

A META-ANALYSIS OF THE EFFECTS OF DIRECT INSTRUCTION IN SPECIAL EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

Studies of the effectiveness of Direct Instruction programs with special education students were examined in a meta-analysis comparison. To be included, the outcomes had to be compared with outcomes for some other treatment to which students were assigned prior to any interventions. Not one of 25 studies showed results favoring the comparison groups. Fifty-three percent of the outcomes significantly favored DI with an average magnitude of effect of .84 standard deviation units. The effects were not restricted to a particular handicapping condition, age group, or skill area.

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This analysis is based on studies that compared the effectiveness of Direct Instruction (DI) intervention with that of one or more comparison interventions. Only studies with students experiencing some form of learning handicap (e.g., learning disability, trainable mental retardation, reading disability) were included. Studies with students considered "at-risk" for learning problems did *not* qualify.

For a study to be included in the meta-analysis, the assignment of participants to experimental and comparison groups must have taken place prior to intervention. Studies with noncomparable experimental and comparison groups, established by statistically significant differences on pretest scores or by acknowledgment of an author in a report, were excluded.

A study was considered to contain a Direct Instruction treatment group if the author of the report considered one of the groups to be such. Studies were included if a treatment group was based on the Engelmann and Carnine (1982) model of Direct Instruction, or if a group utilized instructional materials developed by Engelmann and associates.

Literature Search

Studies were gathered from research previously known to the reviewer or to the reviewer's colleagues, from reports referenced in such research, and from research listed in a computer literature search conducted on April 30, 1986

For a more thorough examination of this research, refer to the author's December 1986 dissertation (The Effects of Direct Instruction in Special Education: A Meta-Analysis) at the University of Oregon.

