

Client: NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR DIRECT INSTRUCTION
Project: NIFDI VIDEO
Subject: GREAT EXPECTATIONS
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[EXTERIOR]

Narrator: Education it is said is in a state of crisis. It fails the children who need it most—poor minority children—but not here at this Houston school.

Students: [UNISON]

Narrator: At Wesley Elementary, a school where almost 90% of the children are poor enough to qualify for the federal free meals program, the Kindergarteners are way ahead of their suburban peers.

Students: [UNISON]

Narrator: They know their tables and many already read fluently.

Student: [READS] I want to read [INCOHERENT] I love his house. He lives at the red house. He looks out the windows. He looks at all these things.

[EXTERIOR]

Narrator: In Minneapolis, inner city African-American schools perform poorly—in the lowest 20% of the nation's schools. But not



here at Seed Academy. Here, students are on task and engaged.

[THIRD GRADE CLASSROOM]

Teacher: Next word.

Students: [UNISON]

Teacher: Next word.

Students: [UNISON]

Teacher: Next word.

Students: [UNISON]

Teacher: Excellent reading those words.

Girl Student: [READS] Dog with thickest head all through one of the holes. You could reach through the other hole and wash the dog and you wouldn't get wet while you were washing the dog.

Narrator: These 3rd graders are performing at a level a suburban school would be proud of. The school's performance on standardized tests place Seed Academy's African-American students in the top 20% of the nation's schools.

Teacher: Keep going.

Girl Student: [READS] Wilma made pictures of some - -



Principal Manmound (Seed Academy): The students you can see the self-confidence that they've developed over the past few years being able to pick up a book and read just about anything off the page.

Girl Student: [READS] A daughter that - -

Principal Manmound: We have 1st graders that are reading at a 4th grade reading level. Kindergarteners reading at a 3rd grade reading level. So the proof is in the testing.

Teacher: There comes a - -

Principal Manmound: And we have enjoyed quite a bit of success.

Teacher: - - working on - -

Narrator: The basis of their success is a curriculum called Direct Instruction or DI developed at the University of Oregon. DI is a system that aims to ensure that all children master the basic skills of math, language and reading leaving elementary school with an unassailable foundation. The philosophy of Direct Instruction says that if a child fails to learn it is never their fault. It's the instruction which is to blame. So everything is planned down to the last detail to make sure all children learn as efficiently as possible, even the teachers' words are scripted. In the hands of a skilled DI teacher, children can go very, very fast achieving results which previously seemed impossible.

[KINDERGARTEN CLASSROOM]

Teacher Sayd: Get ready.



Students: [UNISON]

Teacher Sayd: What's the name of our state, everybody?

Students: [UNISON]

Teacher Sayd: What's the name of our city? And don't scream. Get ready.

Students: [UNISON] The name of our city is Houston.

Teacher Sayd: What's the name of our President?

Kids are really smart. They're like sponges. I mean that they walk in your room. They can't hold a pencil. They can hardly give you a complete sentence and at the end of the year I mean they're at the end of 2nd Grade level. I mean this is a lot.

What's the name of our Mayor?

Students: [UNISON] The name of our Mayor is Mr. - - .

Abdel Sayd (Kinder Teacher): I really like Direct Instruction. I mean, my kids can read the stories and I don't mean a one-page story. They can read five, six, seven, ten-page stories and they comprehend it, too.

Students: [UNISON]

[EXTERIOR]



Narrator: Wesley, when the Kindergarteners know all of the states has inspired other schools to commit themselves to fundamental change. Schools like Herzl Elementary in the Lawndale area of Chicago. Three years ago Herzl was placed on the district's watch list of seriously low performing schools.

[HALLWAY]

Betty Green (Principal, Herzl Elementary): When we realized we had been placed on the watch list, we knew at that point that we needed to do something different. We visited Wesley in Houston and visiting Wesley that really gave us a vision. We started to realize that if the children in Texas can learn, the children in North Lawndale can.

Teacher: Again.

Students: [UNISON] Sadder.

Teacher: Say it fast.

Students: [UNISON] Sad.

Narrator: Herzl began by introducing DI in the Kindergarten and 1st Grades. For the teachers it was very strange following scripts and getting kids to respond in unison.

Teacher: What's that sound?

Student: Mmmmm.

Teacher: Good. Do it again. What's that sound?



Students: [UNISON] E.

Teacher: Good. What's that sound? What's that sound? Okay.

Principal Green: I thought it would be easy. To be perfectly honest, once we got into it, I realized that it's very labor intense. It requires a commitment from everybody involved. We started originally with pre-service training for about a week for all of the teachers. With the week's training, they went into the classroom and start working with the coach in the room helping 'em.

Teacher: [INCOHERENT]

Adult Students: [UNISON]

Principal Green: And then we realized that that just wasn't sufficient.

[MEETING ROOM]

Teacher: Get ready.

Adult Students: [UNISON]

Teacher: [INCOHERENT]

Principal Green: So we started as a group to meeting four days a week for an hour each day in order to really, really become good in teaching Direct Instruction.

Teacher: Get ready.



Adult Student: There.

Teacher: Yes. Get ready.

Adult Students: [UNISON] Ah.

Teacher: Ah. Get ready.

Adult Students: [UNISON] A.

Teacher: Very good. Now the whole word. Get ready. Sound it out.
Get ready.

Adult Students: [UNISON] Ah.

Teacher: Now read the underlined part. Get ready.

Adult Students: Eee.

Teacher: Yes. Eee. Now read the whole word. Get ready.

Adult Students: Seal.

Teacher: Yes. 'Seal'. Very good saying that word. The next word.

[KINDERGARTEN CLASSROOM]

Teacher: - - we're gonna do this. No mistakes. No mistakes. Here we go. Look at it.

Narrator: Today, Herzl is a transformed school. No longer on the watch list, staff feel they have a chance to make Herzl into another Wesley.



Teacher: That's right. Good. Try it again.

Students: [UNISON]

Teacher: What do you say this word.

Students: [UNISON]

Teacher: That's right.

Principal Green: It's scripted but it's not rote. Many people feel that children are bored. They're not bored. The children are happy.

Teacher: Once you get your ? [INCOHERENT] words, alright? Once --

Teacher: Once the children start achieving success, they want to work harder and they do work harder. They are happy that they're able to learn.

Teacher: Say it.

Students: [UNISON]

Principal Green: We found that it increased attendance. Children started feeling good about themselves so they wanted to come to school.

[FIRST GRADE CLASSROOM (HERZL)]

Teacher Griswell: What word?

Students: [UNISON] He.



Teacher Griswell: Get ready.

Students: [UNISON] My.

Teacher Griswell: Yes, my and - -

Principal Green: I love going to classes now because I love seeing my children be successful.

Students: [UNISON]

Teacher Griswell: [INCOHERENT]

Students: [UNISON]

Teacher Griswell: Let's try that again.

Students: [UNISON]

Teacher Griswell: [INCOHERENT]

Principal Green: Miss Griswell, let me test them. What is this word?

Students: [UNISON] Stand

Principal Green: What is this word?

Students: [UNISON] My.

Principal Green: You're doing good. What is this word?

Students: [UNISON]



Principal Green: We're seeing a great improvement in the standardized test results now over what they were prior to Direct Instruction. When we started Direct Instruction, we only had about 12 to 15% of our children reading at or above grade level, as measured by the Iowa Test of Basic Skills. At this point, we have about 40% reading at or above and our goal for this year is 50%.

[EXTERIOR]

Narrator: Because Wesley showed success was possible, there is no longer any excuse for failure.

[FIRST GRADE CLASSROOM]

Student: [INCOHERENT]

Narrator: Like other low income at-risk children, Wesley students start off behind arriving at school with less than half the vocabulary words of their suburban peers. But year after year, a powerful instructional program has managed to overcome these disadvantages.

Principal Green: If a child has not learned to read by the end of 1st Grade, we have failed him, unless he has a serious learning problem that needs another kind of diagnosis.

Girl Student: [READS] That was so good to come inside the [INCOHERENT] - - was so strong that [INCOHERENT]. It that it was so [INCOHERENT] could not knock her down. [INCOHERENT] We - -



Wilma Rimes (Principal, Wesley Elementary): Our children are having so much fun being smart. There are enough repetitions provided in each of these lessons for every child to be successful. If the teacher will teach two lessons a day in Kindergarten, you will have children who are ready to read on 2nd Grade level when they walk into 1st Grade.

[EXTERIOR]

Students: [UNISON SINGING]

Principal Manmound: We know that many children in the inner city come to school behind academically, so we have to accelerate them at a very early age. The problem in education is prices that we talk about is not a hardware problem. It has nothing to do with these children's genes. It has nothing to do with them physically. It's really a software problem. It's how we program these children. And by going to Wesley, it was clear to me that we could program these children for success instead of programming them for failure.

[THIRD GRADE CLASSROOM (SEED ACADEMY)]

Students: [UNISON] Three weeks.

Teacher: Three weeks. What problem did Leonard have when cracking eggs? Ariel.

Student Ariel: He wasn't very good at cracking the eggs.

Teacher: He wasn't very good at it.



Principal Manmound: I'm convinced that the only way that we're going to solve this educational crisis in this country at/is at the organizational level. I mean, we can have thousands of great teachers—and we do have thousands of great teachers—but if each school building around the country is only relegated to two or three great teachers then the impact is going to be limited. We have to really develop institutions that have organized themselves into a seamless pipeline where one grade lays the foundation for the next grade.

[FIFTH GRADE CLASSROOM (SEED ACADEMY)]

Teacher: You're gonna read the rest by yourself - -

Teacher2: About how far is it from the northern border of California to the southern - -

Principal Manmound: That's the only way we're going to solve this educational crisis in this country.

Teacher2: To the southern border of California. Mamai.

Student Mamai: One hundred - -

Teacher2: Yes - -

Narrator: Seed Academy and Wesley Elementary have shown that children who stay in Direct Instruction until 6th Grade hold their own with their suburban peers.

Student: [READS] The ?_____ at the bottom of the mountain are large trees and ?_____ passed out ?_____ - -



Narrator: But DI schools are not just found in the inner city.

[EXTERIOR]

Teacher: Very good - -

Narrator: You find Direct Instruction in the mountains of Utah.

Teacher: None. Ready. What word?

Students: [UNISON] None.

Teacher: Spell 'none'. Ready.

Students: [UNISON] N-o-n-e. None.

Teacher: Very good. Give yourself a kiss. Alright. This side.

Narrator: You find it in private schools in California.

Teacher: Sentence seven. A large bunch of red and yellow daisies were in the hall. What's the verb, class?

Students: [UNISON] Were.

Teacher: 'Were. That's right. Is the verb correct?

Students: [UNISON] No.

Teacher: No, it's not. You should have written 'a large bunch of red and yellow daisies was in the hall'.



[EXTERIOR]

Narrator: And DI has also enabled students who are not native speakers of English to succeed. In Rio Hondo, Texas a DI program designed for older students is helping them to catch up.

[HALLWAY]

Principal Alvarez: Students are coming with very little English.

Teacher: Again.

Student: [READS] [?]

Teacher: Look again, there.

Student: [READS] [?]

Teacher: Alright.

Ramon Alvarez (Principal, Rio Hondo Intermediate): And we have children coming in reading level of Kindergarten, 1st Grade, 2nd Grade and so we need to do something fast because we only have them here for two years which is the 4th and 5th Grade.

Students: [UNISON]

Teacher: Spell 'type'. Get ready.

Students: [UNISON] T-y-p-e.



Teacher: Spell 'house'. Get ready.

Students: [UNISON] H-o-u-s-e.

Narrator: Despite success with children all over America, Direct Instruction has attracted criticism from some educators who think it is too rigid. But, in fact, everything in DI is there to help children learn. Take, for example, the unison response.

Teacher: Get ready.

Students: [UNISON]

Teacher: Spell - -

Aneyazuka Ahediana (DI Coach): What the unison response will do is it gives a number of repetitions very efficiently to a large number of people at one time. If one kid raises their hand, all I know is that kid knows. I don't know anything else. I don't have any feedback from anybody else. But if I can get a unison response and I can get everybody answer me, I have a good feel about how firm the students are. I've got a lotta information coming back. It also gives every kid their own chance to initiate their own response. They do it at the same time but it's still their own response and it's the next best choice they - - say between from saying, 'It's your turn. It's your turn. It's your turn' and we don't have time to do that.

[EXTERIOR]



Narrator: If Herzl Elementary could turn things around in a few years, can other struggling schools do the same?

Teacher: What's that word?

Students: [UNISON] Rain.

Teacher: Sound three. First word. What word?

Students: [UNISON] He said.

Teacher: Next word. What word?

Students: [UNISON]

Teacher: Next word. What word?

Principal Green: The Direct Instruction program that's implemented at Herzl could be replicated in any school. However, we must realize that it's gonna take a lot of work. It's not gonna be easy.

Students: [INCOHERENT]

Teacher: Okay. Very good. And let's look at that carefully.

Boy Student: [READS] ?_____ moved the ?_____ at the - -

Principal Green: The first feature is to have teachers who are committed to Direct Instruction. It will not work if you have staff who does not want it to work. The teachers must be committed. The next thing is to provide the appropriate in-service training for the teachers. We can't expect them to go into the classroom and do a good job if they haven't been



properly trained. So they do need training. In addition to the training, they need coaching in the classroom.

Girl Student: [INCOHERENT]

Teacher: Everybody, give Sonja a hand. That was very good.

[EXTERIOR]

Principal Manmound: This isn't a 9-to-5 job. This is a commitment to making a difference in the lives of children that may not come to school with a lotta skills in the first place. What's really important is a long-term commitment to this Direct Instruction implementation. I would say a three- to four-year commitment in order to see the results on a long-term basis.

[EXTERIOR]

School Staff: [HUGGING STUDENTS] That's a good one. Bring in my homework tomorrow.

[TEXT]

[END]

