



USING DIRECT INSTRUCTION TO IMPROVE STUDENT PERFORMANCE AT THE MIDDLE GRADES

THE MIDDLE SCHOOL PERFORMANCE GAP

Middle schools often experience an influx of large numbers of students who can't access content courses. Generally, struggling students have limited reading and/or math proficiency that limits their understanding of science, social studies and other courses in which foundational skills are applied. If students don't receive instruction in middle school that increases their fundamental reading and math skills, they will have even more difficulty accessing content course material when they reach high school.

MIDDLE SCHOOL: THE LAST CHANCE

The middle school grades are the last chance to customize instruction for large groups of students struggling to meet grade-level expectations. Once students reach the high school level, a system of requirements and credits complicates school-wide efforts to address the skills of students performing several years below grade level. The middle school setting allows teachers and administrators to respond to students' needs with customized solutions that target fundamental skills in reading and mathematics.

PROVEN INSTRUCTIONAL APPROACH

DI instructional materials, when properly implemented, have been proven to provide instruction in skills that allow students to gain a solid proficiency in reading and mathematics so they can access content courses and apply foundational skills and concepts in science and other courses. DI programs include several key elements that make them highly effective:

- **Placement tests** to determine where in the program students should begin based on their current skill level.
- **Clear, concise approach** to guarantee students learn material quickly and efficiently to close learning gaps.
- **Step-by-step design** to provide students just enough new material to master each lesson with confidence before moving on.
- **Mastery tests** to monitor students' success in the program.
- **Built-in remedies** for reacting to students' individual needs.

NIFDI'S LITERACY AND NUMERACY MODEL

The National Institute for Direct Instruction (NIFDI) specializes in school-wide implementations of Direct Instruction (DI). NIFDI works with schools to establish a comprehensive implementation of DI school-wide and across grade levels. With an emphasis on student performance at a high level of mastery, a successful implementation of DI accelerates the performance of all students and provides teachers support in the structural and instructional details that enable acceleration to occur. NIFDI's school-wide model involves a dedicated 90-minute reading block and a 45- to 60-

minute mathematics block, which provide students enough time in the DI programs to close the achievement gap significantly.

The middle school remedial literacy model is designed for students who have demonstrated needs in decoding and comprehending written texts. Programs include *Corrective Reading Decoding*, *Corrective Reading Comprehension* and *Expressive Writing*. The goal of the model is to increase student confidence in reading and writing and provide students with fundamental skills that will allow them to function in middle school content courses. The numeracy version of the model addresses fundamental mathematics skills at the middle school level using *Corrective Mathematics*, a program available in seven separate modules that address specific mathematics deficits: Addition; Subtraction; Multiplication; Division; Basic Fractions; Fractions, Decimals and Percents; Ratios and Equations. Advanced students receive instruction in *Essentials for Algebra*.

NIFDI'S TRAINING AND SUPPORT PROGRAM

NIFDI equips schools and districts with tools, training procedures and skills necessary for schools to be successful with Direct Instruction in the middle grades. District personnel are trained to provide on-site support and coaching, and a site-based management team takes over the coordination of the DI implementation after three to five years of NIFDI support.

NIFDI's comprehensive services are comprised of several interlocking components that build the school's effectiveness in implementing DI:

- **Assessment Training** to train staff on how to administer placement tests and place students into the program. This step occurs in the spring before the program begins.
- **Preservice Training** is a three- to five-day professional development training focused on teaching instructional personnel the application of DI techniques through simulated practice.
- **Inservice Training** picks up where preservice training leaves off by preparing participants to teach formats that appear later in the program and expanding on topics covered during preservice training. These sessions are conducted throughout the year.
- **Coaches Training** equips school and district staff with the skills required to effectively analyze student performance data, conduct observations, lead team meetings focused on student performance and participate in problem-solving sessions with the school's leadership team.
- **In-class Coaching** improves teachers' mastery of DI techniques through expert observation, feedback and demonstration of lessons.
- **Virtual Visits** allows NIFDI staff to observe teachers instruction groups remotely and provide specific feedback on what they observe.
- **Data Analysis** support helps schools utilize dynamic student data to adjust instruction based on student needs.
- **Weekly Conference Calls** provide an opportunity for NIFDI consultants to review student data with the leadership team to ensure students are optimally placed in the programs and instructional problems are quickly remedied.

For more information, contact the National Institute for Direct Instruction (NIFDI) toll-free at 877.485.1973 or at info@nifdi.org.