# Table of Contents

What is SWIFT? ......................................................................................................................... 4  
What is SWIFT? ......................................................................................................................... 5  
SWIFT Mission .......................................................................................................................... 5  
SWIFT Framework .................................................................................................................... 5  
SWIFT Domains and Features ................................................................................................. 5  
Research Support for SWIFT ................................................................................................. 6  
Benefits of Inclusive Education ............................................................................................... 7  
Research Support for SWIFT Domains and Features ......................................................... 9  

SWIFT Technical Assistance .................................................................................................... 10  
Technical Assistance Process .................................................................................................. 11  

References .................................................................................................................................. 13  

SWIFT Frequently Asked Questions ....................................................................................... 14  

SWIFT Contact ......................................................................................................................... 15
What is SWIFT?
What is SWIFT?
SWIFT is a national K-8 technical assistance center that helps whole education systems build capacity to provide academic and behavioral instruction and support for all students, including students with disabilities and those with the most extensive needs.

SWIFT Mission
SWIFT’s mission is to transform fragmented systems into fully integrated organizations that deliver effective academic and behavioral instruction and extra-curricular activities to all students in the school community. SWIFT is committed to equity-based inclusion, where every child is valued and given the supports he or she needs to succeed.

SWIFT Framework
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.

Multi-Tiered System of Support
A multi-tiered system of support is a continuum of research-based, system-wide practices of data-based decision making 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 of instruction all students, including those with the most extensive support needs. Academic and behavior supports are integrated within one multi-tiered system of support.

Inclusive Behavior Instruction
Inclusive Behavior Instruction is a proactive approach to teaching social and behavior skills. Schoolwide interventions identify instructional priorities using multiple sources of data, prevent behavior challenges, and provide social and behavior supports. Academic and behavior 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.
Research Support For SWIFT
Benefits of Inclusive Education
SWIFT Center provides technical assistance to schools, districts, and states to implement and sustain an 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 help them build a career later in life. Thirty years of research shows us that when all students are learning together (including those with the most extensive needs) AND are given the appropriate instruction and supports, 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.

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 of SWIFT
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 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 accountability.

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 exist 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:


Technical Assistance Process

SWIFT’s role is to provide differentiated technical assistance (TA) to partner states and their participating districts and schools. SWIFT TA uses a set of six evidence-based practices for building inclusive education; but every district and school partnering with SWIFT has its own starting point and travels its own path for creating and sustaining fully inclusive and equitable 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 transformation teams, district 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 Visioning, Data Snapshots, Priority and Practice Planning, Resource Mapping and Matching, Transformation Teaming, and Coaching and Facilitation.

Visioning

What is our community’s shared vision of excellence and equity for all students?

SWIFT TA acknowledges and builds on already existing school, district and community strengths. Through the Visioning 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). SWIFT TA Visioning begins with partner conversations about current priorities and exploration of future direction. Jointly moving toward a shared vision of a 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 shared vision creates a shared ownership and clear direction for the transformation process.

Data Snapshots

What is right, useful, successful, uniquely good or alive that we can build upon to achieve our vision?

SWIFT emphasizes the 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 to 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, SWIFT-Feature Integrity Assessment, and Drivers of Implementation Best Practice Assessment. The School Data Snapshot practice prompts meaningful conversation about the current state of the school and leads to decisions about targets for change in relation to each school’s vision of its own implementation of the SWIFT Domains and Features.

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 School Data Snapshots from all SWIFT schools in a district, and or all SWIFT districts in a state. Further, District and State Capacity Assessments help these partners identify their strengths and opportunities to implement innovations and interventions that are systemic, 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.

Priority And Practice Planning
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. Visioning and Data Snapshots practices contribute this stage as schools and districts work through a Priority and Practice Planning process. Each partners’ exploration and self-assessment in relation to each SWIFT Feature continues until data from a number of sources indicate their readiness to move ahead to another stage of the work.

Resource Mapping And Matching
How can we amplify what already works?
Consistent with strengths-and-data-based evidences 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 visions 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.”

Transformation 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 Transformation Teaming structures. A school team includes the Principal, a school “Coach”, and representatives of general and specialized educators, support staff, family, and community members. A school Coach refers to a school staff member who, along with the Principal, assumes...
a role of providing site-based support for SWIFT implementation. Districts and state educational agencies form Implementation Teams that represent stakeholders and systems that support school transformation. As a part of the district and state commitment to SWIFT, staff are designated as Coordinators who are the primary interfaces with the SWIFT TA providers, who are referred to as Facilitators. Districts and states also form Leadership Teams that provide leadership and support for their Implementation Teams. These various transformation teams carry out the previously described Visioning, Data Snapshots, Priority and Practice Planning and Resource Mapping and Matching.

**Coaching And Facilitation**

How will we expand our capacity to lead transformation? How will we prepare the next generation of transformation leaders? The Coaching and Facilitation practice develops organizational and personnel capacity via sustained and purposeful contact among SWIFT TA Facilitators and partner Coordinators as well as district and state teams. As district and state Coordinators and principals learn and build up their capacity to lead transformation, SWIFT Facilitators move into coaching roles, 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:


Frequently Asked Question
**SWIFT Frequently Asked Questions**

**What can educators do to move forward inclusive education?**

SWIFT Field Guide is a resource you can use with your school staff to support 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. Guide.swiftschools.org

**What can families do to help their neighborhood schools to embrace inclusion?**

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. www.swiftschools.org

**What does SWIFT in action look like?**

SWIFT-In-60 videos are a great way to see inclusion in action.

Check out our partner school and district websites.

Review the newsletter archives and read about partner school inclusive education activities.

“Like” SWIFT Schools on Facebook and Twitter and access daily reports of inclusive education in action.

**Can SWIFT advise us about our current plan to make our school more inclusive?**

SWIFT-FIA is a free, downloadable resource you can use to self-assess your school's inclusive educational practices and consider action steps for change and the SWIFT Field Guide provides Discussion Guides, Introductory Presentations, and Steps to Get You Started along with links to helpful resources.

**How can my school or district become a SWIFT partner?**

SWIFT Center currently works with whole educational systems, which includes state, district, and school leaders, along with family and community members, in five selected states. Write to leaders in your district and state to let them know about your interest in SWIFT for your neighborhood school.

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**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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