



# DIRECT INSTRUCTION AT THE HIGH SCHOOL LEVEL

BEGINNING IN 9TH GRADE WITH SELECTED STUDENTS

The implementation of Direct Instruction (DI) at the high school level depends a great deal on the performance level of students. Most DI programs used at the high school level are remedial, designed to close the performance gap of students who did not master fundamental skills in elementary and middle school. Some DI programs are designed specifically for high school students and help them acquire more advanced skills needed to graduate.

## PROGRAMS

The DI programs in any one subject area can be linked into a track. Once students are identified for the DI programs, they should remain in the DI track until completing it. Students can be identified for DI when they are given placement tests in the Direct Instruction programs for assessing their skill level in reading, writing, and mathematics. Students who place into the programs should be grouped homogeneously and given instruction in those programs along with other students with similar skills. Students should move through the programs as their performance dictates. Their progress may differ in different subject areas.

There are three major subject areas or tracks: reading, writing, and mathematics. The reading track is further broken down into decoding and comprehension tracks. Here is a description of the programs in each of the tracks.

### ***Corrective Reading Decoding***

*Corrective Reading Decoding* is designed to teach students in grades 4-12 fundamental decoding skills that are necessary to access the material in advanced texts. *Corrective Reading Decoding* comes in four levels. *Decoding A* contains 65 lessons and is for students who are virtual non-readers. It teaches symbol-sound relationships that are applied to basic sentences and simple stories. *Decoding B1* includes 65 lessons and *Decoding B2* includes 65 lessons. They are for readers who do not read at an adequate rate and who confuse words. The programs teach decoding strategies: letter and word discrimination, sound and letter combinations, word endings, story reading, and literal and inferential comprehension. *Decoding C* contains 125 lessons. It is for fair readers who have trouble with multisyllabic words and typical textbook material. It teaches skill applications: additional sound combinations, affixes, vocabulary development, reading expository text, recall of events, sequencing, and building reading rate.

### ***Corrective Reading Comprehension***

*Corrective Reading Comprehension* is designed to teach students in grades 4-12 fundamental reasoning skills that are necessary to comprehend advanced texts. *Comprehension A* contains 60 lessons. It is for students who cannot understand concepts underlying much of the material being taught. It teaches thinking basics: deduction and induction, analogies, vocabulary, true/false, recitation, and information such as calendar skills. *Comprehension B1* includes 60 lessons and *Comprehension B2* includes 65 lessons. They are for poor reasoners who have difficulty with conclusions, contradictions, and understanding written directions. They teach



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comprehension skills: more advanced reasoning, handling information, vocabulary, analyzing sentences, and writing skills. *Comprehension C* contains 140 lessons. It is for students who can't comprehend sophisticated text, do not learn well from material they read, or have trouble thinking critically. It teaches concept applications: organizing and operating on information, using sources of information, and communicating information.

## **Other Direct Instruction Reading Programs**

There are two higher-level Direct Instruction reading programs for students who have mastered fundamental decoding and comprehension skills: *Understanding U.S. History*, which provides students with a systematic introduction to social science concepts and vocabulary through a problem-solution framework for examining historical events; and *REWARDS* (Reading Excellence: Word Attack and Rate Development Strategies), a DI multisyllabic word reading program. *REWARDS Plus*, a more advanced version of the program, applies word attack strategies to social studies and science passages.

## **Direct Instruction Writing Programs**

The DI writing programs include *Expressive Writing, Reasoning and Writing* and *Essentials for Writing*. *Expressive Writing* comes in two levels. *Expressive Writing 1* contains 55 lessons. It is for students who haven't acquired fundamental writing skills. It teaches students how to construct clear sentences and paragraphs that adhere to sequences of events. *Expressive Writing 2* includes a ten-lesson preprogram and a fifty-lesson regular program. The pre-program includes an accelerated presentation of the content taught in *Expressive Writing 1*. The regular fifty-lesson program has seven main tracks: Pronoun Clarity, Quotations, Sentence Writing, Verbal Preparation for Paragraph Writing (important detail), Paragraph Conventions, Editing (for multiple criteria) and Passage Writing. Most of the content is first taught as specific skills, then integrated into editing exercises and finally into writing exercises. *Reasoning and Writing* comes in four levels. Students who complete *Expressive Writing II* would proceed to *Reasoning and Writing*, level D, which teaches different forms of functional writing that require critical thinking, including directions, summaries, comparisons and critiques of arguments in 110 lessons. *Essentials for Writing* is the capstone Direct Instruction writing program. It contains 95 lessons and enhances students' ability to write critically as they master additional forms of writing, including persuasive arguments and autobiographical sketches.

## **Direct Instruction Mathematics Programs**

The DI mathematics programs include *Corrective Mathematics* and *Essentials for Algebra*. *Corrective Mathematics* is a series of seven modules intended as an intervention program for students grades 3 through adult. The modules include: addition; subtraction; multiplication; division; basic fractions; fractions, decimals, and percents; ratios and equations. The series focuses on core concepts, rules, and mathematical reasoning to help students: learn and retain facts; understand place value; understand fractions, decimals, and percents; solve computational problems; and accurately translate word problems into numerical statements.



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*Essentials for Algebra* is a 120-lesson program designed to teach students in one year algebra and related topics typically presented in high school math exams for graduation requirements. The program is constructed with a multi-track design and covers exponents, rate equations, signed-number multiplication, geometry, function tables and other topics.

## SCHEDULING REQUIREMENTS

Each class period for any of the DI programs should last at least 45 minutes. Students who receive instruction in the Corrective (remedial) programs should receive instruction in the Academy for virtually the entire day. Those who receive instruction in the more advanced levels may have only three periods of DI per day. Below is a description of three examples of schedules for three different types of students with different initial skill sets.

### Example #1

The following student has not acquired basic skills that s/he should have mastered during elementary school. S/he places into the *Corrective Reading* programs, which indicates that s/he has difficulty identifying the words and phrases encountered in high school texts. S/he also places into the basic operation modules of the *Corrective Mathematics* program (addition, subtraction, multiplication or division).

In order to accelerate their acquisition of fundamental skills, this student receives two periods of *Corrective Reading Decoding* and two periods of *Corrective Mathematics* a day. Here is a sample schedule for this student:

Period	Subject
1	Corrective Mathematics (addition, subtraction, multiplication or division)
2	Corrective Mathematics
3	Reading—Decoding A, B1, B2 or C
4	Reading—Decoding
5	Reading—Comprehension
6	Expressive Writing 1 or 2

The order of the subjects is flexible as long as the total time in the programs remains the same. Breaking up the subjects might be helpful. For instance, the two decoding periods can be separated by the comprehension or writing periods in order to avoid student burn out. Note that none of the courses for this student would generate high school credit.

### Example #2

The second student has acquired skills that they should have mastered during elementary school, such as decoding and basic math operations, but still lacks more sophisticated comprehension and math skills needed to succeed in the high school environment. S/he is too



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advanced for the *Corrective Reading* decoding programs, but still needs to receive explicit teaching in reading complex words, sentences and larger constructions. S/he still has difficulty understanding what s/he reads and receives two periods of comprehension instruction as well as a single period focusing on decoding. His/her mathematics skills are still considerably below grade level so s/he receives two math periods a day.

Here is a sample schedule for this student:

Period	Subject
1	Corrective Mathematics (Fractions, Decimals, and Percents; Ratios and Equations)
2	Corrective Mathematics
3	Reading—Decoding ( <i>REWARDS Plus</i> , <i>Understanding U.S. History</i> )
4	Reading—Comprehension A, B1, B2 or C
5	Reading—Comprehension
6	Reasoning and Writing

As in the case of the first student, the order of the subjects is flexible as long as the total time in the programs remains the same. Some of these courses could be taken for high school credit. The math courses could qualify as well as courses using *REWARDS Plus* and *Understanding U.S. History*.

### Example #3

This student has acquired basic skills that provide a foundation for accelerating the acquisition of more advanced skills in all subject areas. S/he has strong enough skills in reading and writing to take introductory high school courses in content areas so s/he only needs to spend three periods a day in DI. These courses prepare him/her to be able to pass high-stakes tests and attend higher-level high school content area courses.

Here is a sample schedule for this student:

Period	Subject
1	Novel Studies
2	<i>Essentials for Algebra</i>
3	<i>Essentials for Writing</i>

The novel studies classes would incorporate direct instruction techniques: structured review of difficult-to-read words; definition and discussion of vocabulary words; group oral reading of story chapters and information passages; literal and inferential questions interspersed during oral reading. All three courses could be taken for high school credit.



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## **DIRECT INSTRUCTION FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS**

Students who enter high school with non-native English language skills may require additional coursework. These students could receive instruction in English oral language for most of their school day. The *Direct Instruction Spoken English* (DISE) program can be used for students with the least knowledge of English. DISE is intended for students who are non-English-speakers but have the equivalent of at least a 3rd grade level understanding of their native language. DISE is designed to teach students how to express in English concepts that they already know in their native language. The program builds on fundamental grammar and expressions as a basis for developing more advanced oral communication.

## **TIMELINE FOR IMPLEMENTING DI**

The establishment of DI at the high school level involves several steps that need to take place before implementation in the fall. These steps include the initial assessment of students, ordering instructional materials and participating in preservice training.

### ***Initial Assessment of Students***

Assessment training of staff and placement testing of students in the Direct Instruction (DI) programs are important first steps in implementing any model of DI. The individual assessment results allow students to be placed and grouped in specific DI programs. Placing and grouping students in late spring allows DI instruction to start on the first day of school. This initial assessment also provides a basis for ordering specific levels of the DI programs, and the results from the initial assessment are used to determine which levels of the programs teachers need to be trained to teach. Since the instructional skills used to teach different DI levels and programs are highly different, it is vital that 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 10 staff members are trained to administer and record the placement test results. This 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 the National Institute for Direct Instruction (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 there's a great deal of variation based on student skill level. Tests are administered to individuals and/or groups depending on the program and level being tested.

NIFDI supplies materials for the trainer 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



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set for each student continuing at the school. Completed placement tests are shipped to NIFDI, who analyzes the protocols and forms student lists for the initial, homogeneous instructional groupings.

## ***Ordering Materials***

Ordering the correct levels of the Direct Instruction (DI) programs for students is a critical part of implementing DI effectively. Students should receive instruction in the levels of the programs that correspond to their current skill levels as determined by the initial assessment using DI placement tests. NIFDI can provide the names and contact information of the publishers of the DI materials and review orders to make sure they will meet the needs of the students. NIFDI can recommend that schools order a buffer of at least 10% additional workbooks in the different levels to accommodate the transfer of students into the school and movement of students between instructional groups inside the school.

## ***Preservice Training***

A thorough and timely preservice training in DI methods ensures that 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 direct 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 National Institute for Direct Instruction (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.

A preservice training can be shared by more than one school if the schools are in close proximity to each other. NIFDI can also arrange large-scale trainings involving hundreds of teachers. Regardless of the size of the trainings, session sizes are kept small so trainers can devote sufficient attention to each participant.

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