DIRECT INSTRUCTION READING

Douglas W. Carnine
Professor Emeritus, University of Oregon

Jerry Silbert
National Institute for Direct Instruction

Edward J. Kame’enui
University of Oregon

Sara G. Tarver
University of Wisconsin, Madison

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(Excerpts)
PREFACE

In April 2000, the National Reading Panel, a panel of scientists charged by the U.S. Congress with the responsibility of reviewing research in reading instruction and identifying methods that consistently relate to reading success, issued a long-awaited report. The findings of the National Reading Panel confirmed the validity of the content and procedures that have been included in Direct Instruction Reading since the first edition. The panel pointed out the importance of teaching phonemic awareness (Chapter 6), letter-sound correspondences (Chapter 7), systematic and explicit phonics (Chapters 9, 10, 11, 14, and 15), fluency (Chapter 18), vocabulary (Chapters 11 and 20), and strategies for comprehending narrative and content-area text (Chapters 12, 19, 20, 21, 23). Furthermore, the panel pointed out the importance of systematic and explicit teaching in all areas.

Direct Instruction Reading, unlike most other textbooks, does not describe multiple approaches to teaching reading but instead provides detailed information on how to systematically and explicitly teach essential reading skills. The direct instruction approach is highly congruent with the findings of the National Reading Panel. The procedures described in this text have been shown to benefit all students but are especially powerful with the most vulnerable learners, children who are at risk because of poverty, disability, or limited knowledge of English.

This textbook is designed to provide teachers and soon-to-be teachers specific information that can help them to be effective with all their students. The text not only provides information on what to do but explains why particular procedures are recommended. Even though publishers have begun to incorporate more research findings into their reading programs, teachers will find great differences among programs regarding their effectiveness with at-risk students and must be prepared to make needed modifications and adjustments to ensure successful learning for all students.

Direct Instruction Reading presents information on how to help students succeed through structuring initial teaching procedures so that the teacher presentation is clear, using language and demonstrations that can be understood by all children; sequencing the content to be sure that all essential skills and knowledge are taught in an aligned and coherent manner; using teacher presentation techniques that foster a high degree of interaction between teacher and student; and providing adequate practice and review to develop high levels of fluency and accuracy.

Direct Instruction Reading attempts to help teachers create a learning and instructional environment for teaching students in a humane and efficient manner. A learning environment is humane when the environment enhances a student’s self-concept. Our experience and our reading of the research suggest that competence comes first, leading to increased self-concept. A learning environment is efficient when the maximum amount of learning occurs in the shortest possible time with the fewest resources.

We have organized the chapters of this text to be congruent with the five major areas of reading instruction identified by the National Reading Panel. We continue to devote a disproportionate amount of the book to beginning reading because the first months of reading instruction are immensely important to later reading success.

The major changes in this edition of Direct Instruction Reading include a more in-depth discussion of the difference between direct instruction materials and general direct instruction teaching techniques, additional descriptions of how critical content is taught in the recently published comprehensive core reading programs, enhanced suggestions on how to strengthen instruction for at-risk students when using comprehensive core programs, additional information on how to use assessments in establishing an overall reading program, and updated and enhanced chapters on comprehension.
As with previous editions, this edition is not intended to be a definitive handbook. As we work with students, we continue to learn, and this learning enables us to improve our procedures. Procedures can always be improved. The main purpose of the text is to empower teachers by providing them with specific suggestions for problems they will encounter in the classroom. It is our hope that the systematic procedures recommended here will stimulate the development of even better procedures. Furthermore, we encourage teachers to view learning as an outcome of instruction rather than as a function of inalterable attributes of the learner. We also encourage commercial publishers to design better programs for students. Overall, we hope that this book contributes to better teaching methods for all students, particularly difficult-to-teach and at-risk students.

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In addition to ideas gained from these programs, many ideas were contributed by colleagues and students. Kathy Jungiohann has provided invaluable input from her experience in public school and college classrooms. Gary Davis, Kathy Howe, Elizabeth Jankowski, Mary Damer, and Karen Davis provided input in revisions of chapters for this edition. The following persons made valuable contributions in earlier editions: Vicky Vachon, Carrie Thomas-Beck, Nancy Woolfson, Frank Falco, Mary Gleason, Ramon Alvarez, Linda Carnine, Billie Overholser, Conley Overholser. Abby Adams, Anita Archer, Scott Baker, Elain C. Bruner, Vonnie Dicecco, Robert Dixon, Phil Dommes, Jane Dougall, Ruth Falco, Mickey Garrison, Alex Granzin, Tracey Hall, Cheri Hansen, Lisa Howard, Sheri Irwin, Joleen Johnson, Jean Osborn, Mary Rosenbaum, Barak Rossen shine, Sandra Schofield, Marcy Stein. Marilyn Stepnoski, Candy Stevens, and Joan Thorham. Other colleagues provided important support and encouragement, including Barbara Bateman, Wes Becker, Mark Gall, Joe Jenkins, Marty Kaufman, Deb Simmons, and Ruth Waugh.

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What is Direct Instruction?

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Direct Instruction is an approach to teaching. It is skills-oriented, and the teaching practices it implies are teacher-directed. It emphasizes the use of small-group, face-to-face instruction by teachers and aides using carefully articulated lessons in which cognitive skills are broken down into small units, sequenced deliberately, and taught explicitly (see Carnine, 2000, pp. 5-6; Traub, 1999).

Direct instruction derives mainly from two lines of scholarship and curriculum development. One line of scholarship is based on a synthesis of findings from experimental studies (conducted by many different researchers, working independently, mostly in the 1980s) in which teachers were trained to use particular instructional practices. These practices then were assessed for their effects on student learning, and the effects were compared with effects for similar students who had not been taught according to the experimental method. The synthesis growing out of these studies identified common "teaching functions" abstracted from the experiments that had proved effective in improving student learning. These teaching functions included teaching in small steps with student practice after each step, guiding students during initial practice, and ensuring that all students experienced a high level of successful practice. Instruction of this sort was described variously by the people who used it and discussed it. It was sometimes called systematic teaching, or explicit teaching, or active teaching. In an influential essay, Barak Rosenshine and Robert Stevens (1986) called it direct instruction, and this is the name by which it is now most often known.

As Rosenshine and Stevens describe it, direct instruction is a teaching model, not a particular, fully elaborated program for teaching, say, reading or mathematics. It is abstracted from detailed procedures found, for example, in particular training manuals and materials, and it implies nothing definite about how teaching functions it embodies (Rosenshine & Stevens, 1986, p. 389). It is a generic teaching model, in other words - one awaiting subsequent interpretation and development in particular applications.

Interpretation and development of this sort has been provided in a second line of scholarship associated primarily with the work of Siegfried Engelmann and his colleagues. Their work goes beyond the generic direct instruction model, providing detailed teaching programs consistent with its main principles. Engelmann and his colleagues call their programs Direct Instruction or DI programs, using upper-case type to distinguish from the earlier, generic formulations.

The texture of detail in Direct Instruction derives in part from its foundation in close analyses of the comprehension and reasoning skills needed for successful performance
in, say, reading or mathematics. These skills provide the intellectual substance of Direct Instruction programs. In the case of reading, it is substance found in the sound system of spoken English and the ways in which English sounds are represented in writing. That is why Direct Instruction is associated with phonemic awareness, or phonics. But Direct Instruction is not the same thing as phonics, or "merely phonics." Direct Instruction can be used to teach other things other than phonics - mathematics and logic, for example - and phonics can be taught (as it often has been) by means other than Direct Instruction.

The detailed chapters of Direct Instruction derives also from a learning theory (Engelmann & Carnine, 1991) and a set of teaching practices linked to that theory. The learning theory focuses on how children generalize from present understanding to understanding of new, untaught examples. This theory informs the sequencing of classroom tasks for children and the means by which the teachers lead children through those tasks. The means include a complex system of scripted remarks, questions, and signals, to which children provide individual and choral responses in extended, interactive sessions. Children in Direct Instruction classrooms also do written work in workbook or activity sheets.

Many published instructional programs have made some use of insights from Direct Instruction (or direct instruction). Taken at a high level of generality, at least, those insights are not private property. But Direct Instruction to date is represented most clearly and extensively in instructional programs authored by Engelmann and published by SRA/McGraw-Hill.

When educators talk about adopting Direct Instruction, the programs in question are most likely the Engelmann-authored SRA/McGraw-Hill programs. Other publishers, of course, could enter the market, if they chose to do so, by developing direct instruction principles.
Chapter 1, PERSPECTIVES ON READING INSTRUCTION

Reading is a complex process - complex to learn and complex to teach. Psychologists, information systems analysts, reading researchers, and cognitive psychologists all describe the reading process differently. While these descriptions are important to theoretical questions about the reading process, many of them do not address the needs of classroom teachers. Our purpose is not to survey the various theoretical positions but to explain procedures that teachers can use to improve the reading performance of their students. Our position is that many students will not become successful readers unless teachers identify the essential reading skills, find out what skill students lack, and teach those skills directly.

Success in reading is very important to students, both for academic and vocational advancement and for the students' psychological well-being.

To teach reading effectively and efficiently, teachers must be knowledgeable in several areas. Teachers must know...
1. The essential skills or objectives that make up the reading process and the procedures for teaching those skills.
2. The sequence in which the essential skills can be introduced.
3. The procedures for evaluating, selecting, and modifying reading programs to meet the needs of all the students in their classrooms.
4. The techniques for effectively presenting lessons, including techniques for pacing tasks, motivating students, and diagnosing and correcting their errors.
5. The types of assessments to use during the school year.
6. How to use the information from assessments to establish an instructional program and make necessary and timely adjustments.
7. How to organize classrooms to maximize the amount of time students spend in reading instruction.

Perspective on Improving Student Reading Performance.
Effective and efficient instruction benefits all students but is essential for instructionally naive students who typically have trouble learning to read. Instructionally naive students are those students who do not readily retain newly presented information, are easily confused, and have difficulty attending to an instructional presentation.

Direct instruction is a basic perspective on improving student reading performance. It assumes that if teachers a.) analyze tasks to be learned thoroughly, b.) sequence instruction carefully, c.) construct clear instructional presentations, and d.) provide systematic practice review, and application, they will be able to provide children with success in school, regardless of the outside conditions that may put the children at risk.

What is required if a child is to read and write?
Much of the current research that focuses on beginning reading skills unwaveringly points to the child's need for well-developed phonological awareness skills and alphabetic understanding as pre-requisite and co-requisite requirements in learning to read and write and the need for explicit and systematic instruction in teaching these skills.

The direct instruction orientation, in our opinion, is the most productive answer to the question of how educators can improve student reading performance. Direct instruction involves an ongoing effort to teach essential reading skills in a highly effective and efficient manner. This orientation requires that teachers (and school systems) take responsibility for student performance.

When a student is not performing or progressing at desired levels, the teacher examines 4 important components of instruction:
- Was the initial presentation clear?
- Were an adequate number of examples presented?
- Did the instruction keep the students engaged?
- Was the adequate practice and systematic review?

The direct instruction orientation requires an ongoing examination of data to determine if the student is working and what is not working. Essential skills as well as effective and efficient teaching practices are identified by scientifically based research on reading development, reading instruction, and reading disabilities.

11.13.16 Charles Arthur, carthur@teleport.com
Chapter 2. **A MODEL OF READING INSTRUCTION**
Direct instruction is systematic and explicit

Instruction is explicit when the teacher clearly **models or demonstrates** (and, if needed, explains) what she wants students to learn. The teacher focuses precisely on what she wants students to learn. The teacher clearly reveals the concepts and rules she is presenting through modeling and running commentary to students.

Instruction is systematic when it includes
1. a planned, logically **progressive sequence** of knowledge units (e.g., a carefully selected set of letter-sound relationships introduced into a logical sequence),
2. clearly **defined objectives** (stated in terms of what students will do) for each knowledge unit,
3. planned **distribution of practice** to build fluency and retention, and
4. planned **work on new examples** (e.g., words, text) to foster application or generalization of previously taught knowledge.

The focus of reading instruction evolves over time
- from an initial emphasis on breaking the code (learning how to translate the printed squiggles [letters] on a page into oral language)
- to a later emphasis on using reading as a tool to gather new information (reading to learn).

Chapter 4. **DELIVERY OF INSTRUCTION**
Teachers must be able to **design lessons** for teaching specific skills. Six aspects of direct instruction program design are relevant when selecting a reading program, writing lessons plans, and modifying reading programs.

1. **Specifying objectives**
   - Objectives of a program should be carefully evaluated according to their usefulness. Because teaching time is limited, skills should be listed in order of importance, with essential skills being taught first. A skill is essential if it is a prerequisite for a more sophisticated skill (leave for higher grade) or is important in its own right.

2. **Devising instructional strategies**
   - Whenever possible, programs should teach students to rely on strategies rather than require them to memorize information. It makes it more efficient. For example, teaching children the letter-sound correspondences and a sounding-out strategy (that works) enables children to read any word that contains these letter-sound relationships. The child would also be empowered to read a number of new words with these letters. There are a number of overt strategies the students need to know how to perform.

3. **Developing teaching procedures** (called formats that can be applied to similar skills or strategies)
   - The strategy must be translated into a format that specifies exactly how the teacher is to present the strategy. Formats include directions on what the teacher and the student are to say and do. Detailed formats planned and practice in advanced allow teachers to focus their full attention on the students' performance.

4. **Selecting examples**
   - Selecting appropriate examples for discrimination exercises involves creating a mix of examples. They provide practice for students in differentiating when to use the new strategy and when to use previously taught strategies.

5. **Sequencing skills**
   - Sequencing involves determining an **optimal order** for introducing new information and strategies. This **affects the difficulty** or ease students have when learning new skills.
   - Five sequencing guidelines tend to reduce error rates.
     - Pre-skills of a strategy are taught before the strategy itself is presented.
     - Instances that are consistent with strategy are introduced before exceptions.
     - High-utility skills are introduced before less useful ones.
     - Easy skills are taught before more difficult ones.
     - Strategies and information likely to be confused are not introduced at the same time.

6. **Providing practice and review**
   - Learning to read requires lots of practice to develop accuracy and fluency. Sufficient practice must be provided within each lesson and across lessons. When a new strategy or piece of information is introduced, within—lesson practice includes a concentrated or massed presentation of examples. This in-depth practice continues over several lessons. The practice is necessary if the student is to master the strategy. A pattern of massed practice in the first several lessons and systematic review later is critical for developing accuracy, fluency, and retention.

**Presentation of Techniques:** Small-Group Instruction, Unison Oral Responding, Signaling, Pacing, Monitoring, Correcting Errors and Teaching to Mastery, Diagnosing, Motivation, Accelerating Student Learning, Whole-Class Instruction.

11.13.16 Charles Arthur, cartthur@teleport.com