



National Institute for Direct Instruction

Video Guide for: The Battle of City Springs (Epilogue 2001) 10:32 minutes

Video Guide Purpose:

This presentation guide is to be used as a tool for stimulating discussion about important points raised in the video. It is only intended to be a framework for discussion. Presenters of the video should feel free to add to the focus items, which have been included. Other topics related to the events in the video may come up after the video is viewed.

Video Summary:

It is stated at the beginning of this video that City Springs Elementary School was widely regarded as a hopeless case. Located in the poorest area of Baltimore, it had consistently failed and had a reputation as one of the worst schools in the city. Because of consistently dismal academic results, the school had been put on probation. Unless the school showed measurable improvement in the 1997-98 school year, it would be taken over by the state. In the fall of 1997, City Springs started the Direct Instruction approach to teaching their students how to read. By 2001, tremendous academic gains had been made.

Focus Items:

The next section includes a list of possible focus items to be used by the presenter. Some possible points of discussion are bulleted after the focus items, but they include only a sample of points from the video. Presenters and participants will likely find many other topics to discuss depending on their own personal experiences.

1. As this video begins in 1997, what challenges were being faced by the administrator at City Springs?

- School was located in poorest area of Baltimore, serving disadvantaged students from the toughest environments in the city
- History of serious academic failure (on probation by the state)
- New and inexperienced teachers
- New curriculum was radically different from what had been used in prior years



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- 2. The students at City Springs were placed in groups for instruction.**
 - a. What criteria were used to form the groups?
 - All students tested and placed according to skill level, rather than age.
 - Groups at the first two levels of Reading Mastery were purposefully kept low in number.
 - b. What advantages do you see in placing students according to the criteria used at City Springs? Discuss.

- 3. After about five months into the first year, serious concerns arose concerning the implementation of Direct Instruction in kindergarten.**
 - a. What did you notice about the implementation at that point?
 - Students out of control
 - Expectations being questioned
 - b. As a kindergarten teacher, how would you have felt about that?

- 4. Many changes took place at City Springs following the implementation of Direct Instruction. What change stands out to you the most? Discuss.**
 - Behavioral culture changed dramatically
 - Clear evidence of improved academic success
 - Marked improvement shown in test scores
 - Went from one of the worst schools in Baltimore to one of the best

- 5. It took a significant amount of time get the right teaching team assembled and implementing with a high level of fidelity.**
 - a. How long did it take?
 - 5 years
 - b. Is this amount of time reasonable?

- 6. At City Springs, procedures were in place for celebrating student success.**
 - a. How was academic success celebrated at City Springs?
 - Entire school attended celebrations
 - Academic success recognized and showcased
 - b. Do you think celebrating academic success is important? Discuss.
 - c. If academic success is celebrated in your building, describe how that occurs. Share and discuss.

*Note to presenter: The next page should be reproduced and handed out to participants to use for the purpose of taking notes as the video is viewed and for reference during discussion.



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1. **As this video begins in 1997, what challenges were being faced by the administrator at City Springs?**

2. **The students at City Springs were placed in groups for instruction.**
 - a. **What criteria were used to form the groups?**

 - b. **What advantages do you see in placing students according to the criteria used at City Springs? Discuss.**

3. **After about five months into the first year, serious concerns arose concerning the implementation of Direct Instruction in kindergarten.**
 - a. **What did you notice about the implementation at that point?**



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- b. As a kindergarten teacher, how would you have felt about that?**

- 4. Many changes took place at City Springs following the implementation of Direct Instruction. What change stands out to you the most? Why?**

- 5. It took a significant amount of time get the right teaching team assembled and implementing with a high level of fidelity.**
 - a. How long did it take?**

 - b. Is this amount of time reasonable?**

- 6. At City Springs, procedures were in place for celebrating student success.**
 - a. How was academic success celebrated at City Springs?**

 - b. Do you think celebrating academic success is important? Discuss.**

 - c. If academic success is celebrated in your building, describe how that occurs. Share and discuss.**