

# Direct Instruction: A Foundation Teacher's perspective



Miss Hoek, a Foundation teacher at the Cape York Aboriginal Australian Academy's Coen Campus, has experienced first-hand the benefits of using Direct Instruction in the classroom.

*I love teaching students in their first year of schooling. It's incredible how far they can come in such a short time with the Direct Instruction programs. The children love the structure and get really excited by their own progress. They really love showing off their reading skills!*

Case Study: Foundation Teacher



## Before school (45 minutes)

### Getting prepared

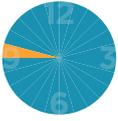
My teaching assistant, Andy and I head into the classroom to prepare for the day. I start by reviewing my teacher presentation book to ensure I know what materials I need to present the lesson. I also check which students need to be tested that day and which will need reading checkouts (they are reviewed every 5 lessons).

*Data is collected every day so I know what I can do to accelerate learning.*

We talk through the language lesson, discuss concerns about individual students and agree strategies to help increase student achievement. I then prepare individual seat work and extension activities for the students who finish their work quickly so I don't waste valuable learning time gathering resources during class time.

During this time, the children have been taught to get ready for their learning day by putting away their drink bottles and lunch boxes and getting out any classroom resources that are needed.





## Assembly and transition to class (15 minutes)

### Getting started

We greet our students just before assembly starts. Most of my students are five years old but some are older students (six and seven years old) who have missed a fair amount of school and are at the same learning level.

We walk them to our classroom which

is decorated with displays of student learning and charts that reinforce the concepts being taught. We also display the classroom rules, behaviour charts and picture charts showing progress towards our reading goals.



## Morning DI session (90 minutes)

### Reading Mastery and independent work

We start by singing the 'Good Morning song', marking the attendance register, and discussing our calendar and weather chart. We also review our classroom rules and behaviour expectations as well as discuss our character strength focus for the week.

#### Signatures Reading Mastery

I have three groups that I rotate every 30 minutes. The lower group, 'the goannas', is with me first for reading, the middle group, 'the kookaburras', is with my teaching assistant for language and the high group, 'the emus' are doing the independent activities I've organised. Over the course of the morning I teach all three groups a reading lesson at their learning level.

The Signatures K program is the most technical to teach and I have to monitor how each child is pronouncing each sound. To do this, they respond in unison as a group on my signal which allows me to truly see which child knows the sound or word and who needs more support. After responding as a group, we have 'Time to Shine' which allows children to respond to questions such as 'what sound' or 'what word' as individuals and allows me to check for children's understanding and ensure all children have mastered the concepts being taught (students have to master concepts before moving forward). After we complete our phonic and word work, we read a sound, word, sentence or a story depending on the group's ability level.



*We continually check for understanding and get feedback and support on how best to remediate. Students have to master concepts before moving on to the next level.*

#### Independent work

After reading as a group, the children begin independent work. I supervise them in their skill practice as they take turns reading aloud from our readers and monitor the completion of their student workbooks. Today they are doing letter tracing to improve fine motor skills.

The middle group is building their

language and vocabulary with Andy. They respond to his questions as a group as well as take individual turns and then complete language workbooks. The high group are doing independent seat work, which are activities that I have designed to enrich the Reading and Language program and further develop the skills the children have already mastered.

### Remediation

Both Andy and I have been taught how to check the students understanding. I use my judgement about when to remediate if I don't feel the students are firm on the content and I also get feedback and support from our

implementation manager on how best to do this.

The data recently showed that some of our students needed to increase their reading of minimum words per minute during their reading check outs.

*My implementation manager modelled how to teach students to quickly blend sounds and read words the fast way. She did some team teaching with me and I then practiced it until I felt comfortable with the new technique.*



### Middle DI session (90 minutes)

#### DISTAR arithmetic and positive reinforcement

#### DISTAR arithmetic

After morning break, it's time to teach maths. I have a few more six year olds in the class who are at the same learning level as my other students. We start our lessons by doing some numeral identification. The children have now learnt to recognise all numerals from 0-10 as well as symbols, such as + and =. We then work on strategies to help students learn how to solve addition and subtraction equations. We practice counting forwards and backwards from a range of different numbers. After this, we complete a workbook page which allows children to independently demonstrate their understanding of concepts taught during our group instruction. Once children have completed their workbook page, they move to maths games and activities

that I have planned and created to reinforce learnt concepts.

#### Positive reinforcement

I have been trained how to teach routines and use positive reinforcement so the students stay engaged and the classroom is calm and orderly. We play a simple student-teacher game with the students where they get a student point for every correct response and I get a teacher point if students do not follow classroom rules. The game is designed to ensure behaviour is maintained so the students always win and when they do we have a little celebratory cheer or small reward. This program really helps with behaviour in the classroom because it's structured and fast moving. The students know they have to be paying attention, listening. They have to be ready to answer as soon as you give that signal.





## Afternoon DI session (60 minutes)

### Reading and language

After second break, I have my morning group of students back. It's important my students get a second session of reading and language when they are trying to master the basics.

My Direct Instruction kit has all the materials I need to teach. It has my teacher presentation book and supporting teacher guides, literatures guides and tips for extra work.

I have workbooks for each student that contain the guided practice tasks aligned to the concepts I teach and reading books for each student so they can

practice reading short stories at their current learning level.

I start by settling the students with a storybook using vocabulary that they have been learning.

We then start on the afternoon rotations. One of my students needs assistance to read words the fast way, so whilst the others are working independently, I take him aside to practice his last reading check-out again. I then do catch-up testing for students who have been away.



## Other activities session (60 minutes)

### Preparation and review

Andy and I walk my students to their physical education lesson. Then I complete my data for the day and mark student workbooks. Every day I fill in my students test scores in the Student Test Summary form in case I need to

prioritise them for remediation the next day. I also complete the Lesson Progress Chart to record the lessons I taught that day and record any behavioural incidents.

At the end of the week I pull all my paperwork together to send away for analysis so any trends or issues can be identified for my next data call and so I know what I can do to further accelerate my students learning.



## After school (30 minutes)

### Collegiality and professional development

This afternoon is a supervised partner practice meeting. We do this twice a week for half an hour each session. It's really helpful as I get to share issues and solutions with my colleagues. I practice my delivery and get tips and resources from teachers who are further ahead in

the program than me.

While teachers in other schools spend this time planning their lessons for the next day, our focus is on how we deliver the lesson to ensure optimal learning and understanding.



## Teaching in a Direct Instruction school

For more information about teaching Direct Instruction in our schools and current career opportunities, go to [www.goodtogreatschools.org.au](http://www.goodtogreatschools.org.au)

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