



# UNIQUE CHARACTERISTICS OF DIRECT INSTRUCTION PROGRAMS

Direct Instruction programs are designed to control all the variables that make a difference in how students learn—the rate at which new material is introduced, the amount of practice provided on applying concepts, the feedback teachers provide students, and the sequence of skills that are taught. The goal of Direct Instruction programs is to teach students everything they need to master a particular subject or skill, and to teach it efficiently, but not to teach students things they don't need.

Direct Instruction programs differ from traditional ones in 5 principal ways:

1. Direct Instruction lessons do not focus on a single topic (such as contractions or determining if something is a fact or an opinion).
2. Only about 10% of what occurs on a lesson involves new concepts. The rest of the material involves reviewing and applying concepts that have been introduced on preceding lessons. This small-step design and constant review guarantees that all children will learn everything the program presents.
3. Direct Instruction programs are scripted to assure that teachers give adequate explanations, quickly and efficiently. The Direct Instruction programs specify the exact wording and the examples the teacher is to present for each exercise in the program, which ensures that the program will communicate one and only one possible interpretation of the skill being taught.
4. The structure of the programs permits predictions about the skills students will have mastered at any time during the year. If the teacher follows the program carefully, an average group will progress at the rate of one lesson per day. All children within the group will be at mastery, so there are no surprises. No children (with the exception of the severely mentally challenged and the perennially absent) fail to learn to read by the end of Kindergarten, for instance. These predictions cannot be made with traditional programs because the design of these programs permits a lot of children to “slip through the cracks.”
5. All Direct Instruction programs are extensively field tested and revised on the basis of how students perform. When published, the program will work. Such field testing is not done as part of the development of other published programs. That's why they tend to not work well with the full range of students in public schools.

In summary, Direct Instruction programs present material the way an expert would present it. By following the program specifications, any teacher or parent becomes an expert instructor.