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What is SWiFT Education Center?
**What is SWiFT Education Center?**

SWIFT is a national research, professional learning, and technical assistance center that helps whole education systems build capacity to provide academic, behavioral and social-emotional instruction and support for all students, including students with the most extensive needs.

**SWiFT Mission**

We believe that together we can transform education so that it benefits each and every student, their families, and ultimately the communities in which they live.

We use our talents, passion, and resources to ensure that every child and young adult is invited, welcomed, and has a sense of belonging in their school. We work toward sustainable systems that provide the support each student needs to achieve academic and social success.

We are committed to eliminating the silos in education by bridging general and specialized education to create powerful learning opportunities for students and educators and to promote active, engaged partnerships among families and communities.

**SWiFT Framework**

Evidence-based domains and features are the building blocks of the SWIFT framework. Research shows it takes administrative leadership, a multi-tiered system of support, family and community partnerships, an integrated educational framework, and inclusive policies and practices to effectively meet the needs of ALL students.
**Administrative Leadership**

Strong and actively engaged administrative leadership involves a commitment to improving teaching and learning and a system that empowers educators and school personnel. The two features of this domain are:

**Strong and Engaged Site Leadership**

Strong and Engaged Site Leadership is the foundation for implementing, transforming, and sustaining systems throughout a school. The principal and leadership team empower educators and families to contribute to core school decisions to improve teaching and learning.

**Strong Educator Support System**

A Strong Educator Support System provides the structures that enable educators to constantly improve their practices. Instructional supports may include professional learning, instructional coaching and supportive, useful evaluation with a focus on building knowledge and skills.

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**Multi-Tiered System of Support**

A multi-tiered system of support is a continuum of research-based, system-wide practice of data-informed decision used to meet the academic and behavior needs of all students. The two features of this domain are:

**Inclusive Academic Instruction**

Inclusive Academic Instruction utilizes schoolwide approaches to promote student learning and high achievement for all students. Schools use multi-tiered instructional strategies, differentiation, Universal Design for Learning, and flexible grouping to support instruction all students, including those with the most extensive support needs. Academic, behavior and social-emotional supports are integrated within one multi-tiered system of support.

**Inclusive Behavior/Social-Emotional Instruction**

Inclusive Behavior Instruction is a proactive approach to teaching social and behavior skills. Schoolwide systems identify instructional priorities using multiple sources of data, prevent behavior challenges, and promote healthy social-emotional and behavioral conduct. Academic, behavior and social-emotional supports are integrated within one multi-tiered system of support.
Integrated Educational Framework

An integrated educational framework encompasses all students, personnel, and stakeholders within a positive school culture and ensures full access for all students to participate in all school-related activities. The two features of this domain are:

**Fully Integrated Organizational Structure**

A Fully Integrated Organizational Structure means full participation in the general education curriculum for all students. All students participate in the general education curriculum instruction and activities of their grade level peers, and schools embrace ways to redefine roles of paraeducators and teaching assistants to support all students.

**Strong and Positive School Culture**

A Strong and Positive School Culture creates an atmosphere in which everyone feels that they belong. Particularly, students have equal access to extracurricular learning activities with appropriate supports, and school personnel share responsibilities to educate all students.

Family & Community Engagement

Families, community members, and schools form a partnership in which each benefits from and supports the others. The two features of this domain are:

**Trusting Family Partnerships**

Trusting Family Partnerships contribute to positive student outcomes when family members and school staff have respectful, mutually beneficial relationships with shared responsibility for student learning; family members have options for meaningful involvement in their children’s education and in the life of the school; and the school responds to family interests and involvement in a culturally responsive manner.

**Trusting Community Partnerships**

Trusting Community Partnerships contribute to positive student outcomes when schools work collaboratively with community members, agencies, organizations, businesses, and industries around common goals. Community representatives directly participate in school leadership, and schools enhance community resources.
Inclusive Policy Structure & Practice

Inclusive policy structure and practice includes a supportive, reciprocal partnership between the school and its district or local educational agency. The two features of this domain are:

**Strong LEA/School Relationship**
A local educational agency (LEA) partners with the school to promote a shared vision and foster inclusive teaching and learning. Strong LEA/School Relationships use policy to formally organize and integrate initiatives and programs, address and remove barriers to success, and address ways to more effectively use resources.

**LEA Policy Framework**
The LEA Policy Framework means that the district or local educational agency (LEA) has a formal structure to continually evaluate and rewrite policy in support of quality practices. The LEA uses information from schools to support and ensure staff members receive training on relevant research and/or research-based practices.
Highlights from SWiFT Framework Implementation
Student inclusion steadily increased

- Students with disabilities were included in general education 80%+ of the time at rates above the national average in each year and schools with stronger implementation of SWIFT features had higher rates of inclusive placement
- Partner schools experienced a steady increase in the percent of students receiving services in general education settings for 80% or more of the day, and a decrease in removals of students with disabilities from general education settings
- For specific students with IEPs at the start and three consecutive years in SWIFT schools, 15.7% exited from special education services and were fully supported by their school

Access to academic instruction due to greatly improved behavior outcomes

- In-and out-of-school suspension days per 100 students decreased by 32% or 26.9 days from baseline to project end for students with disabilities
- In-and out-of-school suspension days per 100 students decreased by 35% or 19.2 days from baseline to project end for all students

Academic performance improvements

- SWIFT implementation is a significant predictor for both reading and math performance
- SWIFT implementation has a strong, positive correlation with larger increases in student reading scores
- Students in schools with the same state assessment for two consecutive years overall reading proficiency rate rose to 13% of students, a full percentage point over prior year
- Students in schools with the same state assessment for two consecutive years math proficiency rate increased 11%, 1.34 percentage points over the prior year

Other Research Support for SWIFT

Benefits for Equitable and Inclusive Education

SWIFT Center provides technical assistance to schools, districts, and states to implement and sustain an equity-based, inclusive educational framework that enables all students to receive maximum educational benefits. The point of public education is giving students a foundation of learning that will prepare them for employment, responsible citizenship, and fulfilling lives. Forty years of research shows us that when all students are learning together AND are given the appropriate instruction and support, ALL students can participate, learn, and excel within grade-level general education curriculum; build meaningful social relationships; achieve positive behavioral outcomes; and graduate from high school, college and beyond.

Here are the findings from several research studies that demonstrate benefits of inclusive education. Schools implementing SWIFT’s equity-based, inclusive MTSS...
framework demonstrated longitudinal changes of proficiency in English language arts and math for students with IEPs who were consistently enrolled in schools implementing (Choi, McCart, & Sailor, 2020a). In a similar study, demonstrated students with IEPs improved their math performance and did so a greater rate than their peers in non-implementing schools (Choi, McCart, & Sailor, 2020b); and improved academic outcomes for all students (Choi, Meisenheimer, McCart, & Sailor, 2017).

Students without disabilities made significantly greater progress in reading and math when served in inclusive settings (Cole, Waldron, & Majd, 2004).

Students who provided peer supports for students with disabilities in general education classrooms demonstrated positive academic outcomes, such as increased academic achievement, assignment completion, and classroom participation (Cushing & Kennedy, 1997).

No significant difference was found in the academic achievement of students without disabilities when served in classrooms with or without inclusion (Ruijs, Van der Veen, & Peetsma, 2010; Sermier Dessemontet & Bless, 2013).

In a meta-analysis of research, Kalambouka, Farrell, and Dyson (2007) found 81% of the outcomes reported showed that including students with disabilities in general education resulted in either positive or neutral effects for students without disabilities. Time spent engaged in the general education curriculum is strongly and positively correlated with math and reading achievement for students with disabilities (Cosier, Causton-Theoharis, & Theoharis, 2013; Cole et al., 2004).

Students with intellectual disabilities that were fully included in general education classrooms made more progress in literacy skills when compared to students served in special schools (Dessemontet, Bless, & Morin, 2012).

Students with autism in inclusive settings scored significantly higher on academic achievement tests when compared to students with autism in self-contained settings (Kurth & Mastergeorge, 2010).

Research Support for Domain and Features of SWIFT Framework

Domains and Features
The specific features that are common to successful inclusive education can be summarized as: administrative leadership, a multi-tiered system of support, integrated educational framework, family and community partnerships, and inclusive policy structure and practices. Here are findings from some of the studies that support these individual features of equitable and inclusive education.

Administrative Leadership:

Strong and Engaged Site Leadership
Strong and engaged site leadership is a key component for developing and sustaining inclusive school practices (Ainscow & Sandhill, 2010; Waldron & McLeskey, 2010).

Strong Educator Support System
The principal plays an essential role in developing inclusive programs at schools. When conducting a case study of a principal at an effective inclusive school, Hoppey and McLeskey (2010) identified the following characteristics of the principal's role: caring for and investing in teachers, providing opportunities for distributed leadership, and protecting teachers from the pressures of high-stakes account-ability.
Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS):

**Inclusive Academic Instruction**
An MTSS framework should be used to guide instruction, by using effective general education strategies with all students and increasing the level of support for some students based on needs identified through screening and progress monitoring (Copeland & Cosbey, 2008; Sailor, 2009a, 2009b).

**Inclusive Behavior Instruction**
Implementing School-wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports resulted in decreases in office discipline referrals, suspensions, and disruptive behaviors and increases in pro-social behavior (Bradshaw, Mitchell, & Leaf, 2010; Sailor, Wolf, Choi, & Roger, 2009; Sailor, Zuna, Choi et al., 2006).

Integrated Educational Framework:

**Fully Integrated Organizational Structure**
Fully integrated organizational structures allow all students who need additional supports to benefit from resources that otherwise would be available only to segregated populations of students (Sailor, 2009a).

**Strong and Positive School Culture**
“Schools have cultures, and research from educational anthropologists (i.e., Ogbu, 1982, 1985) has shown repeatedly that the culture of schools is a strong influence on academic achievement” (Sailor, 2009a, p. 250).

Family & Community Engagement:

**Trusting Family Partnerships**
Student achievement in the elementary grades (Goddard, Tschannen-Moran, & Hoy, 2001), middle school grades (Sweetland & Hoy, 2000), and high school grades (Hoy & Tarter, 1997) is likely to be higher in schools in which trusting partnerships exist than in schools in which partnerships and trust do not abound.

**Trusting Community Partnerships**
“Research indicates that when a collective group of school, family, and community stakeholders work together, achievement gaps decrease” (Bryan & Henry, 2012, p. 408).

Inclusive Policy Structure and Practice:

**Strong LEA/School Relationship**
A strong and supportive relationship between individual schools and their districts is critical for sustainable school reform. (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2003).

**LEA Policy Framework**
A policy framework must exist at the school, district, state, and federal levels that is fully aligned with inclusive reform initiatives and removes barriers to successful implementation (Kozleski & Smith, 2009).
References


Transformation in Action Practices
Transformation in Action Practices

SWIFT provides differentiated technical assistance to partners using a set of six evidence-based “transformation in action practices” (TA); but every state, district, and school partner has its own starting point and travels its own path for creating and sustaining equitable and inclusive schools. Therefore, TA providers and TA recipients work collaboratively in teams to identify the actions and resources needed to achieve desired outcomes. SWIFT TA Teams include school leadership and transformation teams, district leadership and implementation teams, and state leadership and implementation teams. These teams work together to support transformation across the whole education system.

The six TA practices are Design, Data, Priorities, Resources, Teaming, and Coaching.

Design

What is our community's shared hope for excellence and equity for all students?

SWIFT TA acknowledges and builds on existing school, district and community strengths. Design is a strengths-based practice that generates a collective agreement about an ideal future education system for all students in a community. Through this practice, each community is engaged to understand and acknowledge that they have resources from which to draw, and that they are resilient, resourceful, and seek out opportunities to learn (Pulla, 2012; Shaked, 2014). It includes deep partner conversations about current priorities and exploration of future direction.

Jointly moving toward a shared design for highly effective school for all students offers each community an opportunity to partner with SWIFT in a way that is deeply relevant and culturally responsive. This experience creates a shared ownership and clear direction for the transformation process and helps promote sustainability of implementation.

Data

What is right, useful, successful, uniquely good or alive that we can build upon to achieve our design for the future?

SWIFT TA acknowledges and builds on existing school, district and SWIFT emphasizes use of data to help schools and districts identify their priorities for change and make decisions about the TA support that is needed. Data Snapshots draw together multiple sources of data for a body of evidence review that can inform decisions about the differentiated nature and content of the TA to be provided. At a school, these sources include: student outcome data, student placement data, SWIFT- Fidelity of Implementation Tool scores,
SWIFT-Feature Integrity Assessment, and Drivers of Implementation Best Practice Assessment. This Data practice prompts meaningful conversation about the current state of a school and leads to decisions about possible changes in relation SWIFT Domains and Features and their Design for the future.

District and state implementation teams also engage in Data Snapshots to inform decisions about their roles in transforming schools as well as the nature and content of SWIFT TA support. The data sources at these levels include summaries of multiple school Data Snapshots in a district, and or all districts in a state. Further, district and state capacity assessments help these partners identify their strengths and opportunities to implement new systems and practices that can be sustained over time and scaled up to additional schools and districts. District and state Data Snapshots support analysis and discussion about the content and process of transformation, and mapping priorities to available resources.

**Priorities**

How will we harness our will and capacity to carry out our vision?

Implementation of new systems, structures, and practices occurs over time and in stages that overlap and are revisited as necessary (AIHub, 2013). The State Implementation & Scaling-up of Evidence-based Practices (SISEP) Center states that readiness to engage in evidence-based practices and systems change is critical to overall implementation success and sustainability (Fixsen, Blase, Horner, Sims, & Sugai, 2013b; Fixsen, Naoom, Blase, Friedman, & Wallace, 2005). To achieve readiness, SWIFT TA initially engages partners in a foundation setting stage, the first of several active implementation stages. Design and Data practices contribute this stage as schools and districts work through a this Priorities practice.

**Resources**

How can we amplify what already works?

Consistent with strengths-and data-informed decisions is the notion of resource leveraging, that is, the practice of applying current resources in new ways to achieve better outcomes. As a capacity-enhancing approach, SWIFT and their partner schools, districts, and states move through a process of “mapping” and “matching” available resources to achieve their ideal design for excellent and equitable education for all students. Existing in-district, in-state and national resources are identified and mapped to SWIFT features. Then these resources are matched to specific school/ district priorities. Next, the process involves locating and applying additional layers of resources where needed to deepen knowledge or fill existing gaps. This practice allows for schools/districts to re-think the traditional approach of “seek and pay TA.”
**Teaming**

How will we engage with each other and the whole system to move our schools and districts through transformation?

As a means of building capacity with a wider reach than a single teacher, classroom or school, SWIFT TA expects districts to share the on-site responsibility for implementation that in other TA models would be filled solely by an external “expert.” Thus, rather early a TA partnership, SWIFT asks its partners to establish Teaming structures with representatives of general and specialized educators, support staff, family, and community members. Districts and state educational agencies also form teams that represent stakeholders and systems that support school transformation. These various teams carry out the previously described Design, Data, Priorities and Resources activities.

**Coaching**

How will we expand our capacity to lead transformation? How will we prepare the next generation of transformation leaders?

The Coaching practice develops organizational and personnel capacity via sustained and purposeful contact among SWIFT TA providers and staff on school, district and state leaders. These leaders learn and build up their capacity to spearhead the current and future transformation as SWIFT TA providers move into coaching by modeling, observing, and providing feedback. Eventually, this coaching model builds capacity within the system to implement and adapt without reliance on an external TA provider.

**References**


SWiFT Frequently Asked Questions
SWiFT Frequently Asked Questions

What can educators do to move forward equitable and inclusive education?
SWIFT Guide is a resource you can use with your school staff to support equitable and inclusive practices. Try using the Discussion Guides, Introductory Presentations, and Steps to Get You Started as thinking prompts for your leadership team or faculty meetings. Visit guide.swiftschools.org

What can families do to help their neighborhood schools to embrace equitable and inclusive education?
Check out our Families and Community link and Join the Conversation on our website. We have several ideas and would love to hear about your experiences. Visit swiftschools.org/community

What does SWIFT in action look like?
SWIFT-in-60 videos are a great way to see equity and inclusion in action. If you have a little more time, watch our videos “Together” and “Whatever it takes”.

Can SWIFT advise us about our current plan to make our school more equitable and inclusive?
SWIFT-FIA is a free, downloadable resource you can use to self-assess your school’s educational practices and consider action steps for change. Visit swiftschools.org/shelf and look under Tools.

How can my school or district become a SWIFT partner?
Write to leaders in your district and state to let them know about your interest in SWIFT

SWiFT Contact

Have a question or want to get involved?
Drop us a line and let us know how we can work together.

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