and the school's leadership team. Teachers record lesson progress, mastery test results and performance on independent work. To record student progress through the programs, each teacher writes down the lessons covered by each instructional group (s)he teaches on lesson progress charts (LPCs). To record student mastery, teachers write down on Student Test Summary (STS) charts the results by individual students of reading "check outs" and mastery tests, which occur every five to 15 lessons depending on the DI program. Teachers also record the

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results of daily independent work for students in the upper levels of the programs. NIFDI supplies copies of the LPCs, STS charts and independent work summary sheets for all teachers.

These data are reviewed by the school leadership team and sent to the NIFDI manager and director for review and analysis. Subsequently, a weekly telephone conference between these parties is held to discuss the performance of groups and individual children in detail. The telephone conference helps direct the coaching efforts to the areas of greatest need.

Weekly Conference Calls

Direct Instruction programs are designed so that students master small steps daily. A successful DI implementation takes advantage of the small-step design of the DI programs by ensuring that students are taught at their current skill levels continuously. Students who are placed at their current skill level progress through the programs much faster and with a higher degree of mastery than students who are not placed at their current skill level. A weekly conference call between NIFDI and the school's leadership team can help ensure that students are placed optimally in the programs and that problems of learning and instruction are solved in a timely manner.

The school's leadership team and the NIFDI Implementation Manager (IM) and Project Director (PD) analyze performance data on each instructional group before the conference call. Then they discuss the performance of each instructional group, identify and prioritize problems of teaching and learning and develop specific remedies to address the problems identified. Initially, the NIFDI IM and PD take the lead on the conference calls. The responsibility of the data analysis shifts gradually to the school as the school's leadership team becomes more familiar with analyzing the data and solving instructional problems. Every week, the NIFDI IM writes a summary of the call that describes the actions to be taken before the next call and designates who will take the actions. This conference call summary is divided into several sections that address the following:

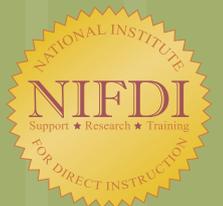
1. The status of actions that were to be taken after the last conference call;
2. New problems identified through data analysis and in-class observations;
3. Accolades describing accomplishments by students; and,
4. Unresolved problems that have been discussed on several conference calls.

The summary is sent to the school's leadership team and district personnel who support the DI implementation. Each week, the conference call begins with a review of the status of items discussed on the previous week's call to ensure that all problems are addressed in a timely manner.



How can schools ensure success with DI?

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HOW CAN SCHOOLS ENSURE SUCCESS WITH DI?

The services and implementation materials provided by NIFDI afford schools and districts a strong basis for implementing the comprehensive DI model successfully with all children. However, a successful implementation requires much more than the services NIFDI provides. What a school does with the services makes the biggest difference. Teachers and administrators themselves are the ones who implement the model day in and day out. The way in which the implementation is established at the school and the way it is carried out every day will determine how successful DI will be with students. This section provides a description of the primary ways schools can ensure a successful implementation.

SINGLE INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM

To get the most out of the Direct Instruction (DI) programs, schools should avoid using any other instructional or supplemental program in the same subject area as the DI programs in use at the school. The amount of time for instruction in each subject is limited, especially when second reading periods are included in the schedule. Any programs that inhibit the scheduling of sufficient time for DI programs should be removed.

Also, the use of other programs may be confusing to students. The DI programs teach explicit strategies. In the first level of the reading program, for instance, some of these strategies include the use of the "sounds" that letters make instead of letter names, "sounding out" words and then "saying them fast". A program that refers to letter names and prompts students to use context clues (such as looking at pictures) would have the potential to confuse children who were receiving DI reading. Young students and students from highly at-risk backgrounds in particular can get confused by multiple instructional approaches. These students need instruction using consistent, effective strategies.

If another program is used for extra practice, it may be ok to use. If another program is used for instruction, it will probably not be ok to use. Other programs or materials may be used for practice as long as: 1) use of the materials doesn't take time away from DI, 2) the materials aren't used to teach concepts or skills, and 3) students can perform at 100% mastery on the materials independently. If the students cannot perform perfectly on the materials independently, then they will need instruction in the materials, which will detract from their progress in DI. If students are given books that are too difficult for them to understand, reading them may become punishing to students, which can undermine their motivation to learn. Students should be given books they can decode with minimal help so they feel good about themselves and are eager to read more.



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i IMPORTANT: the practice of using two or more instructional programs with children is widespread, but it can have negative implications for student progress and teacher performance. Not only can a second (or third) instructional program confuse children because of the different instructional approaches, it can also confuse teachers. A second program requires teachers to learn two different programs, two different instructional approaches and two different assessments. Teachers must receive training in two different programs, and supervisors must monitor and provide support for the two programs. It may be difficult for teachers and supervisors to determine when and how a second program should be used, especially when the two programs are not designed to be taught together. DI programs contain all of the components that teachers and students need to be successful, and the DI programs have provisions for working with students representing the full range of learners. Any diversion from the DI programs will lead to less impressive results than a full, undiluted, comprehensive DI implementation.

SCHEDULING SUFFICIENT INSTRUCTIONAL TIME

One of the most important prerequisites for implementing the comprehensive Direct Instruction (DI) model successfully with all children is to provide sufficient instructional time for each instructional group. Student success depends on the rate at which students master material presented in the DI programs. The schedule should include enough time for students to make adequate progress at mastery through the programs and allow teachers to accelerate higher performing students or provide additional practice to students having problems mastering concepts or skills.

Specifically, schedules should include the following:

- A 90-minute reading block in the morning daily for all students.
- A 60-minute reading block in the afternoon for all students in grades Kindergarten and 1st grade and those students who are below grade-level expectations in grades 2 and above.
- An additional 60-minute block for language instruction after Kindergarten when assistants are no longer available to instruct groups. (An instructional assistant teaches language in Kindergarten and also in first grade where possible at the same time the teacher teaches reading.)
- An additional 60-minute mathematics block for all students.
- Common instructional times by subject for each grade level, and where possible across grade levels. Schedules should provide the flexibility to group and regroup students across grade levels.
- Second reading periods for students in middle school who place in Corrective Reading Decoding A or B1. Ideally, the second periods should

HOW CAN SCHOOLS ENSURE SUCCESS WITH DI?

be scheduled in the afternoon and provided in addition to a separate Comprehension period.

Having a schedule with sufficient instructional time is the first step. The second step is implementing the schedule so that precious minutes are not lost. It is critical that all staff understand that “every second counts.” Time lost in transition or simply starting late results in time not available for students to master the material.

Implementing a schedule with sufficient instructional time results in students completing one reading level per year at the minimum. To be at benchmark, students must complete the Reading Mastery Signature Edition level designated for their grade. For example, second grade children need to complete the grade 2 RM Signature level. Fourth grade children need to complete the grade 4 RM Signature level. Many continuing students will exceed these minimum benchmarks.

The Importance of a Second Reading Period

Reading is the most important academic skill and provides the basis for most other academic learning. Reading proficiency is the most accurate predictor of whether a student will experience academic success, graduate from high school and attend college. Students who lack reading skills are much more likely to experience academic failure, drop out of school and get into trouble with the law.

The comprehensive DI model requires a 2nd reading period each day for students who have not completed level two of the Reading Mastery program and for students whose performance is below grade level expectations. The comprehensive DI model has been shown in repeated large-scale studies to produce higher learning outcomes than competing approaches.

The 2nd reading period accelerates the rate at which children learn to read fluently and accurately. In one year, students who receive a daily 2nd reading period can show gains of as much as one full grade level over the standardized-test performance of students who do not receive the 2nd reading period.

With a 2nd reading period, teachers are able to teach more skills per day, per week and per year. During a single period, teachers are able to teach about one lesson per day in the Reading Mastery program to average-performing children. With an additional period, many teachers are able to teach an additional lesson. A 2nd reading period also provides students with distributed practice in reading, which is an efficient way for students to master material because it requires them to recall information and apply strategies more frequently in a wider range of contexts.



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Teachers are not usually able to teach a lesson to mastery during a single period to lower performing students, who finish about 2/3rd of a lesson during a period. Consequently, these children cannot cover a full grade level of material during a single school year. With a second reading period, however, lower performing students can successfully complete a lesson a day, and by the end of Kindergarten, these children will be close to completing the first level of Reading Mastery (Grade K). Many students then complete the second level of Reading Mastery (Grade 1) and perform at or above grade level by the end of first grade.

Students who receive two reading periods a day will learn a great deal of science and social studies information. Science and social studies terminology and concepts are incorporated into the Reading Mastery DI program in levels three through six (Grade 2 through 5). Science and social studies concepts are systematically pre-taught to students, integrated into the stories and then reviewed to ensure students' retention of the material. Some schools, including City Springs Elementary in Baltimore, have used no other science program, and their students have performed outstandingly on tests of their scientific knowledge.

i **IMPORTANT:** Teachers cannot guarantee student success if students do not spend a sufficient amount of time in the DI programs. This is especially true for younger children who are in the early stages of formal learning. Young students have fewer problems when practice occurs twice a day instead of once every 24 hours. Two reading periods a day is particularly helpful for highly at-risk students who have less background information and less academic experience than their more affluent peers.

SUFFICIENT PERSONNEL

Implementing the comprehensive Direct Instruction (DI) model effectively requires a sufficient number of teaching personnel trained in the DI methodology and administrators who can ensure a successful implementation. The number of teachers needed for instruction depends on the number of children that place into each level of the DI programs. The first two levels of the Reading Mastery program require small group instruction with the following number of students per group:

| | |
|-------------------|--------------------------|
| Lower performers | 4-6 students per group |
| Middle performers | 8-10 students per group |
| High performers | 10-12 students per group |

These ratios ensure that teachers can hear and react to student responses. Lower-performing students require smaller student/teacher ratios because they

HOW CAN SCHOOLS ENSURE SUCCESS WITH DI?

are apt to make more errors and need additional practice in comparison to higher performing students. Similar group sizes are also required in the first two levels of the Corrective Reading program:

| | |
|----------|--|
| Level A | no more than 12 students per group |
| Level B1 | 15 or less is optimal, but larger groups can be accommodated |

Instruction takes place in large groups (up to 30 students grouped homogeneously) once students reach the third level of Reading Mastery or Corrective Reading.

A teacher and paraprofessional are needed in each room in elementary schools implementing a 90-minute reading block in the morning with three instructional groups per room. The teacher teaches reading for 30 minutes to a group while the paraprofessional teaches language to a 2nd group and a 3rd group works on their "take home" assignment independently. The groups rotate after 30 minutes. At the end of a 90-minute period, each instructional group has received a dose of reading, a dose of language and 30 minutes of independent work. The same rotation occurs in the afternoon for 20 minutes a group.

Schools also need a full-time, on-site (building) coordinator in each school employed by the district to facilitate the implementation. The coordinator manages day-to-day aspects of the DI implementation, such as collecting and examining data forms submitted by teachers. In addition, the coordinator acts as the lead coach with some teaching responsibilities for at least the first year. The coordinator and peer coaches receive advanced training in three stages over the course of three years.

Schools also benefit if they have access to substitute teachers who have been trained in the programs. Students can continue to advance in the programs if the school employs substitutes who are able to teach the specific DI programs effectively.

i **IMPORTANT:** When students learn something incorrectly, it takes a great deal of effort for students to re-learn the material correctly. In many cases, students require dozens or even hundreds of correct exposures to a skill or concept if they have mislearned the skill or concept initially. This type of re-teaching can be time consuming and difficult as students' motivation to re-learn skills or concepts may be low. Schools can avoid the difficulties of re-teaching by ensuring that students are placed appropriately in the DI programs and taught to mastery daily in homogeneously grouped instructional groups. Small-sized groups in the lower levels of the DI programs allow teachers to focus on student responses and correct student errors early before they can develop into misrules.



HOW CAN SCHOOLS ENSURE SUCCESS WITH DI?

Small-sized groups are possible only if schools have a sufficient number of trained teaching personnel available to teach every day. Trained substitute teachers can continue the teaching when regular classroom teachers or paraprofessionals are absent.

PRACTICING DI

Teaching Direct Instruction (DI) can be very demanding, especially in the early levels of the programs. In order to be effective, teachers must be able to:

- Hold the presentation book so students can see it
- Present the examples at a quick pace
- Follow the scripted lessons
- Know which words to emphasize
- Signal at the right time after giving students enough "think time"
- Observe whether all students respond in unison
- Detect any errors in students' responses
- Correct errors immediately
- Reinforce students for working hard
- Record points for the "Teacher-Student Game"

Melding these elements together for every lesson is difficult and initially requires daily practice. Teachers can practice reading the script out loud on their own and can practice correcting different errors with a partner. Practicing reading and correcting errors for the next day's lesson just 10 to 15 minutes per day pays huge dividends in student learning.

In addition to the routine daily practice, some exercises that address specific skills require special attention. Group in-service sessions are the best way to practice these targeted exercises and other potential problem areas that are critical to teaching DI effectively. In-service sessions cover such topics as:

- Individual turns and delayed tests
- Transitions between tasks and between groups
- Correcting errors effectively
- Teaching to mastery
- Motivating students
- Correcting comprehension errors
- Actively monitoring independent work
- Conducting mastery tests and checkouts
- Correcting comprehension errors
- Actively monitoring independent work
- Conducting mastery tests and checkouts

HOW CAN SCHOOLS ENSURE SUCCESS WITH DI?

i IMPORTANT: Many teachers who haven't used DI before may be under the impression that teaching DI is a simple affair. After all, the script provides the precise wording to say, the specific examples to present, and the types of corrections to make. What could be easier? The reality is that teaching DI is not easy. To be effective, teachers must be able to respond quickly and positively to students' answers, which can't be done if the teachers' eyes are fixed on the script. Teachers' eyes and attention must be directed toward the students. Teachers' presentations must be fluid and flawless, which requires that teachers practice the presentations before working with students.

FOCUSING ON STUDENT PERFORMANCE

Implementing Direct Instruction (DI) effectively requires teachers and administrators to make student performance the focus of the staff's efforts to improve the school. Student performance determines 1) placement in groups, 2) which instructional materials should be ordered, and 3) which levels of the programs teachers should receive training in. Student performance also determines whether a problem exists. If students are not progressing through the program at mastery at an acceptable rate, then there is a problem.

When effective administrators and coaches enter classrooms, they focus on student performance. If there is something unconventional about the classroom setup or the teacher's delivery, but students are learning successfully, then there is no problem. If a teacher's signal is unusual, for instance, but all children respond in unison, then there is no problem because a signal's purpose is to prompt student to respond together. Similarly, if an instructional group is larger than recommended but all students can see the presentation book, respond together, and the teacher is able to monitor all of their responses, then there is no problem because the purpose of smaller groups is to ensure that teachers can monitor the responses of all students.

When administrators and coaches identify problems of student performance, they require accurate, current data on the progress of each instructional group and the performance of each student on in-program assessments. They may also need to get more specific information on the problem: during which exercises and on which items does this problem occur? How long has the problem been taking place? What has been done already to solve the problem? What was the effect of implementing these remedies? Have any other problems, including behavioral problems, arisen since the identification of the original problem? What specific steps can be taken to solve the original problem and any spin-off problems? Who is going to take the steps and talk with the teacher about the problem(s)?

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This comprehensive approach to problem solving is critical because problems rarely solve themselves. They usually worsen and cause other problems to occur. So it is important to solve each problem as it occurs and not relent until it is gone!

ⓘ IMPORTANT: If teachers aren't aware that a problem exists, they can't solve it. If teachers aren't aware that they need assistance, they won't ask for it. Regular in-class observations and weekly data analysis can uncover student problems and identify areas where teachers need assistance. To be effective in spotting problems, both in-class observations and data analysis require a focus on student performance. With student performance at the center, administrators and coaches can more easily talk about problems with teachers. Focusing on student performance keeps discussions away from “the blame game” of finding fault with staff members and keeps discussion centered on how to help all children succeed.

TEACHING TO MASTERY

Mastery is at the core of all Direct Instruction (DI) programs. Each DI program is constructed using a small-step design that ensures that all students can be taught to mastery every day if they are placed properly in the program. Only 10-15 % of a DI lesson contains new material. The rest of the lesson reviews or applies material taught in previous lessons so students can *master* the material and perform correctly on every task or exercise by the end of a lesson.

Appropriate placement is critical to teaching children to mastery. If students are placed in material that's too difficult for them, the amount that students have to learn is much greater than 10-15% of a lesson. They cannot master the material in a single day when there is too much that they do not know.

Students should be placed at a lesson where they can perform correctly on every item the first time they see it at least 70% of the time for new material and 90% on the review material and applications that have been taught previously. If students have these first-time correct response rates, by the end of a lesson they will be able to learn the material they didn't get right the first time. Teachers will have enough time to correct errors that students make, and students will be able to absorb the new material presented in each lesson.

Teaching to mastery has several important benefits to students. Students who master material in a lesson can more easily learn new material. The skills and concepts students acquire provide a very strong foundation for learning new skills and concepts. Students' self-esteem increases when they master material presented to them. They are confident that they will be able to learn new

HOW CAN SCHOOLS ENSURE SUCCESS WITH DI?

material. They know they are successful. They look forward to going to school, participating in groups and doing their assignments.

i **IMPORTANT:** Assigning students material they can't understand can be very punishing to them. Forcing a 3rd grade student with beginning decoding skills to read a grade-level text, for example, communicates to the student that (s)he can't read nearly as well as many other 3rd graders. The overall message is that the student is deficient, which can lead to serious self-image problems. Students who are put in material that is too difficult for them often generalize from their experience and anticipate that they will fail on any new material they encounter. Conversely, students who are placed in material they can master in a reasonable amount of time develop very positive self-images. They anticipate that they will master any new material they encounter, and they are ready for the challenge!

LEADERSHIP

Proactive administrative support and strong commitment to success are prerequisites for developing outstanding school-wide Direct Instruction (DI) implementations. When the school's principal and leadership team demonstrate that they are committed to implementing DI with high fidelity every day, and they communicate this commitment through words and deeds to the rest of the staff, the prospect of success with DI increases substantially throughout the school. Isolated teachers may achieve considerable success implementing DI alone in an uncoordinated effort, but the effect of individual teachers implementing DI by themselves is usually far less than the effect of a school wide, coordinated implementation of DI. Success with DI depends on many factors—schedules, assignment of paraprofessionals, professional development, and data analysis—that cannot be controlled by individual teachers. These factors are most effectively implemented through a coordinated and systematic effort, which requires consistent and forward-thinking leadership.

To take decisive action through all stages of a DI implementation, school leaders:

1. Ensure initial support of all staff members for the DI implementation;
2. Understand the major factors that lead to success with DI, including the purpose and function of NIFDI support services;
3. Set up the structural components of a successful implementation, such as the schedule and assignment of paraprofessionals, before instruction begins;
4. Arrange for initial program training and other professional development sessions;
5. Ensure that staff members attend training and practice sessions;

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6. Identify student problems through data analysis and direct observation of instruction;
7. Take appropriate actions to resolve student problems;
8. Recognize and celebrate student achievement!

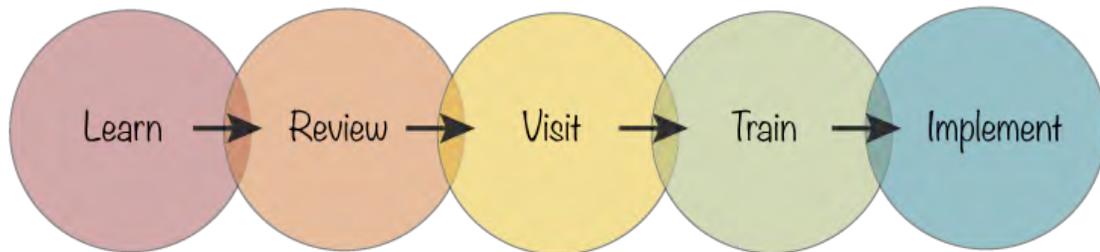
ⓘ IMPORTANT: A long-lasting commitment to implementing Direct Instruction (DI) with fidelity is a prerequisite to maximizing student achievement with DI. Student achievement may surpass historical levels after just a couple of years of DI, especially in the lower grades. Maximizing student achievement—especially in the upper grades—requires years of implementing DI with fidelity. Teachers usually require thorough program training and several years of expert in-class coaching and professional development before they become highly effective with DI. It takes several years for student performance in Kindergarten to reach its peak as Kindergarten teachers master DI techniques. It takes several more years for student performance in the upper grades to reach its peak as cohorts of students work their way up through the grades. If an elementary school contains grades K-5, it can take more than six years before an implementation reaches its full potential in the upper grades. Strong leadership must be in place for this time to maintain the school's commitment to implement the program with fidelity and maximize student performance for all students.

What are the next steps?

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WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS FOR BRINGING DI TO MY SCHOOL?



Having a clear understanding of the theory and design of Direct Instruction (DI), as well as a clear understanding of the Essential Elements needed for a successful implementation, is critical in getting your implementation off to a strong start. If you're interested in learning more about how to bring DI to your school or district and what NIFDI can do to support your implementation, we recommend the following steps:



Learn About Direct Instruction

- 1. Take NIFDI's online tutorial.** NIFDI has developed an online tutorial that guides users through key foundational information on Direct Instruction and the essential elements necessary for a successful implementation. The tutorial was developed for teachers, administrators and other school officials, but is also beneficial to anyone interested in DI, whether they work in a school or not. The tutorial is housed on our homepage at <http://www.nifdi.org>.
- 2. View videos on Direct Instruction and NIFDI Schools.** NIFDI has several videos available online that portray the success schools experience when using DI in tandem with implementation support from NIFDI. Additionally, there are a number of videos that address important aspects of implementation and the curriculum. View the videos free at <http://www.nifdi.org/resources/videos/nifdi-schools>.
- 3. Read *Clear Teaching* by Shepard Barbash.** *Clear Teaching* is commissioned by the Education Consumers Foundation (ECF) and is a great book for anyone new to Direct Instruction or wanting a refresher on the basics of DI methodology. It is available from retailers such as Amazon and as a free download on ECF's website. Find ECF online at <http://www.education-consumers.org>.

4. Find resources on the publisher's website for each program. Most of the DI family of programs is published by McGraw-Hill. In addition to product and pricing information, there is a wide variety of support resources for programs available on their website. Find research, alignments to the Common Core State Standards and more by visiting the publishers' websites. Not sure who the publisher is? Learn more about the programs at <http://www.nifdi.org/programs/about-the-programs>.



Review the Essential Elements for Success

- 1. Review the Direct Instruction Model and Essential Elements.** The services offered through an implementation support company such as NIFDI afford schools a strong basis for implementing the DI model successfully with all children. However, the way in which the school utilizes the services provided is a cornerstone in ensuring a strong implementation. Read through the How to be Successful section of our website and review the Essential Elements (found at the end of this booklet) checklist for more information.
- 2. Complete the School Data Form.** In order to determine the scope of your implementation and the support services your site will require, schools need to complete the School Data Form. This information will be used to help assess the school's needs and put together a budget proposal for NIFDI services. If you are a district level administrator interested in contracting for services across several schools, please use our Multi School Data Form. Examples of how to complete the Multi School Data Form, along with downloadable copies of the forms, can be found on our website at <http://www.nifdi.org/resources/downloads/school-data-forms>.
- 3. Arrange a phone conference with NIFDI.** Once you have familiarized yourself with the necessary model components, it is time to discuss with NIFDI how the Full Immersion DI model can be applied in your school or district. During an initial phone call, NIFDI will walk you through the components of a successful implementation and the support NIFDI provides. NIFDI will also



help you identify your school or district's readiness for a successful implementation. In preparation for your call, please be sure you have completed the School Data Form (See item 2 above).



Visit

Visit a Model DI School

1. **Visit a school implementing DI with fidelity.** Schools considering implementing Direct Instruction should consider visiting a school implementing DI with fidelity. Seeing DI in action is different than seeing DI implemented in a school that has worked with NIFDI. As such, NIFDI can recommend sites across the United States -- and around the world -- that warrant a visit. NIFDI can help you to locate those schools so that you can see DI as it was intended to be used.



Train

Train Instructional Staff in DI Programs

1. **Contract with NIFDI for on-site training and support.** NIFDI can provide on-site training for teachers and other instructional staff in programs specific to the skill and performance levels of students, ensuring instructors are equipped with the necessary skills to efficiently and effectively teach students to mastery. This training is provided as part of NIFDI's comprehensive implementation support services. Learn more about NIFDI's support services at <http://www.nifdi.org/services/overview-of-nifdi-services>.

2. **Attend a Direct Instruction Summer Training Conference.** NIFDI presents two premier DI training conferences—the National DI Conference and Institutes and the Southwest Direct Instruction Conference and Institutes. These trainings are an option for those wanting training that adheres to the Developer's Guidelines but not necessarily contracting for the full range of NIFDI services. The National Direct Instruction Conference is the longest running DI training event. Held each year in Eugene, Oregon, the conference attracts educators from around the world who are interested in specific program training as well as topics related to DI. The Southwest Conference is

held in San Antonio Texas in August and offers program training similar to Eugene. A feature of both events is the specialized weeklong institutes on Trainer Training, Coaching and Administrative development.

3. Participate in outreach events sponsored by NIFDI. NIFDI offers several 2-day trainings around the country during the school year. Currently, NIFDI offers a Leadership Academy and Coaching Academies (1 and 2). These academies offer a portion of the content delivered in the weeklong institutes held in the summer. The Leadership Academy is ideal for the leadership team at a school that has minimal or no experience and training in DI. The Coaching academies are designed for the leadership staff that does have experience and training in teaching the programs and will be responsible for assisting in the professional development and quality control of the implementation.

Information about NIFDI's training events can be found at <http://www.nifdi.org/training-events/about-our-events>.



Implement with NIFDI Support

1. Enjoy on-site visits from experienced Direct Instruction trainers. NIFDI support usually spans an intensive period of three years followed by less-intensive support for two or more years depending on the needs of the site. During the intensive phase, NIFDI consultants come on site once a month for in-class observations, feedback, assessment and demonstrations. The exact number of days depends on the size of the school and the available budget. When on site, NIFDI consultants focus on student performance and factors that affect student achievement.

2. Receive program-specific assessment, preservice and inservice trainings. A common misconception is that DI programs are easy to teach because they are scripted. Nothing could be further from the truth. Mastering the instructional skills needed to teach DI programs is difficult, and the trainings NIFDI provides are essential in the learning process for teachers, teaching assistants and administrators in mastering these skills. Trainings are provided on-site by experienced DI teachers and coaches.

3. Support instructional staff through NIFDI's in-class coaching model. In-class coaching helps prepare teachers to become master DI teachers. With the intent to improve teachers' mastery of DI techniques, coaching involves non-evaluative observations of instruction by NIFDI staff, along with specific feedback on what was observed and modeling/demonstration of lessons. Virtual visits are also utilized as appropriate to provide additional support to teachers when NIFDI staff isn't on site.

4. Benefit from off-site NIFDI support services year-round. Even when NIFDI staff isn't on site, schools contracting with NIFDI benefit from off-site support, including virtual visits, data analysis and weekly conference calls.

5. Develop internal capacity for supporting the implementation. Support from NIFDI is key to establishing an effective DI implementation, but NIFDI consultants cannot be on site all the time, and they cannot work with schools indefinitely. Through NIFDI's on-site mentoring, coaches' training and Train the Trainer (TOT) Institutes, schools and districts can develop the internal capacity for maximizing student achievement independently through DI for many years to come.

To learn more about NIFDI's support services, visit our website at <http://www.nifdi.org/services/overview-of-nifdi-services>.

We hope to have the chance to work with you to provide the instruction that students need to experience success throughout their school career!

Contact Us:

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Eugene, OR 97401

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www.nifdi.org
info@nifdi.org





SCHOOL DATA FORM

School: _____ Date: _____

Address: _____ City, State: _____

Principal: _____

Email: _____ Phone: _____

Asst. Principal (If Applicable): _____

Building Coordinator/Reading Coach: _____

| Grade | Number of Teachers | Number of Assistants | Number of Students | Comments/Additional Information |
|-------------------|--------------------|----------------------|--------------------|---------------------------------|
| Pre-K | | | | |
| K | | | | |
| 1 | | | | |
| 2 | | | | |
| 3 | | | | |
| 4 | | | | |
| 5 | | | | |
| 6 | | | | |
| 7 | | | | |
| 8 | | | | |
| 9 | | | | |
| 10 | | | | |
| 11 | | | | |
| 12 | | | | |
| Special Education | | | | |
| TOTAL | | | | |

Additional staff available to instruct groups (Title I staff, paraprofessionals, librarians, etc.):

Kindergarten:

Half Day Full Day

DI Subject Areas:

Reading/Language Math

% Free and Reduced Lunch: _____

% English Language Learners (ELL): _____

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF A SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION

THE FULL IMMERSION DIRECT INSTRUCTION MODEL

NIFDI's mission is to produce schools that replicate the high levels of student achievement that have occurred when the comprehensive Direct Instruction (DI) model is fully implemented and to promote lasting systemic change that allows schools to continue to function at a high level independently after a three to five year initial implementation period. We have observed that the following elements need to be in place in each school in order to accomplish these goals:

Ensuring Fidelity of Implementation

- Only DI programs in use in the school(s) for agreed-upon grade levels and subject areas. The model generally focuses on reading and language together in the first year of implementation.
- Implementation of NIFDI-supplied test preparation materials a few hours per week for up to a month and a half prior to administration of high stakes assessments.
- Two full reading periods a day for a) all students in Kindergarten and 1st grade and b) below-grade learners in grades two and above, with sufficient time scheduled for other academic subject areas.

Reacting to Student Needs

- Student placement for instruction by skill level and a commitment to regrouping students as needed.
- A commitment to supply NIFDI with student progress and student mastery data in a timely fashion and to follow the advice of NIFDI consultants.
- An understanding that any factor interfering with student performance or progress, such as a lack of cooperation or performance on the part of a teacher, will be treated with urgency and followed up until resolved.

Participation of Personnel

- Full participation of the entire staff in support of the model. This includes following schedules, using DI techniques and curricula, incorporating advice of NIFDI consultants, and submitting required data in a timely manner.
- An academic kindergarten with reading and language instruction.
- Aides in grades K-2 at least to ensure necessary student:teacher ratios.
- A full-time, on-site (building) coordinator in each school employed by the district to facilitate the implementation. The coordinator functions as the lead coach with teaching responsibilities for at least the first year.
- Principal leadership as demonstrated through participation in meetings and conference calls, visiting classrooms, and setting priorities that support the implementation of the model.
- Practice sessions scheduled once a week and more often as needed for all teaching staff.

Budget

- A budget that supports release time for DI training and other elements of the NIFDI program.

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF A SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION

AT MIDDLE SCHOOLS AND HIGH SCHOOLS



NIFDI's mission is to produce schools that replicate the high levels of student achievement that have occurred when the comprehensive Direct Instruction (DI) model is fully implemented and to promote lasting systemic change that allows schools to continue to function at a high level independently after a three to five year initial implementation period. We have observed that the following elements need to be in place in each school in order to accomplish these goals:

Ensuring Fidelity of Implementation

- Only DI programs in use in the school(s) for agreed-upon grade levels and subject areas. The model generally focuses on reading and language together in the first year of implementation.
- Implementation of NIFDI-supplied test preparation materials a few hours per week for up to a month and half prior to administration of high stakes assessments.
- Two decoding periods a day for all students who place into the first two levels of the remedial reading program, with sufficient time scheduled for instruction in the Direct Instruction comprehension program.

Reacting to Student Needs

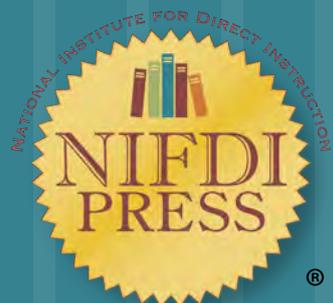
- Student placement for instruction by skill level and a commitment to regrouping students based on student performance as indicated by NIFDI.
- A commitment to supply NIFDI with student progress and student mastery data in a timely fashion and to participate in weekly conference calls.
- An understanding that any factor interfering with student performance or progress, such as a lack of cooperation or performance on the part of a teacher, will be treated with urgency and followed up until resolved.

Participation of Personnel

- Full participation of the entire staff in support of the model. This includes following schedules, using DI techniques and curricula, incorporating advice of NIFDI consultants, attending in-service training sessions, and submitting required data in a timely manner.
- Sufficient personnel to ensure proper student:teacher ratios, which may involve extra personnel for students who place in the lowest levels of the remedial programs.
- A full-time, on-site (building) coordinator in each school employed by the district to facilitate the implementation. The coordinator functions as the lead coach with teaching responsibilities for at least the first year.
- Principal leadership as demonstrated through participation in meetings and conference calls, visiting classrooms, and setting priorities that support the implementation of the model.
- Practice sessions scheduled at least once a week and more often as needed for all teaching staff.

Budget

- A budget that supports release time for DI training and other elements of the NIFDI program.



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