



National Institute for Direct Instruction

Direct Instruction and School Attendance

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June 30, 2015

A very large body of literature documents that students who are taught with Direct Instruction (DI) have higher rates of learning and higher levels of achievement. A somewhat smaller literature documents the higher self-confidence and self-esteem of DI students. The literature that directly assesses the relationship of DI to student attendance is even smaller, but the available evidence parallels the results with achievement and self-esteem, with DI students having better school attendance.

The most extensive evidence comes from the very large Follow Through study, conducted in the 1970s in the United States in a wide range of low income communities and comparing more than 20 different curricula. Of the programs studied only DI produced significant gains in students' achievement and self-esteem. The results appeared when the scores of DI students were compared to national norms and to carefully selected comparison groups from the local communities. Follow-up studies examined the extent to which these positive effects continued through the high school years. Results in several different communities indicated that the DI students were significantly less likely to drop out of high school or to be retained at some point in their schooling. In addition, the DI students were significantly more likely to finish high school and apply to and attend college (Gersten, Keating, & Becker, 1988; Meyer, 1984). While data were not presented on actual school attendance, it seems reasonable to suggest that these positive outcomes would reflect better school attendance patterns. Similar long-term results appeared in a study of students in the Pacific Northwest United States (Stockard, Carnine, Rasplia, Paine, Chaparro, 2015).

A direct test of the relationship of Direct Instruction to attendance was reported in a study of the use of the Direct Instruction program, *Corrective Reading*, with remedial students in a secondary school in the U.K (Gregory, Hackney, & Gregory, 1982). The comparison group, which received instruction with a variety of non-DI curricula, had similar demographic characteristics and baseline reading scores. Results indicated that, as in other studies, the *Corrective Reading* students had a stronger gain in achievement (1.8 years across five months of instruction for the *Corrective Reading* group compared to 0.2 years for the control group). There were also strong differences in attendance and student behavior between the two groups. While the attendance pattern remained constant over time for the control group (an average of 88 and 89 percent at pre and post), it improved substantially for the DI students (from 90 to to 96 percent at post-test). There were similar differences in changes

in behavior. Scores on a standard behavior questionnaire “worsened very slightly” for the DI students, but “did so markedly” for the comparison group (p. 46).

In short, while the available evidence is not large, the available results indicate that, as with achievement and self-esteem, Direct Instruction has a significantly positive effect on students school attendance.

References

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