



National Institute for Direct Instruction

***Clear Teaching* by Shepard Barbash**

Study Guide Questions

Clear Teaching by Shepard Barbash was written to assist the reader with understanding Direct Instruction (DI), development of DI, and the impact it has on all children, regardless of ability level and/or socioeconomic status.

“DI differentiates instruction. It encourages participation and feedback. It builds self-esteem, self-reliance and self-control. It rewards perseverance, honors high expectations and respects diversity. It shuns labels. It makes learning fun. It is rocket fuel for the gifted and a lifeline for the poor” (Barbash, p. 47).

Forward

- The teaching of Direct Instruction programs can be compared to the coaching of sports. Discuss the ways teaching and coaching are similar. How are those ways beneficial to students?
- Direct Instruction is a scientifically proven method of teaching but is controversial and unpopular to some. Why has the educational community at large discounted the effectiveness of DI programs?
- Try to set aside any theories and preconceptions you may have about Direct Instruction as you read this book and begin teaching DI programs. Share any uneasiness you may currently be experiencing.

Introduction

- Zig Engelmann has worked out the answers to questions that will make us all the best teachers possible! Discuss which of these questions are important to you and why.

Chapter I: Radical Optimist

- Engelmann believes that every child is gifted with the ability to learn. He makes a distinction between faulty children and faulty instruction. Discuss that difference. How does this fit with your belief system? How will your belief system positively affect your students?
- Reflection: Do you have questions/concerns about teaching Direct Instruction programs? Are thoughts running through your mind that need clarification? Take a minute to jot down those questions and thoughts to come back to later.
- The graph on page 12 shows the results of Project Follow Thru. Discuss the differences in the three types of teaching approaches: academic, problem-solving and self-esteem. How are academic achievement and positive self-esteem related?

Chapter II: Engelmann's Odyssey

- Engelmann traced the achievement gap to a severe language gap. Discuss how these 'gaps' affect the learning of students. Discuss the effect of DI on language development, learning and IQ scores of the children in the Bereiter-Engelmann preschool.

Chapter III: Engelmann Did It First

- Which three of the many discoveries and inventions in Chapter 3 (phonemic awareness, the effect of a language gap on student learning, how the mind works, thinks, and remembers, etc.) stand out to you as critical to student learning and success? Why are they important to you and your students?
- "...every child has a wondrous capacity to learn, every teacher has a unique opportunity to help." Share your thoughts about how you will help every child reach his/her capacity.

Chapter IV: Rules, Not Misrules,

Chapter 4 discusses the five big rules of Direct Instruction and why they are essential to the success of both students and teachers.

Rule # 1: Be Clear

- DI programs are carefully written to avoid misrules. Discuss the relationship between lower performing students and a higher incidence of misrules.
- How do DI programs help teachers avoid the minefield of misrules?
- Reflect back on your own learning. Share a time when a misrule affected your ability to learn and/or understand something.
- OPTIONAL ACTIVITY: Choose a simple concept or task and develop a teaching sequence. Be prepared to teach this concept or task to your peers. Focus on avoiding misrules.

Rule # 2: Be Efficient

- Teacher scripts, choral response and the hot verbal sequence are important efficiency features of DI. Choose one of these three and explain its impact, both positively and negatively.
- The language gap between children from welfare families and professional families is well documented in a study conducted by Hart and Risley. How do DI programs address and improve this phenomenon?

Rule #3: Teach to Mastery

- Fill in the blanks: “The most important rule, and possibly the most difficult one to teach teachers, is that you have to start as close as possible to _____, and you have to _____.”
- Describe what the author means by “a systematic trickle of new information.”
- Explain, in your own words, what it means to ‘teach to mastery’. Describe something you have mastered. How much practice did it take for the skill to become automatic?

Rule #4: Celebrate Success

- Classroom management and positive reinforcement are essential to the effectiveness of DI programs. Which of the strategies described in this section (celebrate success, catch kids being good, praise more than blame) will you implement with your students?
- Explain why the “Fooler Game” is an effective motivator. Do you think it would work with your students? Tell why or why not.

Rule #5: Beware Intuition

- Direct Instruction programs replace teacher intuition with scientific evidence. Can you relate a time when intuition affected learning – your learning or the learning of someone you know?
- Pages 32 and 33 describe much of the information Engelmann gathered from his many years of scientific research on how kids learn. Which parts of the research are surprising or new learning for you? Which will you remember as you begin instructing students with DI programs?
- “If the student hasn’t learned, the teacher hasn’t taught – that’s not a slogan, it’s an operating principle,” Engelmann says. “You cannot fall in love with your own judgment.” Reflect on and react to this statement. What does it mean for you personally?

Chapter V: Playing the Music

- One misconception about DI programs is that they are effective only in closing the performance gap with at-risk students. What have you learned about this misconception as a result of reading this chapter?
- Direct Instruction programs allow teachers to teach all students at all levels across content areas. Discuss how DI programs accelerate student performance.

Chapter VI: Reputation and Money

- Critics of Direct Instruction appear to believe that: a) students learn best when allowed to decide when and what they learn, b) teachers know best how to teach all students and should be left to be creative, and c) teachers don’t want or need technical training. As a teacher, share your reaction to these statements.

- One reason DI is unpopular is that it gives teachers less freedom to do what they want in the classroom and “limits their creativity.” Using the information learned in chapter 4 and Rule #5 (Beware Intuition) discuss the rationale for having “less freedom.”

Chapter VII: Inconvenient Truths

- Explain why lesson scripts are essential to the effective delivery of DI programs.
- The success of traditional programs is often the responsibility of the teacher, but Engelmann says, “No amount of good teaching behavior can bail a teacher out of a bad program.” DI programs build in success for both teacher and student. Discuss how DI programs support your success and the success of your students.

Chapter VIII: Betting on Science

- Many examples are cited that reference the different settings and populations in which DI programs are successful. What do these examples tell you about Engelmann’s assertion that “all children can learn”?
- Not one scientific study has cited negative effects from Direct Instruction programs. The positive effects are varied and endless. Reflect back on the questions you noted after chapter 1. Have your questions been answered? What are your thoughts now?

Chapter IX: Great Teachers

- Engelmann and his Direct Instruction programs support teachers becoming great teachers. Which of the many examples of DI teachers describe you? Which do you aspire to achieve?
- Engelmann says, “Good instruction turns learning into a game students can win.” Do you agree? Share your thoughts.
- If asked to write a definition of Direct Instruction, what would you include?

Appendix I: Reinforcing Success

- After reading “Snapshot of a DI Class”, what excites you about the potential for your own classroom and your students? What concerns do you have?