

Siegfried Engelmann Memorial Opening Comments
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Welcome to this service to pay tribute to Siefried “Zig” Engelmann. On behalf of the Engelmann family, the National Institute for Direct Instruction (NIFDI), and the Engelmann-Becker Corporation, thanks for being here. My name is Randy Sprick, and my first association with Zig was seeing his name on the DISTAR boxes in Portland, OR, beginning in the fall of 1971. I was a teacher aide in a program for students with emotional/behavior problems. Specifically because of the success of that experience I moved to Eugene to learn from and eventually work for Zig; Wes Becker, co-founder of the Engelmann-Becker Corp.; and the amazing Direct Instruction team. In the subsequent decades, Zig was a generous colleague and (I’m going to be bold here) a dear friend. So my involvement directly with Zig was for 46 years. Among the speakers you get to hear from, I am, relatively speaking, a newbie. Because what Zig taught about the art and science of teaching took root with me, the other speakers, and probably most of us in this room, it has spread and germinated with countless teachers, affecting literally millions of children.

When the Engelmann family requested that I host this event, I immediately accepted and, after ending the call, reflected for a moment about the bittersweet nature of being given this honor. However, that was very shortly followed by a level of consternation caused by remembering two of my favorite Ziggy quotes. The first was an expression Zig used when any lesson or presentation suffered from poor content or bad delivery: “**Get the hook,**” followed by another Ziggy quote, “**Oh, blank.**” Fill in the Zig expletive of your choice.

So the reason for my concern at that moment was the realization that, along with the other speakers, we are paying tribute to a man who was sometimes known to have strong opinions! Now, from other speakers, you will hear about the logic, science, and passion of good teaching that has come to be known as Direct Instruction (DI). So I suspect we are all imagining Zig over our respective shoulders evaluating the quality of our content and delivery today. One concept that is most relevant to my personal “Oh my” (not the actual word) thinking about this event is—pacing.

I vividly remember a training session in about 1976, in which Zig was guiding us as trainers and coaches to evaluate instructional pacing of a DI lesson. On a 30-minute taped lesson, we all took data. The lesson had *very* frequent group responses, a perfect balance of individual turns, and so on. We all shared our data and agreed it was numerically an exemplary lesson. But then Zig chimed in to say, Great pace, but the lesson suffers from equipollence [which means everything has equal power], which from an instructional standpoint means the lesson has too much of the same tone and intensity. He went on to explain that “even a fast pace can become lulling. A great lesson has peaks and valleys of intensity, volume, rate of speech, and importance.”

Now that lesson—that pacing should not suffer from equipollence—has resonated and helped me be a better teacher for over forty years. This is but one of many examples of a conceptual seedling that Zig gave to me that is part of who I choose to be as a teacher. As we hear from the other speakers, we will be reminded of the skills, traits, and behaviors planted by this amazing man we pay tribute to today.

A few nuts and bolts for our gathering: Please silence cell phones and care for any other potential distractions. However, we also needn't be somber (I don't think he would want us to be): laugh, cry, and applaud an enthusiastic thank you to each of the speakers.

The Engelmann family invites you to join them in a toast as the conclusion of this event and at a reception immediately following. There is not going to be an open mike during the service or the reception. Rather, during the reception, share your feelings and stories with those you know and those you meet.