

# Direct Instruction

## NEWS

ADI Effective School Practices

SARA G. TARVER, Editor, University of Wisconsin, Madison

## Implementing DI Successfully

In this issue of *DI News*, we recognize individuals and groups of individuals who have contributed to successful implementations of DI in significant ways. First and foremost, we recognize the contributions of Zig Engelmann. As all of us old-timers know, Direct Instruction was born of his creativity, analytical genius, and devotion to children's learning. The kind of intelligence, integrity, and fortitude that Zig has displayed across the years is rare in the field of education. As senior author of more than 100 instructional programs, his productivity is unparalleled. Without those instructional programs, there would be no Direct Instruction as we know it today. Although Zig has received a number of awards in the past, his work has not yet received the recognition that it deserves from the mainstream of education. The fact that he was the 2002 recipient of the Council of Scientific Society Presidents' prestigious Award for Achievement in Education Research is indicative of growing awareness and appreciation of his work (see announcement in this issue). Congratulations, Zig!

With increased emphasis on accountability has come increased demand for instruction that works. With increased demand for instruction that works has come increased demand for Direct Instruction. To meet the need for more Direct Instruction implementations across the country, experts have formed companies that provide comprehensive professional development and consultation. Four companies that are recog-

nized by ADI are described in this issue. Each of them has played critical roles in successful implementations. What these companies are accomplishing is critical to the continued growth of Direct Instruction. To the many dedicated individuals in these companies, we say "Congratulations, and best wishes for continued success!"

We know that intensive teacher training in specific teaching techniques having to do with classroom organization and teacher presentation of lessons is essential to successful DI implementations. A series of videotapes that can be used to communicate the techniques used in the beginning level of *Reading Mastery* is reviewed in this issue. When I used these videotapes in my methods classes last semester, I found them to be a great help in teaching undergraduates about signaling, pacing, correcting, etc. The five expert teachers who serve as models on those tapes do an outstanding job. Congratulations to those teachers! Thanks to Palfreman Film Group for producing the tapes, Juniata Foundation for funding, and SRA for distributing the tapes. And thanks to Kathleen Waldron-Soler and Angela Przychodzin-Havis for reviewing the tapes for *DI News*.

Hundreds, if not thousands, of teachers who want to use DI programs find themselves in the unfortunate position where neither professional consultation nor training materials (such as training videotapes) are available to them. Fortunately, the teaching manu-

als that accompany published DI programs contain a wealth of information that the new teacher can study to get started. Beyond this, however, there is much to be learned. Knowledge of the kinds of errors that many teachers make as they are getting started can serve to prevent many of those errors. In this issue, Don Crawford describes succinctly the 10 most frequently occurring teaching errors that he has observed in his teacher training experiences. Moreover, he also shows how

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the errors are intertwined, such that one error results in another error, and so on. Careful study of this short article is recommended for all inexperienced (as well as experienced) DI teachers. In another article in this issue, Don helps us to understand the role that the teacher plays in teaching students to decode unknown words and, in the process, he debunks the faulty teaching practices of whole language and/or its descendant called “balanced reading instruction.” Thanks, Don, for sharing these insights that can be so helpful to the many teachers who have to “go it alone” in their struggles to become successful implementers of DI.

Too few principals take an active leadership role in implementing DI and disseminating results that show success. Karen Sullards is an exception. As Principal of Scott Elementary in Pulaski County in Little Rock, Arkansas, she proudly submitted glowing test results after only 1 year of a DI implementation. Those results are

included in this issue. We hope that other principals will follow Karen’s lead and let us know of their successes.

Some of the most successful DI implementers are parents of children who have the most difficulty learning—children with disabilities of one kind or another. The story of Amanda and her mother, Marsha, is a particularly inspiring story of what their psychiatrist called a “miracle” (in this issue, submitted by Linda Carnine). Such stories of miracles with individual children are as important as stories of great success in schoolwide implementations, for they demonstrate that even the most difficult-to-teach children can learn to read at or above grade level if provided Direct Instruction by someone who is committed to learning to use Direct Instruction properly. They also show that our schools’ expectations for such children usually have been much too low. Amanda and Marsha are representative of many who have had similar experiences. Also printed in this issue is a letter from the grandmother of a student in Pearl, Mississippi, whose ability to read has transformed with the

use of Direct Instruction. We recognize and congratulate all and encourage all to share their stories with the readers of *DI News*.

And thank goodness for Bob Dixon’s ability to communicate educational absurdities through entertaining and illuminating satire. In this issue he describes his thoughts about the non-instruction in his daughter’s math textbook (as well as other textbooks). Thanks, Bob, for providing us with an occasion to chuckle at the sad state of many of today’s textbooks.

I’m happy to announce that Martin Kozloff, a long time advocate of DI, has agreed to contribute a column to each issue of *DI News*. Martin is one of the few individuals I know who knows the tiniest details of DI practices and also understands the “big picture” having to do with politics and educational wars. In this issue, Martin shares his musings about skirmishes, battles, and wars. If you’d like to respond to Martin’s column or any other article in this issue, please pen a letter to the editor and send to ADI. *ADI*

BOB DIXON



## *Textbooks: What?*

Every so often, I sit back and look at a textbook, and wonder, has someone gone completely nuts? If that’s the case, then it’s an epidemic. Textbooks look back at me and scream, “I think you’re an idiot!” They say that to me, to the teachers who use them—anyone who looks at them.

I’m not exaggerating. My daughter’s sixth-grade math book has a word problem involving Mt. Everest. Right

above the problem is a *picture* of Mt. Everest. Someone associated with the publisher had to first find the picture, then submit the paperwork to get permission to use the picture, and then make sure the picture got credited properly and legally in the textbook. All this is *a lot* of trouble, given especially that the mother companies of most textbook publishers have very deep pockets. A little mistake on the credits could cost a genuine fortune.

What, exactly, is the contribution of the picture of Mt. Everest to the textbook? Well, it helps add more pages, which in turn helps create the illusion that the book has value (because it has volume). It adds to the cost of the book. It creates a nice little break between problem 23 and problem 24.

I can’t even begin to imagine the instructional value of that picture in that book. It contributes nothing to teaching math. I don’t believe kids even look at it, and if they do, they’re just being distracted from the tasks at hand.

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Speaking of “contributes nothing to math,” my daughter’s math text has some good examples of taking political correctness to its furthest extremes. It

sticks in cultural passages and pictures here and there, with no attempt whatsoever to connect the passages with math. One passage, for example, is about Bessie Smith. There isn't the slightest doubt (in my view) that Bessie Smith's contribution to music in the twentieth century was extraordinary, and not limited solely to blues. I'd absolutely put her at the top of my list when it comes to music history, music appreciation, and musicology in general.

I suppose the passage is in a *math* book because Bessie was an African American. I have a suggestion for the publisher: if its editors are *sincerely* interested in doing something positive for any group of children, including especially low socioeconomic children of any description—publish a textbook that teaches kids how to do math. Start there, then add frills, as you deem necessary, to market the thing.

This same textbook—when it comes to math—does something that convinces me that the editors aren't really that concerned about the well-being of kids. In any set of practice problems—any set at all—the last few problems in the set require kids *to do math that the book hasn't taught them how to do!* This "feature" of the text must be one put in consciously (to use the term "consciously" loosely). I suppose the rationale is based on complete ignorance of the concepts of generalization and transference: kids can, through magic, generalize outside of the range of a generalization they have been taught.

And speaking of asking kids to do something they haven't been taught, "critical thinking" problems are a regular part of the text. Those problems are much like the ones we'd see in a book of brainteasers. Here's one: "Work with a partner. [Good idea, especially if your partner is an adult who knows how to do problems like this.] Arrange the digits 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 into two decimals so that their sum is as close to 1 as possible.

Use each digit only once. The sum cannot be equal to or greater than 1."

This is the same book that tries very hard to make math "authentic." And interdisciplinary. "Maureen has a leaf collection. She has 15 willow leaves, 10 oak, 7 maple, 11 dogwoods, and 17 miscellaneous leaves. Make a bar graph showing this data." This problem is clearly labeled as "science." Is this authentic, because a kid has a leaf collection, just like my daughter and all the other kids in the class, or is it showing the relationship between science and math? None of the above.

*Do the authors or editors of this textbook want to do something to really improve the future prospects and choices for Hispanic kids? First, teach them to do math.*

If they took the "science" label off of the problem, I'd say it was as good as anything for practicing bar graphs. Doesn't seem very authentic to me, though: wouldn't a really good leaf collection have *one* really good example of many varieties of leaves, including especially rare ones? That's what I would recommend, with the leaves arranged in some way that highlights various classes of leaves. Maybe the best thing about such a collection is that it would be really easy to show it on a bar graph.

They have these "critical thinking" problems along the lines: "Jane is 7 years older than her brother, and the sum of their ages, plus 5, multiplied by 4, is the age of their house. How old is everyone and everything?" The people who author these books are the same ones who look back derisively at my mathematics education because we

had to figure out when a couple of trains, leaving opposite coasts and going different speeds, would meet up. The problem wasn't all that authentic, but I think the algebra for solving it was. I have nothing against the "Jane is 7 years..." problem *per se*. If you've taught the algebra for solving...just about anything...then no problem. But in my daughter's text, "critical thinking" means "something relatively difficult to do that we haven't taught anyone how to do, mostly because we don't know how to do that."

Ah ha! Here's one of those cultural passages that relates to mathematics. It's about the former Treasurer of the United States, Katherine Davalos Ortega. She supervised over 5,000 employees. Five thousand: that's math, right? Do the authors or editors of this textbook want to do something to really improve the future prospects and choices for Hispanic kids? First, teach them to do math.

It's very difficult to open this book at random and not find something ridiculous. Just about every assignment has a portfolio...something or other. I don't know what to call these things. They're numbered, like 1 through 25 are problems adding fractions with unlike denominators, and number 28 is "Portfolio: Identify a problem from this chapter that you found particularly challenging, and put it in your portfolio." WHAT!?!?!? (Honestly, I'm not making any of this up.) For starters, nearly all the problems in the chapter are challenging because the book doesn't give teachers anything to help teach the math. I'd put the whole book in my portfolio, and then I'd find a special place for the whole portfolio: an inflammable place.

Are these types of problems limited to math textbooks? Not hardly. (I suppose, technically, that "not hardly" is a double negative, so...) Hardly. One of my "favorite" examples—meaning a very painful one—was in a science

text. It was in a chapter on convection, a very good concept to teach in a science text. The particular part I was looking at dealt with convection on volcanoes. There was, on one of those pages, a small box with a suggestion for an activity for special education students: have them make a volcano out of paper maché. Convection is a critical concept in several branches of science, and it can be difficult for the average student. I don't quite see how *removing special education kids from instruction* can really help them learn and master this critical concept.

Here's a couple of interesting examples of noninstruction from a language arts program, sixth-grade level. The title of the program is, "If it's on Your Adoption List, We Teach it." Well, there is little doubt in my mind that if something in language arts is on your adoption list, this program "covers" it or "touches on" it or something like that. Teaches it?

There is a chapter in the book on pronouns. That itself is interesting at sixth grade: most native speakers of English use all the English pronouns by the time they hit kindergarten, or earlier. For non-native speakers, this chapter isn't going to cut it. With respect to most students in most schools, the most interesting instructional challenge is teaching kids to use pronouns *correctly* that they are likely to use *incorrectly*. Native speakers don't agonize over "I" versus "me" in sentences such as: \_\_\_ like candy. On the other hand, sixth-grade native speakers and many adult native speakers might get confused with: If you give the package to Jake and \_\_\_\_, we'll deliver it for you.

If we're going to teach that, then... we'd have to teach it, as in providing some instruction such that students learn when to use I and me and we and us and she and her and that sort of thing. Back to "Something for Everyone," there is one lesson on "Personal Pronouns—Objective Case."

Exercise 1 of that lesson has students choose between nominative and objective pronouns: 15 sentences. In most of the 15 sentences, the pronouns are in compounds, which is good, considering that's the only time they're a problem for anyone. That's the up side. It is also true that the answer to every exercise is the objective form of personal pronouns, which are conveniently listed on the page. In short, students can do this exercise without a clue about nominative and objective case of pronouns. (I'm not talking about the grammatical terminology.

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I'm just talking about learning which form of a pair of pronouns to use.)

The book offers teachers a suggestion for this Exercise 1. It's in a little section of its own, in the margin of the teacher's edition. Among other things, it says: Remind students that nominative case pronouns are used as subjects and subject complements, whereas objective case pronouns are used as objects. First, I don't think reminding the students of this is necessary, given that certainly not one got it the first time it was mentioned. Second, as I said above, students can ignore that stuff and just select the pronouns that are listed on the same page as the exercise. And personally, I'm not entirely sure I'd choose "subject complements" as one of my highest priority language arts content items. Let's just say they succeeded in teaching kids to say, for example, "This is she" when someone calls, asking for Judy. It's just my guess that Judy might get beat up

the next day at school. I wouldn't want to be party to that.

People who think of DI in terms of scripts are welcome to go ahead and turn this thing into DI. The introduction might look a little like this:

1. THE NOMINATIVE CASE PRONOUNS ARE USED AS SUBJECTS AND SUBJECT COMPLEMENTS.
2. EVERYBODY, TELL ME WHAT THE NOMINATIVE PRONOUNS ARE USED FOR. (Pause, possibly for a very long time.) GET READY. (Signal) "Subjects and subject complements."

Doesn't really help much, does it? Garbage in, garbage out. Scripting wouldn't save this book, by a long shot. Well, it could help *a little*. One instruction in the book says, "Invite volunteers to write their four questions on the board." An advantage of a DI-type script, if we're consistent with all DI programs, is that *no one gets any invitations*. The book doesn't say anywhere what to do if students happen to respectfully decline the invitations.

So what's my point? That textbooks aren't very good? You already know that, I'm sure. Concrete examples just make the idea more humorous—and more depressing. Publishers spend huge amounts of money developing this stuff, where instruction is the least of their concerns, if a concern at all. At the very tippy top of their list is political correctness. Words like fat and man and cat seem like pretty good beginning reading examples to me, but they are all potentially problematic, in terms of political correctness, or more precisely, in terms of political correctness gone berserk. "Fat" might offend someone overweight (like me). "Cat" might offend dog lovers, or, possibly, beatniks. "Man" is inherently sexist, although it seems we can get around that last one if we (a) have 49% of the characters in a book be male and

51% be female, and (b) always show the men putting flowers in a vase or cooking or having a baby.

Don't send notes about this (to me), please. I'm well aware that not that long ago, we had instructionally worthless textbooks with illustrations of white people only, such as Dick and Jane, and even mostly white dogs (Spot). Even the white people weren't representative of *all* white people. In reality, I don't object at all to political correctness, especially when it hasn't gone berserk. It's an easy thing to accommodate. It doesn't require a mind like Zig Engelmann's. Basically, all it requires is the ability to count.

Actually, it might be more challenging than that. It isn't easy to both at the same time (a) make the textbooks *authentic*, and to (b) create an idealized vision of society that doesn't exist now

and probably won't ever. I don't know how to do that, myself.

All I'm really interested in here is the priorities that govern the content of textbooks. If a textbook is, first and foremost, instructionally sound, and effective, and efficient, and otherwise is a highly sophisticated tool for teachers to use, then what the heck: buy rights to some nice photographs. But no number or quality of photographs or essays or pictures of minorities (racial or otherwise) or invitations or cooperative learning suggestions or anything like any of these things is going to make a textbook instructionally more sound. No number or quality of noninstructional priorities—even very important ones—adds up to good instruction. Even scripts and choral responding are pretty stupid if the instruction underlying this isn't pretty good.

The most practical application of any of this is in reference to textbook adoption. I'm a bit cynical, however, when it comes to adoptions. I've seen many sets of adoption criteria in which the notion of children learning was not a part. I've seen cases where "having blending" scores the same number of adoption points as "having high quality photographs." And then there is the idea of a "current copyright." That's some stupid requirement that schools voluntarily impose upon themselves, thereby ensuring that schools will always have to spend substantially more on textbooks than necessary.

Among the many recommendations of the whole language guru's at one point was that of dispensing with textbooks altogether. That might have been as close as they ever got to giving good advice. *ADI*

## *Siegfried Engelmann Receives Award for Achievement in Education Research*

The Council of Scientific Society Presidents (CSSP), the country's leading science leadership development institute and advocate of policy on science, has named University of Oregon Professor of Education Siegfried (Zig) Engelmann the 2002 recipient of the CSSP Award for Achievement in Education Research. Engelmann, creator of Direct Instruction and founder and Director of the National Institute for Direct Instruction (NIFDI), is the fifth person to receive the award since its inception in 1998. The award is given annually for education research that has been shown to improve children's learning and understanding measurably. Engelmann received the award at the national meeting of the

CSSP in Washington, DC in December, 2002.

In notifying Engelmann of the award, CSSP's President, Dr. Martin Apple, wrote that Engelmann was selected "because of the high quality of...research designs, high quality of research execution, innovative discoveries, and measurable impact on the learning of students."

Engelmann is the senior author of more than 100 instructional programs. He is the author or co-author of more than 100 articles and chapters of professional books, and more than a dozen professional books and monographs. He served as the co-director of the University of

Oregon's Direct Instruction Follow Through model, which outperformed all other comparison models in accelerating the performance of at-risk children in Grades K-3. In 1997 he founded NIFDI, a not-for-profit corporation that assists schools implementing Direct Instruction schoolwide. In a study of 24 instructional approaches published by the Educational Research Service in 1999, the comprehensive model of Direct Instruction was found to be only one of two comprehensive reform models with a strong record of improving the performance of students at the elementary level. The National Institute for Direct Instruction has been endorsed by New American Schools as one of the country's top providers of comprehensive school improvement designs. NIFDI joined the New American Schools collective of affiliated organizations in October 2002.

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CSSP was founded in 1973 to provide a forum for communication and joint

action by the country's leading scientists. CSSP is composed of the presidents, presidents-elect and immediate past presidents of nearly 70 scientific societies and scientific federations, whose combined membership numbers exceed one million. CSSP's interest in

the quality of public education has grown in recent years. In his message to U.S. President George Bush in November 2000, CSSP President Dr. Apple identified education reform as one of the country's top policy issues affecting science.

For more information on CSSP, visit its web site at [www.mdsg.umces.edu/CSSP/home.html](http://www.mdsg.umces.edu/CSSP/home.html). For more information on the National Institute for Direct Instruction (NIFDI), visit its web site at [www.nifdi.org](http://www.nifdi.org) or call 1-877-485-1973. *ADI*

## *New American Schools Welcomes School Improvement Program Into Portfolio*

### **National Institute for Direct Instruction Joins Collective**

ALEXANDRIA, VA—New American Schools announced its endorsement of the National Institute for Direct Instruction (NIFDI), a nonprofit corporation dedicated to providing school districts with a solid training program and support for implementation of Direct Instruction, a research-based, comprehensive school reform model. NIFDI joins a nationwide roster of comprehensive school designs affiliated with New American Schools, the education nonprofit driving improvement in America's schools through research, investment, and services.

"NIFDI is the preeminent Direct Instruction model and has a proven track record evidenced by higher student achievement," said New American President and CEO Mary Anne Schmitt. "With well-developed and thoroughly planned lessons centered on small learning increments, NIFDI schools have demonstrated great success with this approach," she added. "We're thrilled to have them join our portfolio of high-quality designs."

After undergoing a rigorous review, NIFDI was invited to join the New American Schools (NAS) collective of affiliated organizations dedicated to

turning around low-performing schools. The two-phased review process, which began in 2001, consisted of self-assessments, external audits by NAS, as well as site visits to schools that currently use the NIFDI model.

Schools that use the NIFDI model employ a single, programmatic sequence for all its students. All students in a particular sequence receive their instruction at the same time. Teaching emphasizes well-developed and carefully planned lessons designed around small learning increments and clearly defined teaching tasks. NIFDI also places a strong emphasis on professional development for teachers and staff and a powerful program for guiding school leaders in using data to inform decision-making.

The model's potential for implementation on a wide scale, while maintaining its high quality, was a key factor behind the NAS endorsement. Founded in 1997 by University of Oregon Professor of Education, Siegfried Engelmann, NIFDI was one of only two comprehensive reform models with a strong record of improving student performance at the elementary level, according to a 1999 study published by the Educational Research Service. Recently, Dr. Engelmann was awarded the 2002 Council of Scientific

Society Presidents' Award for Achievement in Education Research.

"We are proud of the real and measurable progress Direct Instruction has had in the lives of thousands of students. By joining the NAS portfolio, we can extend our reach even further and benefit from NAS-supported activities. Endorsement by New American Schools as one of the top providers of comprehensive school improvement strategies in the nation is an honor. With the support of NAS, we will work to strengthen the educational achievements and success of all students," said Kurt Engelmann, President of NIFDI.

As an NAS-affiliated design, NIFDI will be part of a group of 10 high quality providers of comprehensive school services that benefit from policy initiatives, communications campaigns, best practices exchanges, research, and business planning support.

### **About the National Institute for Direct Instruction**

The Direct Instruction model is based largely upon the research of NIFDI founder and Director, Siegfried Engelmann, who found that both advantaged and disadvantaged students could learn to high standards if teachers follow well-developed and thoroughly planned lessons that center on

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action by the country's leading scientists. CSSP is composed of the presidents, presidents-elect and immediate past presidents of nearly 70 scientific societies and scientific federations, whose combined membership numbers exceed one million. CSSP's interest in

the quality of public education has grown in recent years. In his message to U.S. President George Bush in November 2000, CSSP President Dr. Apple identified education reform as one of the country's top policy issues affecting science.

For more information on CSSP, visit its web site at [www.mdsg.umces.edu/CSSP/home.html](http://www.mdsg.umces.edu/CSSP/home.html). For more information on the National Institute for Direct Instruction (NIFDI), visit its web site at [www.nifdi.org](http://www.nifdi.org) or call 1-877-485-1973. *ADI*

## *New American Schools Welcomes School Improvement Program Into Portfolio*

### **National Institute for Direct Instruction Joins Collective**

ALEXANDRIA, VA—New American Schools announced its endorsement of the National Institute for Direct Instruction (NIFDI), a nonprofit corporation dedicated to providing school districts with a solid training program and support for implementation of Direct Instruction, a research-based, comprehensive school reform model. NIFDI joins a nationwide roster of comprehensive school designs affiliated with New American Schools, the education nonprofit driving improvement in America's schools through research, investment, and services.

"NIFDI is the preeminent Direct Instruction model and has a proven track record evidenced by higher student achievement," said New American President and CEO Mary Anne Schmitt. "With well-developed and thoroughly planned lessons centered on small learning increments, NIFDI schools have demonstrated great success with this approach," she added. "We're thrilled to have them join our portfolio of high-quality designs."

After undergoing a rigorous review, NIFDI was invited to join the New American Schools (NAS) collective of affiliated organizations dedicated to

turning around low-performing schools. The two-phased review process, which began in 2001, consisted of self-assessments, external audits by NAS, as well as site visits to schools that currently use the NIFDI model.

Schools that use the NIFDI model employ a single, programmatic sequence for all its students. All students in a particular sequence receive their instruction at the same time. Teaching emphasizes well-developed and carefully planned lessons designed around small learning increments and clearly defined teaching tasks. NIFDI also places a strong emphasis on professional development for teachers and staff and a powerful program for guiding school leaders in using data to inform decision-making.

The model's potential for implementation on a wide scale, while maintaining its high quality, was a key factor behind the NAS endorsement. Founded in 1997 by University of Oregon Professor of Education, Siegfried Engelmann, NIFDI was one of only two comprehensive reform models with a strong record of improving student performance at the elementary level, according to a 1999 study published by the Educational Research Service. Recently, Dr. Engelmann was awarded the 2002 Council of Scientific

Society Presidents' Award for Achievement in Education Research.

"We are proud of the real and measurable progress Direct Instruction has had in the lives of thousands of students. By joining the NAS portfolio, we can extend our reach even further and benefit from NAS-supported activities. Endorsement by New American Schools as one of the top providers of comprehensive school improvement strategies in the nation is an honor. With the support of NAS, we will work to strengthen the educational achievements and success of all students," said Kurt Engelmann, President of NIFDI.

As an NAS-affiliated design, NIFDI will be part of a group of 10 high quality providers of comprehensive school services that benefit from policy initiatives, communications campaigns, best practices exchanges, research, and business planning support.

### **About the National Institute for Direct Instruction**

The Direct Instruction model is based largely upon the research of NIFDI founder and Director, Siegfried Engelmann, who found that both advantaged and disadvantaged students could learn to high standards if teachers follow well-developed and thoroughly planned lessons that center on

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small learning increments and on clearly defined teaching tasks. NIFDI is based in Eugene, Oregon. For more information about NIFDI, visit its web site at [www.nifdi.org](http://www.nifdi.org).

### **About New American Schools**

Established in 1991 by the chief executives of our country's most successful businesses, NAS is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization whose mission is to increase student achievement

through comprehensive school improvement. To achieve this mission, NAS advocates for policies that advance the values of quality, scale, sustainability, comprehensiveness, choice, and collective action. NAS supports education entrepreneurs with proven and promising educational programs and provides them with the technical assistance and financing. Additionally, NAS offers consulting services to state depart-

ments of education, school districts, and schools to help them design, implement, and align the key components of a comprehensive school improvement strategy. Encouraged by our accomplishments of the past decade, NAS continues to link and deliver superior, research-based education services that provide key stakeholders the tools and assistance needed to ensure that all children succeed at high levels. **ADI**

## *An Introduction to Implementation Companies*

Professional development companies provide experience and expertise in implementing effective, research-based strategies for improving school performance. The following information is an introduction to four of these companies and their characteristics.

### **The Center for Applied Research in Education (C.A.R.E.)**

Founded by Bonnie Grossen of the University of Oregon, the focus of C.A.R.E. is to provide initial training, in-class coaching, support, and consultation that will give educators the knowledge and assistance necessary for them to implement DI programs and research with integrity in upper elementary, middle school, and remedial high school. The instructional programs utilized by C.A.R.E. have 30 years of experimental comparison research supporting the remedial components and 20 years supporting the standards-based programs. C.A.R.E. is listed as an implementer approved on the national Good Schools list of the Northwest Regional Laboratory. In addition to instructional programs, schoolwide systems for managing the

discipline and behavior of the school (the Positive Behavior Support Model) is generally a component of a C.A.R.E. implementation. C.A.R.E. has been in operation for 3 years, has the capacity to work with 20 school districts, utilizes the services of 30 consultants, and currently works with schools and districts located in Florida, California, Hawaii, Kansas, and Oregon.

By guiding the school in establishing and coordinating a progress-monitoring system for setting goals and problem solving to remove obstacles on a continuous basis, C.A.R.E. will help a school, or a district, achieve their goals. The C.A.R.E. professional development model utilizes side-by-side coaching with teachers from initial curriculum training to follow-up with teachers in the classroom to improve the technical delivery strategies. This results in a very efficient training model and immediately "makes it relevant" for the participants. The involvement of actual students, completing the lesson they were on that day, sets the C.A.R.E. training model apart from the rest. C.A.R.E. offers a comprehensive progress-monitoring

piece that accompanies each of the following DI curricula: *Corrective Reading, Expressive Writing, Reasoning and Writing, Spelling Through Morphographs, and Connecting Math Concepts*.

C.A.R.E. lists the following advantages for working with their network to implement DI in the middle grades:

1. Sustained academic growth.
2. Sustained professional growth for teachers. Teachers have opportunities to become host coaches, workshop presenters, site coordinators, and leaders in the state and the nation.
3. Progress monitoring process for sustaining the quality of the implementation, troubleshooting, and solving problems formatively.
4. Group-administered placement test for resource-efficient placement of students into groups (requires one class period and electronic scoring).
5. Access to knowledge gained from experience and data gathered in large-scale implementations.
6. Culture of data-based decision-making at the classroom level, school level, and national level.
7. Shared expertise of a highly experienced team of teachers, trainers, researchers, and leaders.

When selecting an implementation company, C.A.R.E. suggests that a

small learning increments and on clearly defined teaching tasks. NIFDI is based in Eugene, Oregon. For more information about NIFDI, visit its web site at [www.nifdi.org](http://www.nifdi.org).

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4. Group-administered placement test for resource-efficient placement of students into groups (requires one class period and electronic scoring).
5. Access to knowledge gained from experience and data gathered in large-scale implementations.
6. Culture of data-based decision-making at the classroom level, school level, and national level.
7. Shared expertise of a highly experienced team of teachers, trainers, researchers, and leaders.

When selecting an implementation company, C.A.R.E. suggests that a

school/district should consider how well the company works with the individual schedules, academic needs, and concerns pertaining to each school and its staff.

An additional component of the C.A.R.E. approach is the “Beacon School” Professional Development Model. A “Beacon School” is an implementation with a system for replicating itself. One or more schools (intermediate and/or high school level) are selected to work with C.A.R.E to implement the evidence-based programs with the Beacon system of training. These selected schools will receive a greater share of the resources available for such an implementation. In return for receiving a greater share of the resources, the Beacon school staff will agree to “pay forward” the benefits of these resources by sharing what they learn through the Beacon school training model. For example, teachers in the Beacon school will allow teachers who are just learning the model to come into their classrooms to work with them and their students as the teacher trainees learn how to respond to the specific needs

of students and follow the specific procedures prescribed by the model.

### Advantages of the “Beacon School” training model

1. Initial training emphasizes practice with students in the classroom.
2. Intensive in-class coaching with initial training brings greater competence.
3. A focus on student performance in follow-up coaching brings higher achievement.
4. Initial wave of teachers trained become the host coaches and trainers for subsequent waves.
5. A districtwide and statewide implementation can proceed with growing internal support in a very cost-effective manner.
6. Teachers receive opportunities for on-going professional growth and leadership within the district.

Several schools that have worked with C.A.R.E. have received recognition for their improved performance. The following schools in California had teachers who received cash awards for doubling their target gain scores: Ray-

mond Cree Middle School, Palm Springs; Apple Valley Middle School, Apple Valley; Starr King Middle School and Natomas High School, Sacramento. In Florida, teachers from Lincoln Middle School in Gainesville received \$1000 cash for student performance.

For additional information about C.A.R.E. including articles related to implementation at the middle and high school level, contact information for model schools working with C.A.R.E., and establishing cost and initiating implementation, contact:

Anna Judan  
292 West 12th Ave.  
Eugene, OR 97401  
Phone: 541.686.9185  
Fax: 541.345.2090  
E-mail: [ajudan@hotmail.com](mailto:ajudan@hotmail.com)

### Educational Resources, Inc. (ERI)

ERI was incorporated in 1998 and will begin its sixth year in the fall of 2003. The founding partners are Paul McKinney, Molly Blakely, and Ed Schaefer, and the company maintains a cadre of 21 consultants. ERI is

**ERI Table 1**

*Tippens Elementary School*  
**GCRCT**

(Scores include ALL students: Special Education, ESOL, etc.)

*4th Grade*

% of Total Students		Reading			Language Arts			Mathematics		
		2000	2001	2002	2000	2001	2002	2000	2001	2002
<b>Did Not Meet</b>	<b>Tippens</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>29</b>
	<b>State</b>	35	26	20	29	26	23	38	38	34
<b>Meets</b>	<b>Tippens</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>59</b>
	<b>State</b>	37	42	41	55	58	62	51	51	53
<b>Exceeds</b>	<b>Tippens</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>12</b>
	<b>State</b>	28	32	38	16	16	15	11	12	13
<b>Meets + Exceeds</b>	<b>Tippens</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>71</b>
	<b>State</b>	65	74	79	72	74	77	62	63	66

presently partnered with 60 school-wide implementations in 22 states and Canada. The total population includes over 29,000 students in various large urban and small rural areas. The company maintains solid relationships with both public and charter school organizations. ERI has no set limitations on the type or locale of the schools with which they partner, and the schools they are currently working with represent the geographic range of the country.

ERI has a wide range of implementation types. The type of implementation is dependent on the experience the school brings to the project. Schools new to Direct Instruction are required to implement *Reading Mastery* beginning in kindergarten, *Corrective Reading* beginning in third grade along with *Reading Mastery*, and *Language for Learning* in Pre-K and kindergarten. The *Language* sequence expands each successive year and *Spelling Mastery* is suggested for the second year at all grade levels. It has been the experience of ERI that it is more effective when teachers develop sound instructional strategies over time with continued supportive supervision.

ERI provides ongoing supervisory training for site administrators and DI Coordinators. They host an ongoing Administrators Academy where site supervisors are updated on new programs and procedures relevant to their school project.

ERI maintains a product line tailored to fit the needs of any DI site. Materials include training video sets in *Reading Mastery* and *Reading Mastery Plus*, *Language for Learning*, *Corrective Reading Decoding* and *Comprehension*; Advanced Training and Supervision; and Sounds, Signals, Corrections, and Pronunciation for *Reading Mastery* and *Corrective Reading*. They also market DataMaster, a comprehensive data collection and reporting program; Report Writer, a computerized program for creating formal observation reports; Assessment Forms for teachers to compile concise, consistent assessment data on all students; and Writing Extension activities for *Corrective Reading Decoding A, B1, and B2*.

ERI assists schools with grant writing activities to ensure that all the necessary components of the grant application process are addressed with the

most comprehensive information and data available.

The conviction of ERI is that the research on staff development is clear: college coursework, inservice workshops, and after school meetings alone will have little impact on a schoolwide implementation. Effective continuous staff development must take place in classrooms with administrators, teachers, and students. This is the essence of “coaching” which constitutes an absolute requisite element of any successful school improvement effort. The USDOE recommends that schools secure “high-quality external support and assistance from comprehensive school reform entities with experience in schoolwide reform and improvement.”

Recently, two schools working with ERI have been designated as Title I Schools of Excellence, and a third school was identified as a New Jersey Blue Ribbon School for Student Achievement.

The Assistant Superintendent of Pickens County School District in Jasper, Georgia, Dr. Kathryn Floyd, offers these comments about working with ERI.

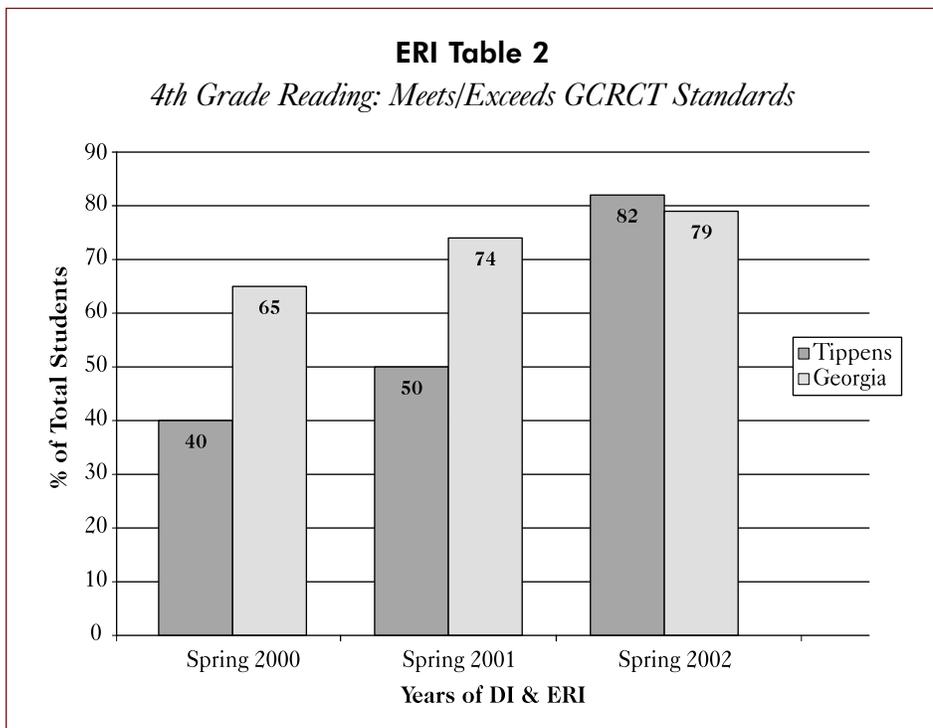
“Personalized, site-tailored, context-sensitive, professional—all of these terms describe the quality of training and coaching provided to those who contract with Educational Resources, Inc.

“ERI ensures fidelity of implementation of Direct Instruction with positive outcomes in student performance and staff morale.

This team is stellar, absolutely stellar.”

For information on working with ERI, visiting a model school, and costs associated with working with ERI, contact:

Paul McKinney, Vice-President,  
 Director of Operations  
 Educational Resources, Inc.  
 821 Forest Ave.  
 Fulton, NY 13069  
 Phone: 315.598.9662  
 Fax: 315.592.9236  
 E-mail: [dismac@aol.com](mailto:dismac@aol.com)



## J/P Associates

J/P Associates has been serving schools since 1989, and the president, Janie Feinberg, has been instrumental in teaching, training, and implementing DI for over 30 years. Currently, J/P is working with over 100 schools in approximately 25 districts across the country. J/P is committed to helping all schools achieve success, regardless of location, type, or size. J/P employs 24 full time consultants.

The philosophy of J/P is that in order for a site to be truly successful they must eventually be able to function without the help of the implementation company. This means that every person involved must be able to competently execute the many details associated with a successful implementation. They have a systematic method for helping schools achieve independence and success, labeled the “Five Stages to Independence.” Following is a summary of the stages.

**Stage One: Modeling and Intensive Professional Development:** all staff members receive intensive training in the DI programs and J/P consultants focus on developing a strong Instructional Leadership Team led by the Principal and DI Coordinator. In addition to instructional methodology, each J/P consultant is trained in classroom management and behavioral techniques.

**Stage Two: Leading and Navigation:** J/P consultants focus on getting representatives of all levels of school staff involved in the Instructional Leadership Team. The individuals chosen for the team will be trained to plot their school’s success, and will lead the school to maintaining academic achievement once J/P has left.

**Stage Three: Testing and Growing:** J/P consultants test themselves and their sites to ensure that the consultants have successfully taught the Instructional Leadership Team how to administer placement tests, group,

analyze pacing guides, back-test, and test for acceleration.

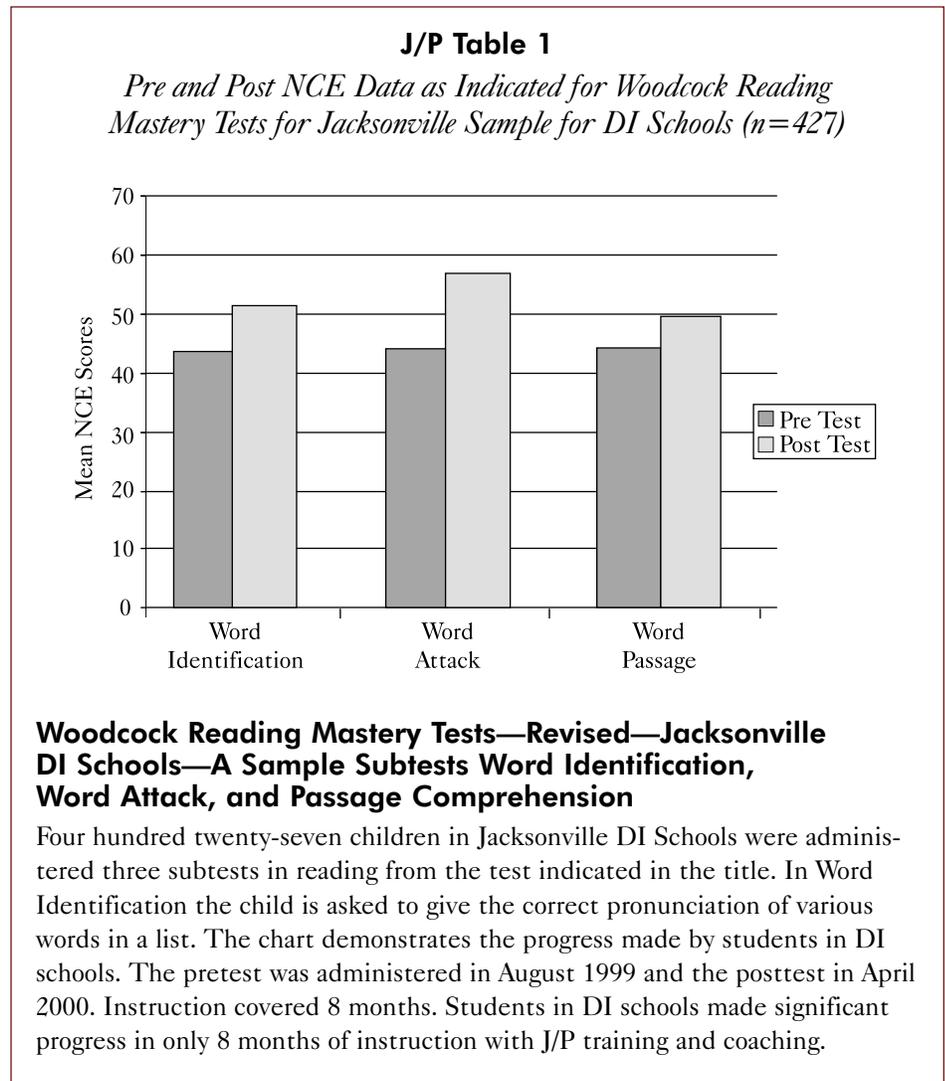
**Stage Four: Approaching Independence:** J/P tests the critical elements of the implementation. Principals are involved in monitoring and feedback, DI Coordinators and cadre are coaching and giving feedback to teachers, the Leadership Team has developed a common vision of instructional excellence, and has clearly defined roles for all staff members in achieving that goal.

**Stage Five: Independence:** J/P tests all areas of implementation. Principals are consistently monitoring and giving feedback to staff, with the goal of being in DI classrooms 90 min per day. Cadre are coaching staff members on a regular basis and giving

written feedback in terms of supportive supervision. DI Coordinators are firm in the role and monitor classrooms regularly.

After completing all five stages at mastery, J/P will provide the site with a Maintenance Contract. The goal is to enable a site to:

1. Have a clear academic focus and mission—all children can learn when teachers have the appropriate tools.
2. Have consistent and structured staff development relevant to the research-based program.
3. Have continuous supportive supervision to enable all teachers to be technically proficient and masters of instruction.



4. Develop strong instructional leaders who focus on literacy, develop an efficient instructional leadership team, and ensure a safe and effective environment for all students.

The following components are included in J/P implementations at each stage in the plan for independence: effective research-based methods and strategies; comprehensive design for effective school functioning, from scheduling to management to training, so that all children will be academically successful; professional development, prior to the beginning of the school year and ongoing training throughout the implementation; benchmark standards and lesson pacing monitoring; staff support for implementation; comprehensive Parent Involvement program; supportive supervision with monthly coaching for

all instructors and consistent feedback to the staff; and data analysis.

J/P also provides grant writing assistance to their sites. An experienced grant writer works with staff at the site to prepare grant applications for grants such as the CSRD and Reading First. They have assisted schools in securing thousands of dollars of grant money, translating into higher student achievement. J/P's experience with DI implementations has given them a perspective from which to assess common challenges DI schools face. As gaps in the instructional tools have emerged, J/P has filled those gaps through the development of new instructional tools and materials.

J/P schools have been recognized for their improvement. Portland Element-

tary in Hamburg, Arkansas has received national recognition as a Distinguished Title I School, A Heritage Foundation "No Excuses" school, and was highlighted in the February 2002 issue of *Reader's Digest*. Whitten Elementary in Lee County, Arkansas, was also recognized as a Distinguished Title I School, and in the 2001 Annual Report of the Baltimore City Public School System, George Kelson Elementary was recognized as one of six excellent schools.

For additional details about J/P's model, information about model schools and data, and assessing cost, contact:

Kendra Feinberg, Vice President  
284 East Chester Avenue  
Valley Stream, NY 11580  
Phone: 516. 561.7803  
E-mail: kfeinberg@jponline.com

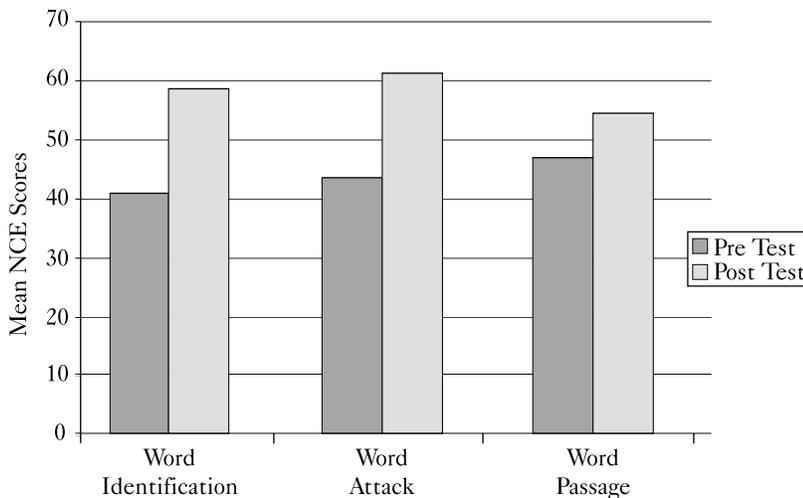
### The National Institute for Direct Instruction (NIFDI)

Founder, Zig Engelmann, started NIFDI in 1997. NIFDI typically works with 25 schools at one time, but has the capacity for much larger implementations. They work with urban and rural schools across the country. There are no limitations in terms of location or type of school as long as the school adheres to the NIFDI model and can support all aspects of the model. The organization prefers to work with clusters of schools rather than isolated schools as this decreases cost and logistics of training and implementation. NIFDI employs two project directors, nine implementation managers, and five coaches' trainers.

NIFDI is endorsed by New American Schools. In an analysis of NIFDI, it was stated that, "After undergoing a rigorous review, the National Institute for Direct Instruction was invited to join the New American Schools (NAS) collective of affiliated organizations dedicated to turning around low performing schools." The review ensures that the model is comprehensive and

**J/P Table 2**

*Pre and Post NCE Data as Indicated for Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests for Oceanway*



### Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests—Revised—Oceanway, Jacksonville, FL—Subtests Word Identification, Word Attack, and Passage Comprehension

One hundred forty-three children at Oceanway Elementary School were administered three subtests in reading as indicated in the title. The chart demonstrates the significant progress made by students at Oceanway in a period of 8 months of reading in Direct Instruction. All scores are expressed in NCE's. In summary, not only do students at Oceanway identify and attack words, but they also understand what they have read at a high level of proficiency.

that NIFDI has the capacity for implementing the model on a large scale. NIFDI is also listed as the DI Current Service Provider in the catalog of School Reform Models.

NIFDI's mission is twofold: (a) to help schools and districts make the systemic changes needed to achieve the highest student performance possible with DI schoolwide (or at least grade-by-grade, which could build into a schoolwide implementation), and (b) to help schools and districts build the capacity to sustain the implementation at a high level and/or expand the implementation of DI to other schools.

NIFDI implementations adhere to the *Developer's Guidelines*, a comprehensive set of implementation components authored by Zig Engelmann. The *Guidelines* cover all major factors that affect student performance at schools. NIFDI guarantees a successful transformation of lower performing schools

to higher performing schools if the *Guidelines* are followed.

Low performing schools seeking to become high performing schools face a difficult challenge. They require extensive professional development, management support, capacity building, and other types of support in order to achieve and sustain a successful transformation. The *Guidelines* provide a more detailed account of the components that NIFDI provides as an integral approach to implementation. These components include:

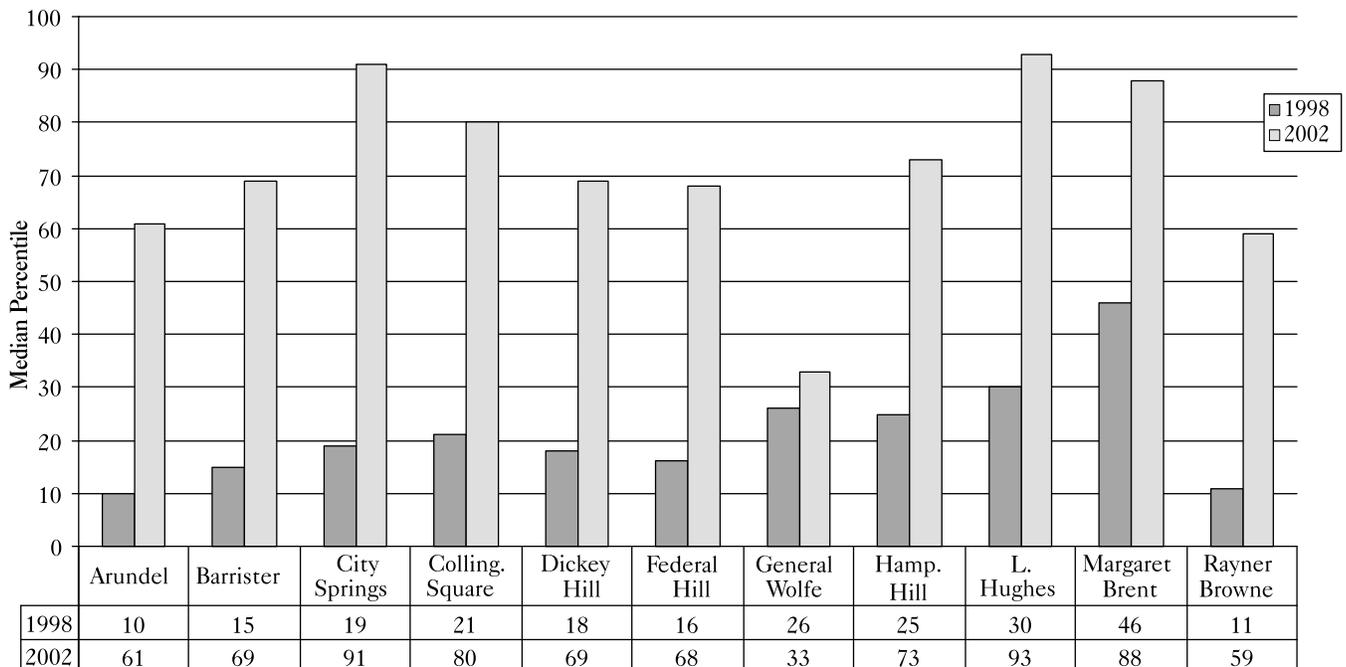
**Full Participation:** All staff and students of agreed-upon grades and the administration participate in a NIFDI implementation. On the staff side, this includes paraprofessionals and "specials" (e.g., physical education and music). On the student side, this includes all students. All students are incorporated into DI groups and the DI instructional sequence, including English Language Learners and the

mildly mentally retarded. All staff and students must be included or student performance progress will be uneven, and some students will not learn the concepts and skills they will need in future years.

**A Comprehensive Curricular Approach:** For model schools, NIFDI implements DI in all major subject areas, including reading, language, spelling, mathematics, and cultural literacy. For schools seeking assistance in reading only, NIFDI implements DI reading and language programs together. The DI language track includes *Language for Learning*, *Language for Thinking*, and *Reasoning and Writing*. Without the full language track, student performance on reading comprehension will suffer, especially the performance of at-risk students.

**Scheduling:** NIFDI develops schedules that devote a near-optimal amount of time to DI, including a second reading period for all students below grade level.

**NIFDI Table 1**  
*CTBS Reading Scores in NIFDI Baltimore Schools*  
*1st Grade*



The efficient use of time is critical for accelerating student performance.

**Two Levels of Consultants:** For every school, NIFDI provides an Implementation Manager, who is on site for an average of 24–32 days a year, and a Project Director, a senior consultant who oversees multiple implementations and is on site at least three times a year. The Implementation Manager and Project Director both participate in weekly conference calls.

**Coaches' Training:** Teachers are identified as peer coaches (usually one per grade level) and they go through a three-level training sequence in which they learn how to complete written records, analyze data, make observations, and identify and remediate problems of instruction and behavior.

**Off-site Data Analysis and Monitoring:** Teachers record lesson progress and mastery data, which NIFDI consultants review off-site during the weeks

they are not on site. The school management team (lead administrator, building coordinator, and coaches) participates in weekly conference calls with NIFDI consultants to review progress and problems and determine the tasks for the coming week.

**DI Curricular Solutions to Specific Problems:** NIFDI includes the senior authors of the DI programs who can create specialized materials to solve particular instructional problems, including teacher and student prep materials for standardized tests.

**Schoolwide Behavior Management:** Schoolwide behavior management and motivation procedures may be put in place that help eliminate negative behaviors and reinforce appropriate behaviors.

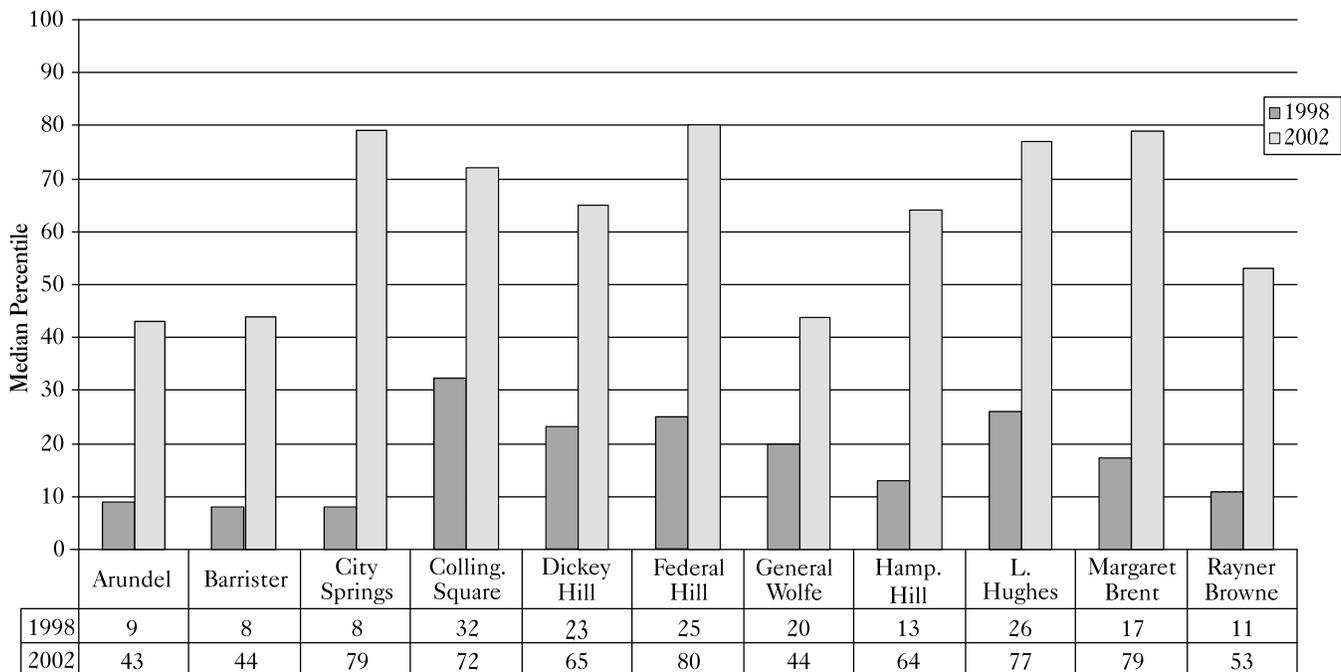
**Building Capacity at the District:** NIFDI works with the district to build its capacity to oversee and support the DI implementation in schools.

**A Focus on Acceleration:** All of the components listed above lead either directly or indirectly to the acceleration of student performance, which allows for a low performing school to be transformed into a higher performing one.

One of NIFDI's schools, City Springs Elementary in Baltimore, MD, was one of the lowest performing schools in Baltimore until it implemented the NIFDI model. Before working with NIFDI, no students at City Springs had ever passed the state assessment exam. In 2001, after working with NIFDI for 4 years, 42.4% of the students passed the exam, nearly double the city average of 22.5%. Between 2000 and 2001 the school's scores increased by 23.5 points, the largest increase in the city, and an increase larger than the city's average score. In 2002 City Springs became the second Baltimore school ever to be removed from the state's list of low performing schools. The Principal of City Springs,

**NIFDI Table 2**

*CTBS Math Scores in NIFDI Baltimore Schools  
1st Grade*



Bernice Whelchel, has since testified to the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Education and the Workforce on the importance of implementing a research-based curriculum. Most recently, she was one of eight principals honored by President Bush at the anniversary celebration of the signing of the No Child Left Behind Act at the White House on January 9, 2003. Principal Whelchel received the

ADI Excellence in Education Award in 2001, and City Springs and Hampstead Hill (another NIFDI school in Baltimore) received the ADI Excellent School Award the same year.

To learn more about NIFDI, the *Developer's Guidelines*, costs associated with working with NIFDI, and additional details associated with their model, contact:

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Administrative Director  
P.O. Box 11248  
Eugene, OR 97440  
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Fax: 541.683.7543  
E-mail: kurt@nifdi.org

ADI thanks the individuals at each of the aforementioned companies for completing the surveys and providing the information for this piece. ~~ADI~~

MARTIN A. KOZLOFF, University of North Carolina, Wilmington

## MARTIN'S MUSINGS

### *Seeing is Believing Versus Believing is Seeing: The Fundamental Problem in Education*

Folks in the know about family systems say that trivial arguments at dinner ("I ask five times before she passes the salt!") are about something bigger—for example, one person's willingness to satisfy another person's needs. In other words, skirmishes are nested within battles, and battles are nested within wars. That's the case in education, which is divided between two main camps:

1. The current education establishment—so-called "progressive" educators (constructivists, whole languagists, advocates of "developmentally appropriate practices," postmodernists) who occupy positions of power and influence.
2. The education anti-establishment—so-called traditionalists or "instructivists" (Finn & Ravitch, 1996) who advocate focused, logically progressive, teacher-led instruction aimed at mastery of

classical ideas and skills, and who challenge the ideas underlying progressive education and offer clear field-tested alternatives. Instructivists include advocates of Direct Instruction (commercial curricula), direct instruction (Rosenshine, 1986; Rosenshine & Stevens, 1986), applied behavior analysis, and Precision Teaching.

What sorts of conflicts are there between these two camps?

First, there are **skirmishes** about **details of teaching**—for example, whether students should be taught to sound out words as the primary strategy (instructivists), or taught to use context cues (the shape of a word, the placement of a word in a sentence) to **guess** what words say (constructivists). Or, in math, whether students should **first** master elementary skills **before** they try to solve problems that **require** the elementary skills (instructivists), or learn the elementary skills in the context of solving problems (constructivists)—which means that students have to learn **both** elementary skills **and** problem solving strategies at the same time.

These **skirmishes** are embedded in larger **curricular battles**. For example, traditionalist-instructivists see reading and math, for example, as knowledge systems that contain meanings and truths independent of what individuals may think, and therefore regard education as a means of bringing students **into** those systems via teacher-directed instruction. Constructivists, in contrast, see reading (literature) and math as having no truths or meanings apart from individuals; the meaning of a novel is constructed by readers; mathematical truths are matters of group negotiation. Therefore, the teacher's role is not to transmit meanings and truths (which are said to have no independent existence) but to help students to construct these.

Curricular battles over reading, math, history, science, and other bodies of knowledge are embedded in a larger **war over social agendas and the social functions of education**. For example, "progressive educators" believe that education in a democratic, technically advanced, affluent society should be about (a) self-development for both teachers and students, fostered in a quasi-therapeutic,

Bernice Whelchel, has since testified to the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Education and the Workforce on the importance of implementing a research-based curriculum. Most recently, she was one of eight principals honored by President Bush at the anniversary celebration of the signing of the No Child Left Behind Act at the White House on January 9, 2003. Principal Whelchel received the

ADI Excellence in Education Award in 2001, and City Springs and Hampstead Hill (another NIFDI school in Baltimore) received the ADI Excellent School Award the same year.

To learn more about NIFDI, the *Developer's Guidelines*, costs associated with working with NIFDI, and additional details associated with their model, contact:

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ADI thanks the individuals at each of the aforementioned companies for completing the surveys and providing the information for this piece. *ADI*

MARTIN A. KOZLOFF, University of North Carolina, Wilmington

## Martin's Musings

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Curricular battles over reading, math, history, science, and other bodies of knowledge are embedded in a larger **war over social agendas and the social functions of education**. For example, "progressive educators" believe that education in a democratic, technically advanced, affluent society should be about (a) self-development for both teachers and students, fostered in a quasi-therapeutic,

“student-centered” environment; (b) the promotion of (their vision of) social justice; and (c) liberation of the individual from the allegedly repressive and self-stifling coercive force of social institutions and external bodies of knowledge.

In contrast, instructivist–traditionalists believe that education in a democratic, technically advanced, affluent society **must** be about the preservation and perfection of democratic social institutions and the intellectual and moral development of the individual (the two being inseparable) by ensuring that individuals acquire the knowledge systems required for their society’s functioning, and that persons learn how to think skillfully (reason) so that they (knowing how to judge the adequacy of information and argumentation) will be able to make wise and morally good personal and societal choices.

Yet, it would be a mistake to think that the skirmishes (about method), battles (over curricula), and war (over the functions of education) are merely differences in the research bases used, instructional styles preferred, or personal and group opinions and philosophies of the two camps—differences that could perhaps be reconciled with more reading, more research, and more discussion. The two camps are opposed in a more fundamental way; namely, **the quality of intellect itself** as that intellect is directed towards investigating and communicating about **reality and knowledge**. Indeed, the evidence will show that at this level differences between traditionalists–instructivists and progressivist–constructivists can be accurately rendered by the opposing terms rational versus irrational, reasonable versus unreasonable, coherent versus incoherent, metaphysically healthy versus metaphysically demented. Let’s see some of the evidence.

### The World as Fact Versus Fancy

One mark of maturity (and sanity) is recognizing and acting on the assumption that the world—reality—has fea-

tures independent of what we may believe and wish those features to be. Here we see the first clear difference in intellect between traditionalist–instructivists and progressivist–constructivists. The traditionalist–instructivist—whether a teacher, school principal, district administrator, education professor, or member of a state department of public instruction—reads the announcements, legislation, regulations, and grant proposal forms for No Child Left Behind and Reading First, and then (treating these as immutable facts) adapts his or her behavior accordingly by (a) determining the real-world consequences of, for

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example, writing a Reading First proposal that **conforms** to the guidelines versus does not conform to the guidelines; (b) improving teacher training, evaluation, and supervision to meet the requirements of No Child Left Behind; and (c) collecting objective data (i.e., data capable of assessment by others besides the data collector) on student achievement.

In marked contrast, the progressivist–constructivist school principal, district administrator, education professor, or state department of public instruction official who (resembling a petulant child) feels his or her power threatened by the external authority of No Child Left Behind and Reading First, responds by (a) **thinking wishfully** that these will simply go away and therefore may be ignored; (b) writes grant proposals that **fly in the face** of the requirements of the funding agen-

cies, but believes this will not be noticed (akin to a mad person who believes his tin foil hat makes him invisible); and (c) **changes the definitions of words**—as if doing so does not violate their common meanings. For example, “scientific research” for the progressivist–constructivist does not mean controlled, experimental, quantitative, replicated research using validated instruments, but instead means qualitative notetaking, because this definition enables the progressivist–constructivist (in his or her mind) to make no changes in how he or she thinks and acts.

### Action Reasonably Fitted to Circumstances

We consider it reasonable (and sane) to smash a fly with a flyswatter—a cheap, tested implement that is focused on the task at hand. We consider it madness if a person burns down his house to get the fly. The same judgment of reasonableness applies in education. For example, the traditionalist–instructivist educator (a) knows there is much basic and applied research on reading; (b) reads a good sample of that research; (c) learns there are field tested programs consistent with the preponderance of research, and that effectively teach the “big ideas” in reading (phonemic awareness, sound–symbol relationships and decoding, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension); and therefore (d) uses these programs in his or her school, district, or state. This is called reasonable, morally responsible—and sane.

In stark contrast, the progressivist–constructivist educator (not in touch with or not accurately depicting reality) (a) does not know or does not care that there is much basic and applied research on reading; (b) does not read this research, or only reads a self-serving sample (so that his or her belief system is unchallenged); (c) fails to see that there are field tested programs consistent with the preponderance of research, or **rejects** these programs (with contempt and hauteur) because he or she does not **like** them; and (d)

instead of using these programs in his or her school, district, or state (irrational), requires teachers with no training in these matters to **invent** their own curricula (unreasonable) using an ersatz assortment of basal readers, nondecodable text, qualitative assessments not aligned with what is taught, spelling books, and made up lessons—that is, a “curriculum” that is unsystematic, untested, redundant, and has glaring curricular holes. However, the immorality and fundamental dementia in all this is disguised behind words such as “teacher empowerment,” “ownership,” and “professional development.”

### Circumspection

A sane person checks his clothing before entering a room, notes that his pants are open, and fixes it up. An intellectually insufficient person checks his pants by touching his **hat**, walks into the room and hears snickers of persons who notice the open pants, and says to himself, “They’ll never notice.” A similar thing exists in education. Rational and sane education schools (rare as bronze Spartan swords from 500 BC)—somehow blessed with a squad of traditionalist–instructivist professors who have managed to get tenure and do not fear offending constructivist–progressivist colleagues, and are aware of the low status of ed schools on college campuses, superficial teacher training and faddish ideas, and current threats posed by alternative certification—examine the ed school curriculum in light of the criticisms and threaten and systematically change core beliefs, research base, mission, rules for judging what is credible, curricula, and assessment of graduates.

Not so in education schools dominated by progressivist–constructivist educators who (a) are not aware of the criticisms and threats, or believe **everyone else** is wrong (“We need to get the word out about how good we are.” In psychiatry, this is considered a delusion of grandeur.); (b) hire new faculty who sustain the school’s progressivist–constructivist orientation despite the fact that this orientation

is the root cause of low level of scholarship, ill-preparation of new teachers, and threat to the existence of ed schools; and (c) create even more fanciful portraits of themselves both for in-school **self-celebration** (self-delusion) and **public presentation**; e.g., calling themselves “flagships of reform,” “stewards of America’s children,” “champions of social justice,” “fostering life-long learning and reflection.” At this point, demented thinking is well beyond silly and approaches suicidal.

*We consider a person rational, sane, and competent who assumes that words and utterances signify real things and who speaks and writes in a way that coherently describes or explains the real world.*

### Word Salad and Other Possible Symptoms of Dementia

A last clear difference between traditionalist–instructivists and progressivist–constructivists is their connection to and communication about reality. We consider a person rational, sane, and competent who assumes that words and utterances signify real things and who speaks and writes in a way that coherently describes or explains the real world. In contrast, we consider a person irrational, insane, and/or incompetent who assumes that words and utterances refer to (mean) whatever he or she wants them to—or to nothing at all—and whose speaking and writing are phantasmagoric, dream-like, disjointed, and bear little relationship to the external world. The more one reads progressivist–constructivist journal articles and books, course syllabi, and ed school documents (such as mission statements and program descriptions), the more one is forced to admit

that these writings bear many marks of psychiatric disorder, as described at <http://216.239.39.100/search?q=cache:0KppTR7hhyEC:mindmelt.co.uk/trickcyclists/docs/Descriptive%2520Psychopathology.doc+hebephrenic+word+salad&hl=en&ie=UTF-8>

Examples include

1. Delusional thinking, or “a fixed, (usually) false or fantastic idea, held in the face of evidence to the contrary...”
2. Loose associations.
3. Palilalia, in which a perseverated word is repeated with increasing frequency.
4. Paragrammatism, or a disorder of grammatical construction.
5. Neologisms, or made-up, nonsensical words.
6. Repeated use of stock words and phrases.
7. Driveling, or “the muddling of elements within an idea to the extent that the meaning is totally obscured to the listener.”
8. Word salad, or “an apparently randomness and illogical mixture of sounds and words.”

The following quotations taken from the writings of progressivist–constructivists show striking similarities to the symptoms of serious psychiatric disorder listed above. I am not saying that these writers are mentally ill; I am merely saying that their writing (a) is similar to examples of symptoms of psychosis found in psychiatric literature, and (b) makes as much sense (and is as useful educationally) as the writings of persons suffering from severe psychiatric disorder.

The quotations immediately following are from the writings of whole language advocates, and seem to show significant detachment from the reality (the facts at hand) known to most sentient persons—the reality of how

children learn to read and how they are best taught—as depicted by the preponderance of empirical (in the real, external world) research.

“Learning is continuous, spontaneous, and effortless, requiring no particular attention, conscious motivation, or specific reinforcement” (Smith, 1992, p. 432). (This may be an example of neologism. Smith has reinvented the meaning of “learning” or is simply inventing a fantastical vision of what learning is. Either way, his statement has little connection with factual reality.)

“Reading without guessing is not reading at all” (Smith, 1973). (Another example of a fanciful vision, this time applied to reading. The statement appears to be rooted firmly not in the world of external facts but in the inner world of incredible imagery and word play.)

“Reading by ‘phonics’ is demonstrably impossible (ask any computer)” (Smith, 1986). (Denial of obvious fact. “See that bumblebee flying over there? It’s not flying.”)

“To the fluent reader the alphabetic principle is completely irrelevant. He identifies every word (if he identifies words at all) as an ideogram” (Smith, 1973). (Most folks do not claim to know the moment to moment workings of another person’s thought processes—to read minds as it were. Other persons apparently **do** think they can read minds. Some of these persons are receiving treatment.)

The next samples are consistent with descriptions of disordered thought processes. Again, I am not saying that the writers are disordered, just that their writing lends itself to that suggestion.

“We cannot understand an individual’s cognitive structure without observing it interacting in a

context, within a culture” (Fosnot, 1996, p. 24). (The crucial word is “it.” Fosnot seems to be asserting that a cognitive structure is a real thing—not a convenient fiction—and that this thing actually **does** things, such as interacting in a context. What does it mean when a person treats fictions as if they were things?)

“From this perspective, learning is a constructive building process of meaning-making that results in reflective abstractions, pro-

*(Another slice of the collective mental processes at a college of education. Note the repeated use of stock phrases—as a substitute for saying anything sensible.)*

ducing symbols within a medium” (Fosnot, 1996, p. 27). (This sentence appears to be a string of loosely connected words that are grammatically correct but are nonsense—at least that’s the way it appears. In what ways does it differ from the quite mad statement, “Learning is a constitutive process of affect-organizing that results in an inductive substratum of signs and symbols within a knowledge trajectory”?)

“Meaning is constructed when awareness is created by observing and gathering information...” (Another bizarre assertion, this time from a college of education website. It appears to assert that awareness is a kind of thing that can be **created**—as if it were a bird house or a sandwich—and that this creation depends on **first** observing and gathering information. But doesn’t that depend on awareness? What do we think of the mental processes

of people who get dressed and then take a shower—in other words, do it in reverse order?)

“Professional knowledge is advanced by the human need to engage in inquiry.” (Also from a college of education website. It has the earmarks of “driveling” defined above. Forget whether humans have a need to engage in inquiry. The idea that professional knowledge is advanced by that alleged need is surely driveling.)

“Participation at the social or interpersonal plane involves social interaction between two or more people to coordinate activity face-to-face or at a distance.” (This sentence, from an ed school website, is (a) a clear example of driveling; (b) shows a poverty of ideas [as if it were a big insight that social interaction involves two or more people]; and (3) asserts bizarre notions; e.g., that the purpose of social interaction is to coordinate activity—when social interaction **IS** that activity.)

“Our student-centered professional development model is predicated on the belief... Our student-centered professional development model rests on the following assumptions... Our student-centered professional development model emphasizes the dynamic nature... Our student-centered professional development model emphasizes the types of knowledge...” (Another slice of the collective mental processes at a college of education. Note the repeated use of stock phrases—as a substitute for saying anything sensible.)

“meaning is constructed”... “meaning making”... “construct and share their own learning”... “ongoing reflection”... “reflection on their own practice”... “outlets for reflection”... “make subject matter meaningful to students”...

“creates learning experiences”... “meaningful learning experiences”... “managing the learning environment”... “reflective, inquiry-oriented”... “engage in inquiry”... “reflection and inquiry into their own practices”... “critical, reflective, inquiring learners”... “teacher preparation... is reflective”... “Think reflectively”... (More from ed school websites, showing perseveration and palilalia in the use of the same words and stock phrases.)

“The Lubyanka College of Education (not the real name) is dedicated to preparing you to teach in the real world.” (This wins the prize for the most disconnected from reality.)

Contrast the above driveling, palilalic, perseverative, loosely connected and otherwise bizarre assertions with a few lines from the works of traditionalist-instructivist writers.

“Teachers should make explanations brief and concise.” (Stein, Silbert, & Carnine, 1997).

“The essential characteristic of any good signal is its clarity.” (Stein, Silbert, & Carnine, 1997).

“Because simple facts have but one example, namely themselves, there can be no actual

range of examples.” (Kameenui & Simmons, 1990).

“The overt sound blending phase continues until the reader accurately and consistently decodes words at a rate of one letter per second.” (Kameenui & Simmons, 1990).

“Decoding—is the central skill in initial reading.” (Engelmann, Haddox, & Bruner, 1983).

“After each teacher presentation, students should be asked to model *positive* examples for each behavioral rule.” (Walker, Colvin, & Ramsey, 1994).

I believe we are able to make the following generalization: In marked contrast to the writing of traditionalist-instructivist educators, progressivist-constructivist writing (and probably thinking—as that is what is written) is often incoherent, illogical, disconnected from the external world in which assertions can be tested, and is in many ways describable with a list of symptoms of psychiatric disorder. Several implications follow. (a) It is no use reasoning with these persons and groups. They have created and live within a different and a dream-like reality, with different rules of verification and falsification. (b) Just as dangerous mental patients should not have the keys to the drug locker, these

persons and groups should not be allowed to miseducate children, mis-train teachers, or infect educational policy with their delusional system. **ADI**

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DON CRAWFORD, Otter Creek Institute

## Top Ten Teaching Errors

In my experience all kids, not mentally handicapped, can learn from one pass through the DI materials, but only if the teaching is top notch. The less able the students the better the teaching must be. Here's my top 10 list of errors that I see teachers make most frequently. Teachers can become top notch by avoiding these errors.

**10. Kids not answering together on signal the first time all of the time.** Low performers being allowed to “chime in” late saying the same thing the “leaders” said without being able to do it the first time themselves. (Dead give away is when the “leaders” give a wrong answer and everyone else says it

too!) Even when teachers repeat every time that students don't all answer together, it means nothing because parroting an answer somebody just said is easy. Low performers in this situation are not learning the material; they are only mindlessly parroting what the “leaders” are saying—so they don't really learn. This often happens when the teacher lets the higher performers set the pace of responding. Instead the teacher

“creates learning experiences”... “meaningful learning experiences”... “managing the learning environment”... “reflective, inquiry-oriented”... “engage in inquiry”... “reflection and inquiry into their own practices”... “critical, reflective, inquiring learners”... “teacher preparation... is reflective”... “Think reflectively”... (More from ed school websites, showing perseveration and palilalia in the use of the same words and stock phrases.)

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must make kids hold the answer in their head until the signal is given. (See also #5.)

9. **Slow pacing.** The teacher takes up more time between kid responses than he/she should. Teachers add extra talk, take time to read the script, stop too long for comments on behavior (especially criticizing bad behavior) and the kids are left to sit and wait for something to do. Many teachers think that as long as they keep up a patter that the kids are benefiting from their “show.” More effective groups spend more time with kids answering—and the kids are getting to answer from 10 to 20 questions per minute, every minute of the lesson. Slow pacing on the teacher’s part reliably produces a lot of off-task fooling around and interruptions from the kids. But more importantly, the less able students are more likely to stop paying attention and will miss more of the lessons when pacing is slow. See #8.
8. **Low performers not paying attention to the lesson and no intervention in place to ensure that they do pay attention.** Not paying attention leads to nonparticipation which leads to #7.
7. **Low performers not participating and not being asked to participate.** Kids with a lot of prior school failure often enter instruction with a mindset that “I can’t do it, so I won’t try.” If teachers don’t get past that initial reluctance and show such learners they can learn THIS stuff then these reluctant learners will “sit out” of the lessons and will not progress as needed. Less able students **MUST** participate in order to learn this material.
6. **Not part firming.** Errors occur, or kids don’t answer, and the teacher may or may not correct the mis-

take, but then just goes on in the lesson. Part firming requires that the teacher go back and re-do any part where there was an error so that the kids get a chance to do it 100% correct. The responsibility of the students is to get it 100% correct. The teacher’s job is to give them the chance to repeat the part until they do. Everyone should be clear on that mission.

5. **Not enough “think time” or “wait time” for the less able students in the group.** Teachers who are trying to move at a brisk pace sometimes shortchange the “think time” between the focus cue, “Next word” and the voice cue, “What word?” The faster kids in the group can answer but the slower ones don’t answer on signal—not because they aren’t trying—but because they can’t think of the answer that quickly. Typically the teacher repeats the question (because not everyone answered) and the second time they all answer together. The teacher will say, “Now everyone answer on signal next time.” But the problem continues. Very quickly the slower thinkers learn to wait to answer until the second time—and then they are no longer generating their own answers or learning the material—they are just parroting what the other kids said on the first try. Just a slight increase in think time and they will all be able to generate the answer and then repetitions can be limited to times when they just don’t know the material—which should happen less than 10% of the time!
4. **Letting the low kids “slide,” not holding them accountable for giving the correct answer every time.** This starts with a kid who is unmotivated (see above) or is misplaced “because we don’t have another group for him.” Misplaced kids can’t be

held accountable for being firm on each part as you go—because they’re misplaced. Unmotivated kids often aren’t held accountable because they put up too much of a fuss. Then you develop the problem of not being able to hold the whole group accountable because of that one kid. Soon the teacher behavior spreads to other groups and you have several kids who “slide” through the lessons without really learning.

3. **Repeating parts all the time as a standard response to kids not paying attention rather than as a response to what ought to be unusual incorrect responses from students.** The kids aren’t paying attention so someone makes an error or some don’t answer—nearly every time. So the teacher just repeats and repeats almost every part of the lesson. Everyone gets bored and so they pay less attention and make more errors and the problem continues. The teacher must increase student motivation for getting it right the first time, get the kids to be clearer about their answers, and avoid unnecessary repetition if they all know it.
2. **Repeating parts all the time because the teacher is in doubt about whether the students were answering correctly so they repeat the part.** The responses get better only because the kids are saying the same thing for the second or third time. The teacher must increase student motivation for getting it right the first time, get the kids to be clearer about their answers, and avoid unnecessary repetition if they all know it. Sometimes individual turns rather than a group repetition are better if the teacher is unsure of whether they all “got it” or not.

1. **Compromises on all of the above due to weakness in behavior management.** Teachers don't teach the way they should because the kids are resistant and the teachers don't have the skills

to overcome that resistance. So they compromise on corrections, part firming, clear responses, and unison responses, etc. The groups are reduced to "going through the motions" of the lessons without a

clear sense of the mission for learning. More able kids still learn the material, but the less able kids don't because they didn't participate and try and get the corrective feedback they needed. *ADI*

DON CRAWFORD, Otter Creek Institute

## *Successfully Decoding Unknown Words: What's the Teacher's Role?*

"Let's all work together to avoid the phrase, 'sound it out!'"—admonition in training materials put out by California State University San Bernardino

The "balanced" reading programs that are the descendants of whole language programs are designed around children reading silently and independently from the very early stages of reading instruction. Little time is spent reading in teacher-directed groups. Instead, children spend most of their reading time reading silently to themselves in self-chosen, but leveled books. In this arrangement teachers are unable to preteach all the words children will encounter. Instead of teaching words, they are attempting to teach "strategies" for the children to decode unknown words without assistance. This is a difficult task indeed, made more difficult by the widespread adherence to the "three-cueing system."

In comprehending text it is rightly understood that readers combine information from semantics (word meanings), syntax (word order), and the graphophonemic system (letters and sounds) to make ultimate sense of a passage. However, this idea has been incorrectly taken to mean that one could rely on syntax or semantic clues to determine the correct identification of a word. As Marilyn Adams (1997) noted, "If the original premise of the

three-cueing system was that the reason for reading the words is to understand the text, it has since been oddly converted such that, in effect, the reason for understanding the text is in order to figure out the words."

The net result is that the strategies being recommended by teachers for decoding unknown words are counter-productive because they direct student's attention away from the letters and towards the context and other spurious clues. One might summarize them as, "Try anything but looking carefully at the word." Figure 1 shows a typical set of prescriptions for parents to use with their children from

**Figure 1**

*Common recommendations for decoding unknown words.*  
[http://www.misd.wednet.edu/~joanna\\_franklin/html/resources.html](http://www.misd.wednet.edu/~joanna_franklin/html/resources.html)

**Efficient readers can use all three-cueing systems. Weak readers tend to over rely on just one cueing system. Since no single strategy works all the time, weak readers have a harder time figuring out unknown words.**

Encourage your child to use a variety of strategies. Some strategies may be more appropriate than others, depending on the situation.

### Graphophonemic strategies

- Break the word into parts. Look for word families, known suffixes, syllables.
- Match letters and letter combinations with the sounds they make.

### Syntactic strategies

- Ask the question, "Do the words sound right, as if I were talking?"

### Semantic strategies

- Use the story's illustrations.
- Make a meaningful substitution, e.g., say "home" for "house." Warning: If a child makes too many substitutions, that child is not reading the story.
- Skip the word and come back to it. Then reread the sentence and use the context of the story to figure out the mystery word.
- Ask the question, "Is what I'm reading making sense?"
- Ask the question, "Does the word work in the story?"

there was only one “ssss-aaa-iiii-d” in the universe and it was always pronounced as “sed.” By making the children “sound-out” the word each time, they develop the habit of looking at all the letters before deciding the identity of the word. This, ultimately, is the critical behavior.

A slightly different strategy is used after the names of the letters have been learned by *Reading Mastery III* or in programs like *Corrective Reading* that assume that children know the names of the letters. In those lessons the teacher tells the children what the word is, and then the children are asked to spell the word while looking

at it. In other words, we ask them to say the names of the letters while looking at them. And then we ask, “What word did you spell?” This procedure is used for introduction of new, unknown words as well as for corrections. Clearly the point is to direct the student’s attention to the letters of the word—after reminding the child of the word’s identity. By the time students have learned a couple hundred regular and common words it is no longer necessary or productive to require students to “sound out” each word, especially if one were to rely on the single most common sound of each letter. And by then, if we have taught well, they have what Virginia

Berninger (2002) calls a Reading Brain—they can learn new words easily with very few repetitions. And although they can often get close to the correct pronunciation independently, even good readers still benefit from the teacher telling them the identity of an “unknown” word. Teaching works! *ADI*

## References

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LINDA CARNINE

## Amanda’s Story

The main purpose of this article is to provide a teaching example—a model for what a parent can do to enhance the capabilities of a child. This story results from the legacy of two pioneers in education, Siegfried (Zig) Engelmann and Wes Becker. Years ago Wes Becker wrote *Parents are Teachers*, which laid the foundation for how parents, as a child’s first teachers, can provide positive, effective instruction at home. Meanwhile, his colleague, Zig Engelmann, and his support staff have worked for the last 35 years to develop instructional programs that are effective with all types of learners, particularly diverse learners with cognitive challenges, such as Amanda.

Amanda, at the age of 8, won the 2001 Wayne Carnine Most Improved Student Award showing the greatest improvement in Direct Instruction learning over that year. Amanda’s story can serve as a model for how committed parents, teaching children with disabilities at critical stages of development, can actually restructure the child’s learning capabilities and greatly

widen their intellectual horizons. Through patience, persistence, and the use of Direct Instruction curricula, Amanda’s mother, Marsha, taught Amanda how to *learn*. If parents want to enhance the learning capabilities of their child with disabilities beyond what teachers are able to do in school, this story will provide a road map for how that can be accomplished.

Blond-haired, blue-eyed Amanda was born with what is vaguely termed “developmental delays.” According to her mother, she did not hit any of the milestones that all parents brag about to their friends. She did not walk, talk, or sing at the age other children did. She never questioned what occurred around her, never asked the usual “why?” that most children utter endlessly. Amanda was always 2 years behind her peers, but, thought her mother, what does it matter? When she turns 18 no one will know or care how old she was when she took her first steps or learned to talk. Delays are nothing in the larger scheme of things.

When Amanda was 4 she was placed in a special education Headstart program. Although Headstart ostensibly targets academics, some evidence suggests that children leaving Headstart know less in some academic areas than when they entered the program. Amanda finished her first year in Headstart well behind her peers and was encouraged by her teacher to stay another year. When she entered first grade she was still academically and socially far behind her peers. According to her mother, “First grade was a disaster.”

Typically, when children like Amanda are placed in special education, whether mainstreamed or self-contained, they often make only modest academic gains. There is simply not enough instructional time to provide the systematic, explicit instruction in



Amanda Bhirdo



Marsha Rodman

all academic areas to allow those with special needs to catch up, let alone keep up, with their peers. If these children are mainstreamed, they usually end up receiving separate individual instruction from a paraprofessional in a whole class setting. This is not a criticism of special education instruction in the public schools; there are many talented and committed special education teachers. But no matter how skilled, committed, or talented a special education teacher may be, he or she simply cannot make the same progress for a special needs child that one determined and skilled caregiver like Marsha can. There are simply not enough minutes in the school day for a teacher to devote to the intensive, systematic direct instruction that Marsha gave her daughter for several years.

When the school evaluated Amanda her IQ was estimated at 63, and she was diagnosed with Infantile Autism. The school psychologist offered these discouraging words to her parents. "You don't seem to understand. She is mildly mentally retarded, and she will never be a rocket scientist or an engineer. All you can hope for is your daughter to get a mediocre job when she is an adult. She might peak out mentally as an 11-year-old, with a reading capability of maybe a third grader." But the psychologist's candid prognosis did not deter Marsha. Instead, these became "fightin' words" to Amanda's determined mother.

Marsha had heard about the effectiveness of the Direct Instruction curriculum for low-performing children. She contacted a McGraw-Hill, SRA representative, Rodney Kerr, who provided her with beginning Direct Instruction materials and the training needed to implement the instruction with Amanda. By this time Amanda was floundering in second grade special education. She was easily frustrated and discouraged with lessons. Amanda would come home from school and go directly to bed. She spoke in a monotone voice and rarely smiled. Halfway through the school year, Marsha pulled Amanda out

of second grade and enrolled her in a private kindergarten class. Even though Amanda was 2 years older than the other children, kindergarten afforded Amanda an opportunity to continue developing socially at her own level.

Amanda now spent mornings in kindergarten and afternoons with her mother in an intensive home schooling program. Marsha began intensive, systematic instruction using DI *Reading Mastery I* and *Language for Learning*. Amanda's first attitude was, "I can't do this!" Amanda at times would hide under the table and Marsha would

*After several weeks, Marsha noticed Amanda's confidence and enthusiasm toward the instruction dramatically increasing because she was given tasks that she could perform successfully.*

have to force her out to do the program. Marsha didn't give up. Nevertheless, Marsha estimated that it took around 1,000 repetitions to teach Amanda the first few sentence forms in the *Language for Learning* program.

Starting with simple sentences in response to the identification question, "What is this?" Amanda learned to produce identity sentences such as, "This is a table" (clock, desk, pencil, orange, tree, vehicle). She then moved to more involved syntactic patterns in action statements such as, "We are standing up," "He is touching his nose," and much later, "You are clapping your hands and tapping your foot." Amanda learned higher-order thinking in basic concepts of part-whole relations (a pencil has a point; a pencil has a shaft; a pencil has an eraser). She also learned hierarchical thinking by classifying objects, another higher-order thinking skill. This also allowed her to expand her vocabulary with various

objects in the categories of vehicles, containers, animals, clothing, food, buildings, and furniture.

Probably one of the most difficult initial concepts for Amanda to learn was the individual sounds various letters make. It took Amanda over 3 years to be able to recognize letter sounds. She came into the DI program knowing two to three sound-letter correspondences, but consistent recall was limited. Starting with easily discriminable letters, (m, s, a, t, e), Marsha had to correct hundreds of errors Amanda made confusing these squiggles. But after a few weeks in *Reading Mastery I*, Amanda began remembering enough of these correspondences accurately in order to start reading simple words. Repetition along with short, frequent opportunities to practice identifying and using the sounds during the daily lesson in the *Reading Mastery* materials allowed Amanda to build this retention. Marsha began seeing the same progress in early lessons of *Connecting Math Concepts* where Amanda now had to identify the squiggles as numerals under 10.

None of this progress came easily at first. It required maximum patience on Marsha's part, and firm persistence. At first Amanda would work for only a minute or two. Then Marsha would give her a tangible reward, a small piece of food and stickers for her sticker book. Gradually these were phased out to points on a chart to earn rewards. She provided frequent, specific praise for Amanda's performance of the tasks in the programs. Marsha also employed multi-sensory techniques learned from Michigan Dyslexia Institute, Lindamood-Bell Learning Processes, and Wilson Reading Programs, which she felt contributed to increasing Amanda's attending behavior.

After several weeks, Marsha noticed Amanda's confidence and enthusiasm toward the instruction dramatically increasing because she was given tasks that she could perform successfully. By carefully teaching the *Reading Mastery* program, Marsha taught Amanda the phonological skills necessary for begin-

ning reading, and the phonics skills for sounding out words using the carefully sequenced lessons. Amanda's language skills also improved and she started to understand some abstract concepts in *Language for Learning* such as, "later," "before," and "only." The language repetition tasks continued to be the most difficult for Amanda to master, which is typically the case. Yet the work that Marsha did with her to enable Amanda to repeat complex syntactic forms was essential for Amanda's later growth in reading comprehension.

The early math concepts proved to be easier for Amanda to grasp. In math she mastered the subskills of counting and number recognition more easily and progressed to performing two-digit column addition and subtraction problems before the end of the year. She was even able to figure out mental math problems such as  $45 + 3$  and  $20 + 30$ .

The transformation in Amanda's attitude toward learning new things was also dramatic. She no longer napped when she got home from school. Amanda began drawing pictures that were vibrantly colorful and detailed. Earlier, the occupational therapist had set a goal for Amanda to include three objects in her drawings. Amanda's new artwork far surpassed this goal. The transformation occurred not only in academic and psychological areas, it affected her socialization as well. She developed many friendships, was always smiling, loved going to school, and was happier at home.

Along with the social skills, Amanda's physical skills also took a leap forward. As Marsha reported, "Somehow after Direct Instruction rewired her brain for language, it also kicked into gear her sensory integration struggles." She has learned to play hopscotch, ride a bike with training wheels, and tie her shoes. In fact, just last month she went to see her occupational therapist for a 1-year reevaluation. The OT (with 25 years experience) was surprised at the progress. She said, "I am truly amazed! I've never seen such improvement in a child after 1 year.

Her body protection issues have substantially diminished; her balance and coordination have improved. She is stronger, more focused, less hyper. She has developed good listening and comprehension skills, and can sit quietly and attentively. She is not the same little girl I started with."

Marsha filled out a nomination for the Wayne Carnine Student Improvement Award for the 2001 Direct Instruction conference. In the application Marsha described the incredible improvement Amanda had made since she had been learning in the Direct Instruction programs. Marsha explained that the psy-

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chiatrist, who had originally diagnosed Amanda with Infantile Autism, was speechless when he completed the evaluation. He said, "I've been in the practice for over 30 years and I've never seen anything like it. It appears you just worked your daughter out of Infantile Autism. Whatever you are doing, I suggest you do more of it. Miracles don't happen every day."

At the psychiatrist's suggestion, Marsha continued to work with Amanda using Direct Instruction. The following year she decided to continue home schooling Amanda and complete at least two levels of the Direct Instruction programs in 1 year. They completed *Reading Mastery I* and *Language for Learning*. Then they continued with *Reading Mastery II*, *Language for Thinking*, *Spelling Mastery A* and *B*, *Reasoning and Writing A* and *B*, and *Connecting Math Concepts A* and *B*. It took Amanda and her mother 6 to 8 hours of intensive, systematic daily instruction in order to do this.

When they reached the middle of *Reading Mastery II*, Amanda announced,

"Mom, I don't need you any more. I can read." Not only did she announce it, she demonstrated it as well. According to her mother, Amanda "marched into her bedroom" and began to read nonstop. Within 4 days she had read over 800 pages. "That was such an exciting week," said Marsha, "She was reading for over 6 hours a day, and it didn't matter what she read. Her absolute favorite books were my old Dick and Jane books. In fact, I got on eBay and found her the entire Dick and Jane readers. These are chapter books and she is reading at a second grade level."

Amanda's favorite program is *Reasoning and Writing* and she wants to do that subject first. She has more difficulty with *Spelling Mastery* and the *Language for Thinking*. She continues to struggle with repeating complex sentences, but is successful with effort. Her attention span, which averaged about 3 minutes at the beginning of the school year, is up to 1.5 hours without a break.

All of this anecdotal information suggests that Amanda has learned a great deal. But there is also documented evidence of her academic success. Amanda was recently administered the Stanford Achievement Test for Grade 1. She performed above the national average, at the 59th percentile for reading comprehension. On the content cluster analysis, Amanda was again above average on the Short Passages (Cloze) and average on all other clusters except riddles. Her math performance is below average, but she has clearly improved, performing at the 19th percentile on problem solving and the 14th percentile on procedures.

Marsha knew Amanda could perform well with one-on-one instruction, but that wasn't good enough anymore. The question was whether she could survive in a classroom setting outside of the special education program. During the last quarter of the school year, Amanda was placed back into first grade at Plantation Key Elementary School. Her report card also confirmed Amanda's progress. She made progress

in all academic areas and received commendations in art, music, physical education, Spanish, study skills, and citizenship. Amanda was awarded the Superintendent's Young Reader's Award in May 2002. She had read over 6,000 pages on her own by this time. Now Amanda is able to perform with her grade level peers and has been assimilated into their social culture.

In summary, the "road map" pioneered by Amanda and her mother consists of:

1. Participation in preschool and kindergarten with emphasis on oral language and vocabulary development;
2. Additional academic tutoring for 1 to 2 hours/day during kindergarten;
3. Home schooling with intensity during first grade (6–8 hours/day);
4. Reintroduction into school setting during latter quarter of first grade with child performing on grade level curriculum and participating long with peers; and
5. Continuation in second grade with continued support in Direct Instruction tutoring at home.

Amanda's story is not unique. Other parents have followed this roadmap. Amanda's mother began additional home teaching when she observed her child not thriving academically and socially. Initially it was a struggle to get Amanda to work every day, but

when Amanda started succeeding at the academic tasks, her success started to change her learning curve. She basically began to learn how to learn.

The critical message is that if a parent wants to make a significant difference in the learning curve for their handicapped child, the extra effort must start early. It must be intensive and positive to result in accomplishments such as Amanda's. Now Amanda is a life-long learner. As Marsha remarked, "Amanda may be like a barge in water, slowly plugging along, but she is steady and she will succeed."

\* Marsha Rodman graduated from the University of Michigan in Civil Engineering in 1982 and worked 18 years as a civil engineer in southern California. Once Marsha determined she had children with learning challenges, she refocused her energies on special education. She is now the owner and director of Swan Learning Institute specializing in reading, math, and language development for individuals with dyslexia, autism, ADHD, and other learning difficulties. If you have further questions about how to implement Direct Instruction programs in a home tutorial setting, you may contact Marsha Rodman at her website: [www.swanlearning.org](http://www.swanlearning.org)

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The author would like to thank Margaret Ashworth for her editing assistance in the preparation of this article. *ADI*

### *A letter from the field*

*This letter was sent to the ADI Board of Directors in May 2002.*

Dear Board,

I am the Grandmother of a third-grade student at Pearl (MS) School. My Grandson, Tate White, has struggled in reading since the first grade. He worried all the time that he was not as smart as all the other kids because of his reading. I am proud to say this reading program has turned his life around. I have lunch with Tate every Tuesday. His reading teacher came to me after Christmas and told me Tate was reading on a third-grade level. I am so proud of his power, yes power, now that he can read! Thank you so much for if nothing else, the program has reached this child.

Sincerely,  
Cindy East

KATHLEEN M. WALDRON-SOLER and ANGELA PRZYCHODZIN-HAVIS, Eastern Washington University

## *Review of the Reading Mastery Training Series*

The *Reading Mastery Training Series* is a new package of 12 videotapes published by Science Research Associates (*Reading Mastery VHS Training Series*: ISBN # 0-07-584122-3, \$129.00). Within an hour, viewers can watch the first four videotapes to learn about the

basic philosophy of *Reading Mastery*, general teaching practices that facilitate student success in the program, and teacher prerequisite skills that must be learned before program implementation. The next seven videotapes offer viewers the opportu-

nity to watch teachers model various formats and signals with small groups of students. Viewers can then practice the formats and signals along with the videotape. The training series ends with a videotape of examples of the implementation of various workbook and storybook formats.

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The following sections provide a summary of each videotape and a critique of the *Reading Mastery Training Series*.

## Videotape Summaries

### **Videotape #1: The Paths to Literacy**

This videotape provides an introduction to the *Reading Mastery* program and an explanation of the following key programmatic elements used to ensure successful beginning readers in the program: (a) instructional groups, (b) signals and unison responding, and (c) sounds and blending. Five kindergarten teachers using the *Reading Mastery* program relate their personal experiences with the implementation of the program. These teachers guide viewers through the remainder of the series as they learn how to use the sounds, signals, and scripts of *Reading Mastery*.

### **Videotape #2: Why Is Reading So Hard?**

This videotape provides a brief, but highly informative explanation of the process students go through when learning to read. The videotape begins with a comparison of how written text must look to a young child versus a literate adult. The narrator explains that what initially looks like “squiggles on paper” to young children must be related to something they already know—speech. Viewers learn of the importance of phonemic awareness instruction in a beginning reading program and examples of phonemes in the English language are given. The fact that some letters have multiple sounds associated with them and the confusion this can cause when learning to read is discussed. Viewers learn that *Reading Mastery* changes the look of some of the letters to help reduce the confusion of which sounds are associated with certain letter symbols. Viewers are shown that *Reading Mastery* initially focuses on teaching the sounds associated with 40 sound symbols, but that by the end of 1 school year high performing students are able to read complex stories with normal text.

### **Videotape #3: Anatomy of a Reading Mastery Classroom**

This videotape explains and shows examples of the following eight class-

room practices used in the *Reading Mastery* program to help teachers achieve success: (a) managing behavior effectively, (b) using praise not criticism, (c) setting up reading groups carefully, (d) using signals to elicit unison responding, (e) mastering scripts thoroughly, (f) monitoring closely and correcting immediately, (g) firming every child to mastery, and (h) making it fun for the kids. The five teachers introduced in *The Paths to Literacy* provide explicit guidelines and tips for implementing each of these eight classroom practices.

### **Videotape #4: Countdown to Lesson One**

This videotape reviews three skills that teachers must master before beginning the *Reading Mastery* program: (a) the pronunciation and blending of the 40 phonemes used in the program; (b) the use of hand signals, presentation book signals, and workbook and storybook signals; and (c) response error correction procedures.

### **Videotape #5: Practice Junction: Practice the Sounds**

This videotape models the correct pronunciation and mouth formation of the 40 sounds used in the program. Viewers hear one model of the sound and are then directed to “Say Along.” Viewers are then asked to practice “By Yourself.” During this sequence, the words “Get Ready” are flashed on the screen followed by a visual of the letter/letter combination. Finally, a verification of the sound is presented.

### **Videotape #6: Practice Junction: Sounds Review/ Practice Blending**

This videotape provides a review of the sounds practiced in *Practice Junction: Practice the Sounds* and practice blending sounds together. Blending is initially practiced with eight words made up of continuous sounds. Viewers are then introduced to words with continuous and stop sounds. To practice each list of words, viewers are asked to say the correct blending along with the videotape. Viewers are then asked to blend

the sounds by themselves. Once a list of words has been practiced, a random review of the words is provided. Viewers are asked to blend the sounds of the word and verification of the appropriate blending is given.

### **Videotapes #7–10: Signal and Scripts Lessons 1–8; Signal and Scripts Lessons 19–29; Signal and Scripts Lessons 37–56; Signal and Scripts Lessons 57–96**

These four videotapes provide practice of tasks from lessons 1 through 96 in *Reading Mastery I*. Viewers are asked to follow a three-step practice sequence for each task: (a) watch and listen, (b) follow along, and (c) say along. During “Watch and Listen,” a teacher models the lesson task with a small group of students. During “Follow Along,” the words “Follow Along” are flashed on the screen and the task is presented again with a visual of the teacher’s signal and the directions the teacher is saying aloud are flashed on the screen. The teacher’s directions and student responses can also be heard. During “Say Along,” the words “Say Along” are flashed on the screen and viewers see the same visual of the teacher’s signal and hear the directions she is saying to the students as presented in the “Follow Along” sequence.

### **Videotape #11: Practice Junction: Correction Procedures for the Early Lessons**

This videotape provides practice of three correction procedures for various student response errors: (a) mispronunciation, (b) misidentification, and (c) stopping between the sounds. The error correction procedure is modeled and then viewers are asked to “Say Along” with the videotape.

### **Videotape #12: Sample Workbook and Storybook Formats**

This videotape presents examples of the implementation of various workbook and storybook tasks from lessons 19 through 96 with small groups of students.

## Critique of the Reading Mastery Training Series

Some concerns are evident across the training series. First, viewers are never told that the training series only focuses on *Reading Mastery I*. Second, although the videotapes refer to *Reading Mastery I and II*, viewers are never provided information about all the levels of the program. Third, although three signals are reviewed, the difference between an audible and visual signal is never explicitly described. Fourth, although corrections for response errors are provided, corrections for nonattending, nonresponding, and signal errors are not discussed. Finally, it is difficult to hear many of the kids on the last videotape, *Sample Workbook and Storybook Formats*.

Two changes to videotapes 7–10 would make them more useful during training sessions. First, viewers should be provided with explicit directions about what they are supposed to do during the “Follow Along” and “Say Along”

practice sequences. Second, a workbook including copies of the teacher presentation book tasks practiced on the videotapes should be provided to viewers. This would allow viewers to actually practice the signals and read the script as they will need to do during implementation of the program. Viewers are currently asked to say the script along with the videotape. The value of this is questionable.

The teachers demonstrated a variety of delivery errors at various times across the 12 videotapes: (a) mouthing sounds while students are responding, (b) failing to provide corrections for student errors, (c) holding the teacher presentation book on the wrong side of the body, (d) signaling and speaking at the same time, (e) targeting one student during an error correction, (f) failing to make clear pull-offs from the page when signaling sounds, (g) forgetting to say “Get ready” before signaling, (h) adding a snap to the hand drop signal, and (i) presenting the hand signal with the fist facing towards the students.

There is also some questionable pronunciation of sounds by the teachers. Although these errors may only be apparent to an individual experienced with the implementation of *Reading Mastery*, it is unfortunate that novice *Reading Mastery* teachers may observe and practice inappropriate implementation procedures.

Despite some of the concerns described above, this training series provides an excellent introduction to *Reading Mastery I* and the basic teaching techniques required to run the program. The series will be a valuable asset to initial *Reading Mastery I* training sessions. The teachers demonstrating the implementation of *Reading Mastery I* are sincere in their testimonials about the effectiveness of the program and demonstrate the use of *Reading Mastery* with “real” students. Viewers are able to see what the *Reading Mastery* materials look like, observe the unique ways in which each teacher implements the program, and witness the positive reactions students have to the *Reading Mastery* program. **ADI**

## Little Rock Success Story

Karen Sullards, Principal of Scott Elementary in Pulaski County Special School District, Little Rock, Arkansas,

submitted this impressive DI success story. After only 1 year of a DI reading implementation, the percent of stu-

dents scoring below basic on the Literacy subtest of the state’s Primary Benchmark Test dropped significantly and the percent scoring at basic and proficient increased significantly. Karen reports that Math scores also improved because it was the first time that the students could read the test. The numbers in Table 1 show the magnitude of the changes in Literacy and Math.

The school is now in its 2nd year of implementation in reading and its 1st year of implementation in language and spelling. **ADI**

**Table 1**

*Percent of Students Scoring Below Basic, Basic, Proficient, and Advanced on the Primary Benchmark Test in 2001 (Before DI implementation) and 2002 (After 1 year of DI implementation) on Literacy and Math*

	2001	2002	Change		2001	2002	Change
Literacy				Math			
Below Basic	64	18	-46	Below Basic	73	41	-32
Basic	27	35	+7	Basic	9	12	+3
Proficient	9	47	+38	Proficient	9	41	+33
Advanced	0	0	0	Advanced	9	6	-3

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