

Direct Instruction: A Primary Teacher's perspective



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

With Direct Instruction, I'm more familiar with how to actively monitor my students to understand when I should accelerate them and when I should spend more time teaching a concept.

DI Case Study: Primary Teacher



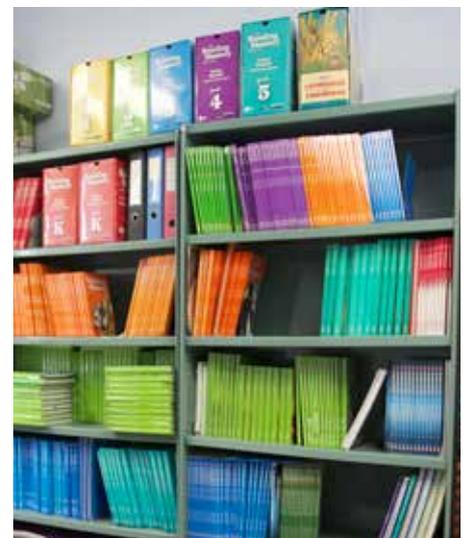
Before school (45 minutes)

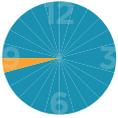
Getting prepared

I arrive by 8am to prepare my classroom lessons and materials for the day. I also review my data to identify which students need to be caught up on testing because every student needs to be tested every 10 lessons. This ensures I can teach 'bell-to-bell' to maximise learning time for my students.

The Direct Instruction kit contains a teacher presentation book which outlines content, what I say to instruct the students, what their model response should be and other tips and techniques. It also includes student workbooks, textbooks and teacher guides (including scope and sequence, assessment guides, literature guides and ideas for extra work.)

I also have a series of preventative classroom management techniques and incentives that ensure my class is always on-task and engaged and I've learnt how to extend students and inspire a love of learning.



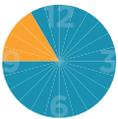


Assembly and transition to class (15 minutes)

Getting started

I greet my students at assembly. My class is a mix of Year 3 up to Year 7 students who are reading at a Year 3 to 4 level. Our classroom is decorated with the best student work, classroom rules, learning goals, progress charts, vocabulary words and career aspirations.

My students take their seats as I've taught them and pull out their textbooks. I teach the whole class together as my students are mature enough to work as a single group of 22.



Morning DI session (90 minutes)

Reading Mastery and independent work

Signatures Reading Mastery 3

I open with a fact review of our previous lesson. We're reading about Wendy Chan's trip on Traveller Four – a passenger spaceship travelling through the solar system. I ask my students to open their textbooks and start by teaching new vocabulary words in Word Attack. Some of these will appear in the story afterwards, like telescope, lava and gases and I add these words to our vocabulary wall for later quizzes. My students are really excited to get to the space landing, so they master the new words quickly. Afterwards I quiz them on the new vocabulary words by getting them to identify missing words in some sentences I've created in a PowerPoint presentation.

Now we're ready to start story reading! Each student takes turns to read two or three sentences aloud. I choose students randomly so the rest follow along.

The DI program is designed to introduce new skills for only 10 per cent of the lesson.

I ask comprehension questions. If a student makes a mistake I use a procedure to correct any errors. Then we re-read the story for Paired Practice; students work in pairs and read half of the story to their partner while I monitor. This gives students an opportunity to practice their expressive voice without feeling embarrassed by everyone listening. My students really enjoy the independence. The upper levels of Reading Mastery are about reading to learn, so they include history, geography and science based stories.

Afterwards, students complete independent work in their workbooks. I monitor actively, which means checking what each student is up to and whether they need assistance before making any errors. I put a tick next to correct answers and a dot next to any that are incorrect. This gives the students an opportunity to reread the questions and fix up their mistakes before I mark their independent work.

Positive reinforcement

I use a lot of positive reinforcement to keep students engaged. We work towards cumulative class goals and rewards: every time independent work is completed accurately, students



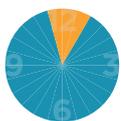
progress towards a milestone, like a popcorn party. I also use small incentives to encourage students. If they get through the lesson target for the day, I show them a two minute YouTube video to do with the day's reading to provide visual examples of concepts they may not have come across before.

Spelling Mastery C

Next I teach a separate program that helps students make the transition from phonemic based spelling to morphographic and whole-word approaches.

It includes a number of key structural spelling rules; we're learning to drop the final 'e' when the suffix begins with a vowel, as in re + late + ive = relative. It's a short, easy to learn program that students excel at.

My classes have a mix of Year levels because they are grouped by learning level rather than age, which gives every student the opportunity to succeed.



Middle DI session (90 minutes)

Connecting Maths Concepts B

I now have a few different students in my class as some students have different learning levels in maths than in reading. They've just passed cumulative test one and I am excited that they have mastered the first half of the program!

We practise column subtraction and mixed counting using digital displays on the smart board. I then start geometry by introducing squares. A lot of my students already recognise a square, but none of them can tell me why so

I teach them that all sides of a square are the same compared to rectangles.

Afterwards, we move on to subtraction facts, coins, word problems in columns, counting dollars, and addition facts. It sounds like a lot to cover in an hour but the way the skills are broken down we finish right on time to start independent work. Independent work helps student demonstrate all the skills they've practiced as a group.

The program is designed to introduce new skills for only 10 percent of the lesson, so students are always revising and building on skills they're confident with, which keeps them engaged in learning.



Afternoon DI session (60 minutes)

Expressive Writing

Since my students are ahead, my instruction coach recommended I use Expressive Writing to improve their paragraphing and editing skills. There are two basic parts in each lesson; a skill part that includes three to five exercises designed to teach specific sub-skills and editing skills, and a passage-writing exercise in which students apply them. Different lessons ask students to check for different things, so students get practice with a range of editing skills.

After editing we complete a cloze passage with 'was' or 'were' to make sense of plurals. Next is a precursor to paragraph writing; two pictures depicting the same scene at different points in time.

I ask my students to deduct answers using these two pictures by getting them to think about what would've happened before the first picture, what happened between the frames, and what might happen after. This also helps students

develop comprehension and inferencing skills.

Lastly is their favourite – writing. The writing prompt is similar to the two frames exercise – but this time there are three and the middle frame is blank. My students love these. They write a paragraph reporting on what happened in the blank frame while ensuring each sentence begins with a capital letter and ends with a full stop.



Afternoon DI session *(Continued)*

Support and coaching

I get a lot of support and coaching on when and how to use remediation skills when I feel students aren't firm on the content.

Yesterday I got feedback from the weekly data call that most students were missing important details in their writing, so my instructional coach came in and observed what the students were doing. She found they were only writing about the parts

that they thought were important, but not details like the fly disappearing out the window.

She then modelled to my students how to look for every detail in the story to make sure their paragraphs reported the picture correctly by having me draw students' paragraphs back to them on the board and look for what was missing.



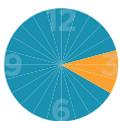
Other activities session (60 minutes)

Health and physical education

Health education is an important part of our curriculum. In our weekly personal health and development afternoon, I have planned out our year of lessons using the Health and Physical Education learning area of the Australian Curriculum. It is based on the Year 5

to 6 band content descriptions and achievement standards.

Today we are examining the influence of emotional responses on behaviour and relationships. I use Explicit Direct Instruction (EDI) techniques to deliver these lessons.



After school

Capturing data

After school I enter student's test and independent work scores on the summary forms in case I need to focus on remediating them the next day. I note the lessons I taught that day on the Lesson Progress Chart. I also record any behavioural incidents and attendance for the day.

This helps me to keep track of the progress my class is making towards our goals. I hand it to my instructional coach at the end of the week so we can review it and discuss patterns and issues. This enables me to find ways to further accelerate my students learning.



This project is funded by the Australian Government Department of Education through the Flexible Literacy for Remote Primary Schools Programme.

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

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