Suggestions for Including Direct Instruction (DI) in Distance Learning
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While Direct Instruction (DI) is intended for face-to-face, real-time interaction between a teacher and students, specific components of DI can be used in a distance learning environment in which the teacher and students are not in the same location. Different components of DI are viable in one-on-one vs. group distance learning situations. This document summarizes the differences between using DI for one-on-one vs. group distance learning situations as well as implications for coaching, behavior management, parental involvement and reentry into the school setting.

Real time one-on-one distance learning

In one-on-one distance learning, nearly the full range of DI activities can take place as long as the hardware and software setup allows for the teacher and student to see each other and their materials (presentation book, story book, lined writing paper, etc.). The teacher may need to hold the teacher presentation book (TPB) so relevant parts are visible to the student via the camera, and the student may need to hold his/her materials so the teacher can see the student's work. The activities that are not conducive to one-on-one distance learning are those that require group participation, such as action exercises in the language track that teach the third person plural "they" verb form.

In one-on-one distance learning, everything is an individual turn. Signals are not needed. Correction procedures should be implemented with six of the seven steps of the Part-Firming Paradigm. Step 6, *Give individual turns*, is unnecessary.

Students who have experienced difficulties ("low performers") should be the priority of one-on-one sessions, with a concentration on reviewing items that have been difficult for them. Distance learning will provide a good opportunity to bring the skill level of lower performers up to speed! One-on-one sessions can be interspersed with group sessions so lower performers get a double dose of instruction on critical items.

Real-time group distance learning

Real-time distance learning group sessions can also take place, but the activities are restricted because of the difficulty of:

1) getting consistent group responses during virtual instruction, and
2) monitoring performance during remote teaching vis-à-vis in-person instruction.

Achieving consistent group responses

With different Internet connection speeds, there are often time delays of different length that users experience. This makes it very difficult for groups to respond chorally. If the teacher repeats tasks multiple times to try to attain choral responses, students can become frustrated. If the teacher does not try to attain choral responses and instead accepts a group response with some students' responses following others', the teacher does not know whether a student was coat tailing or the student tried to answer at the correct time, but the response was delayed due to a slower Internet connection.

An imperfect option is to dispense with group responses altogether and simply rely on individual turns for every item in every exercise with only one child receiving a turn per task. This approach would ensure that there is no coat tailing. However, the group size would need to be very small (three students or less) for students to receive enough individual turns to ensure that they are all engaged and learning the content.

Note: if the Internet connection is quick enough to allow for clean, choral responses, then choral responses can be the norm. Still, the group size would need to be small (maximum a half dozen students) in order for the teacher to determine that all students respond on time and appropriately.

Monitoring performance during remote teaching

With a small enough group, teachers may be able to monitor oral responses. However, even with a small group, it will be difficult for teachers to monitor written responses because of how cumbersome it will be for students to hold up their writing to the camera. (Note: teachers should be able to enlarge the screen so any one students' work is visible.) It will also be difficult to monitor where students are touching on the page even with a very small group because of the inability of the teacher to monitor at a close proximity in comparison to real life. This has implications for reading instruction, discussed below.

The teacher presentation of all types of distance learning (one-on-one as well as small group) is limited by the small screen size. Students may have difficulty seeing any detail because of how much smaller the teacher presentation book (TPB) appears in comparison to classroom instruction. Teachers will probably have great difficulty determining where a student is looking on the screen if the teacher attempts to present items to the students visually using the TPB. The teacher will be able to tell whether

students are looking at the screen, but s/he will not be able to tell exactly where on the screen the students are looking.

Types of activities that are conducive to real-time instruction

For the reasons above, completely <u>oral tasks</u> may be most suitable for group distance learning. Examples from the Grade K language program of completely oral tasks include:

- Background information – names, school information, days of the week, months of the year, seasons, materials, common information, locations.
- Instructional words and problem-solving – temporal relations (first, next), same/different class, where/who/when/what

The following are examples of tasks that may be less conducive to distance learning and should be avoided if only the camera on the computer can be used:

- Tasks in which kids need to discern subtle differences visually, such as the difference between *on* and *not on.*
- Tasks that involve the teacher discerning subtle differences visually, such as children touching their *foot* vs. *feet.*
- Tasks involving the students to do things in a common space, such as placing a chair *in front of* the teacher.

Tasks that are presented and performed completely orally are also advantageous in case students do not have access to a computer as completely oral tasks can take place over the phone.

If, however, teachers have access to the DI lessons through <u>my.mheducation.com</u>, they can present the lessons to students by sharing their screen. The built-in tools of several video conferencing apps allow for users to share their screens. So the teacher can pull lessons up through <u>my.mheducation.com</u>, share his/her screen, and the students can see a full-screen version of the DI lessons. Teachers can use the built-in features of the video conferencing software to point to items in the lessons on the screen, circle critical elements or block out unwanted distractions.

Group reading tasks will be difficult to perform in a distance learning setting, including blending tasks and group story reading. Many group reading activities will need to be replaced by individual turns as described above. Story reading and other reading activities can be facilitated by providing the lessons to the students beforehand in hard copy or by the teacher sharing his/her screen during the distance learning session.

Reviewing past lessons should take preference

For various reasons, teachers should concentrate on reviewing past lessons during distance learning sessions, at least initially:

> The distance learning environment will be new for both teachers and students. Reviewing items from previous lessons will allow everyone to become more comfortable with the new environment.

> Reviewing past lessons should involve a high level of student success, which will make the sessions more positive.

> Concentrating on review items will give teachers a chance to firm up skills that weren't fully mastered and to bring lower performing students up to the level of the rest of the group.

> Some students may have difficulty participating in the distance learning sessions because of a lack of computers or even phones. Presenting new items would create a split in the group when students are absent from the distance learning sessions whereas reviewing items from past lessons should not.

After students have been performing at a high mastery rate and engagement for several sessions, teachers can introduce new lessons – as long as all students can receive the content.

Supporting packet work

Regular distance learning sessions with students by teachers can be used to check up on students' progress with take-home packets and to expand on items covered in the packets. Independent work from lessons previously covered by the instructional group can be sent home with the students. Many types of work can be sent home with the student to work on independently including:

- paired practice reading passages for students in Lesson 120 of RMSE K through RMSE 1;
- Reasoning & Writing extensions;
- sentence copying sheets;
- decodable books;
- projects across the curriculum.

Packets can be in five-day bunches labeled with the dates they should be covered by the student. Parents can take pictures of the completed student work to send to teachers for them to review before distance learning check-in sessions. They can also audio record students reading different passages to upload to a site for the teacher to review.

Coaching and data analysis

Coaching can and should be a part of distance learning instruction. Coaches, including external support providers, should be given the log-in or phone-in information for the distance learning sessions. They can take many of the same types of data that they would collect during normal observations – levels of engagement, first-time correct mastery, script fidelity, error corrections, positive-to-negative feedback, pacing, etc. In terms of intervening, the coach should err on the side of delaying feedback to the teacher until after the session unless there is a strong need to intervene. An interruption can be disruptive to the instructional flow of the distance learning sessions, especially at the beginning. Coaches should mostly provide feedback after distance learning sessions are over.

Several video conferencing apps, including Zoom, Bluejeans and Goto Meeting, have session recording capabilities. The teacher can record sessions, coaches and internal support providers can view the recorded sessions after they are finished, take data and note areas of improvement, which can be communicated to the teacher in a debriefing session.

Weekly problem-solving sessions (PSS) with external support providers should continue, but they may differ in format from the traditional PSS. Data should still be collected and analyzed, but the data should capture the important features of the distance learning interactions. For instance, a record of the items covered by individual students in one-on-one sessions will be more useful than a group Lesson Progress Chart (LPC) when distance learning is conducted one-on-one with students.

During the weekly sessions, there may not be a comprehensive, systematic discussion of every instructional group. Rather, data review and discussions may concentrate on specific staff members and students of concern in addition to how well the DI distance learning setup is functioning/not functioning overall and what steps to take to improve instructional delivery.

Positive behavior management

It is critically important that distance learning sessions are lively and engaging for the students. Teachers should treat distance instruction as a fun challenge for the children with at least a ratio of 4:1 positive:negative feedback to the children. In order to ensure full participation of the students, a reinforcement system should be set up from the beginning with clear expectations for the children and positive reinforcers the children are working for. Teachers should use a reinforcement system is familiar to the students, such as the student-teacher game, to keep track of points. Students should receive a home-based reward for working hard that can be faded or delayed over time after several sessions.

The Role of Parents

Parents and other adults in the home can play a critically important role in the success of the distance learning sessions. Their contributions can include:

1. establishing a quiet environment for the students free of distractions;
2. setting out the materials the students need for the sessions;
3. logging or phoning into the sessions;
4. setting the expectations for the students' full participation in the sessions;
5. communicating to the teacher about the performance of their students (e.g., are they touching the correct item?);
6. intervening if students get off-task;
7. holding up student work for the teacher to see;
8. reinforcing students for paying attention and working hard;
9. monitoring student independent work outside of the distance learning sessions.

School leaders should orient the parents to the requirements of successful distance learning sessions before they start. For the first distance learning session, the teacher running the session should first talk to the parents. Then the students should be brought in. The teacher should do a few exercises with them. The students should leave, and the teacher should then debrief with the parents.

Resources should be made available to ensure that parents understand their role and can support their children's learning at home. For example, the link to the Reading Mastery sounds page should be shared with all parents so they understand the precise sounds that each symbol represents. See: https://www.anguslloyd.com/pronunciation-guide/.

Tryout

It will be important for teachers to try out the distance learning setup and material before using it with children. Coaches can set up mock distance learning sessions to see how well the distance environment works with different types of exercises. Participants playing the role of students can deliberately make different types of errors to see whether teachers notice them and respond to them appropriately. Teachers should determine which type of exercises are clearly visible to the participants playing the role of the students, and what's not visible. External support providers should monitor the tryout and provide feedback to school leaders with suggestions for improving the system.

Re-entry into the school setting

Whenever students return to school, start-of-year procedures should be used to make sure groups are at mastery before they continue in the lessons. For groups that only review items from previous lessons during distance learning, this will involve backing students up three lessons from the last lesson taught in the school setting. For groups

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that continued to advance through the lessons with their teacher through distance learning, this will involve <u>backing students up three lessons from the last lesson taught remotely at mastery</u>. Administering placement tests and/or mastery tests may assist in determining the best starting point for students when they return to school in the fall.

If all of the steps above are followed, distance learning with DI should be able to allow teachers to continue to build students' mastery of critical skills and content that will help every student be prepared for more advanced material the following school year!

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