



# DIRECT INSTRUCTION IN PRESCHOOL

The National Institute for Direct Instruction (NIFDI) supports several schools that employ Direct Instruction (DI) in their preschool classrooms. The children usually start a DI language program (*Español to English* or level K of *Reading Mastery Signature Language*) after a few weeks of school. Children initially participate in only about 10 minutes of language per day. They start with the action track in language. Once they are accustomed to following directions the first time (about the first 10 lessons), the teacher goes back to lesson 1 and teaches entire lessons, which may take 20 minutes or more. The children may need a break so they are only experiencing DI for 15 minutes at a time. The goal in preschool is for students to complete at least the first 80 lessons of language at mastery by the end of the year.

The children start DISTAR Arithmetic at the same time that they go back to lesson 1 of the language program after mastering the first 10 lessons of the action track. With math, students also start with short periods of time and work up to longer instructional blocks. Printing numerals comes in quite early in the program and needs a lot of attention at that age—how to hold the pencil, hand over hand, etc. The goal is for the preschoolers to finish 80 lessons in math.

Once children complete lesson 40 in language at mastery in preschool, they can begin reading lessons immediately and not have to wait until they enter kindergarten. NIFDI highly recommends that students complete the first 40 lessons of the language program before starting reading because then they will have the receptive and expressive skills and concepts to be able to respond appropriately during reading instruction. For English language learners, the number of lessons should be higher—up to 65 language lessons before starting reading instruction.

If students master the first 40 language lessons (or 65 lessons for ELL students), they can start reading instruction in preschool with a strong focus on the phonemic awareness tracks in the program. This instruction might occur as early as January for many students. Reading instruction should then take place for only one 30-minute period for each instructional group in contrast to students in kindergarten and first grade, who should receive a 2<sup>nd</sup> dose of reading.

The selection of the DI reading program depends on the reading curriculum in the other grades. If the reading track of the Reading Mastery program is used in kindergarten and first grade, it should be used in preschool. Funnix or Horizons can be used if there is no possibility of students continuing in the Reading Mastery program in later grades.