



**Course:** Direct Instruction

**Account Name:** Stanground Academy **Teachers:** Sally Tymoczko and D Brooks

**Product in Use:** Corrective Reading Decoding B2 and Connecting Maths Concepts Level C

**Number of Students: 50** 

## What is Direct Instruction?

- A teaching method built by Siegfried Engelmann proven after 50 years of extensive research
- A method that focuses on explicit demonstration and practice that has its grounding on children who are disadvantaged or who have little confidence
- Allows children to be taught at their current level as opposed to their expected grade
- Has been proven to accelerate academic progress and improve behaviour
- Emphasises the retrieval of previously learnt skills - 10-15% of new learning each lesson is included to ensure mastery of earlier topics and concepts
- Models itself on a tracked curriculum rather than a spiralling curriculum.

# Teachers utilizing the Direct Instruction model:

- Teach from the front using a script that allows them to focus on their interaction with their learners
- Do not allow pupils to opt out of answering questions
- Focus on questioning
- Include regular opportunities for testing
- Demonstrate a 'warm strict' manner.

## The Background

When the school Sally was teaching at became part of a Trust, there was an emphasis on supporting disadvantaged students. It was around 7 years ago, Sally reflected, that they were able to set up a transition curriculum -- "in essence a primary school in my classroom" which focused on getting students on track with their learning, revisiting content from KS1 and KS2 where needed. This curriculum "had fantastic results," remarked Sally.

A few years after that, though, the new Primary curriculum was introduced and that had an impact. "We noticed a big change on account of the new curriculum and Year 7 students suddenly needed a change to suit their needs. They were beginning their time at our school below age related expectations." Sally commented that the changes seemed to kick in overnight, which prompted her and her school to explore a different framework for supporting their learners.

"We needed to support students to be able to close the gap between them and their peers, and fast." Sally Tymoczko

## The Solution

Sally was given the task of finding a new programme to support this need, and it was at this time that she first came across Direct Instruction. She commented that "Direct Instruction really stood out for us. We loved that it was tried and tested in the States with fantastic results. We decided to give it a try."

"We also loved how pacey it was. Children who aren't meeting expectations need to be learning faster, and DI looked like it could narrow that gap."

Sally acknowledged that DI was very different, but this was something that she found "extremely exciting." She laughed, "If you know me, you know I love a challenge!" She admitted to having some trepidation, though, on account of learning a new teaching technique.

Any nerves Sally had were quelled by the training she attended, a one-day course which Sally called "super." After that initial training, Sally then did her own research into DI, spending time reading and studying the subject. Past that, Sally had further 1:1 training at her school and commented that she felt very supported in making the move as "there was always someone on the end of the phone" to support her.

She also pointed about that there are great hubs of information online, such as NIFDI, an online hub for DI-based information and videos.

Sally recognised that some peers, on hearing about the introduction of DI, believed the approach to be quite prescriptive. It is a common perception that the autonomy of the teachers is taken away through the heavy use of scripts. "But it's the exact opposite in reality, students just need to know how 'this' is done, then do it together, then do it on their own," she said.

"If you want students to learn and learn quickly, this is the way to go." Sally Tymoczko

# Implementation

It took a little while for the students to find their way with new habits. Sally explained that there is a contrast with Direction Instruction's focus on the choral response as opposed to asking a specific learner a specific question which was the norm.

The set up is very different physically to a non-DI classroom with students facing forward only with equipment laid out ready for them to minimise distraction.

Whilst her students may have found the move to a different learning style initially a little different, Sally could very quickly see the benefits.

One of the benefits that was very immediate was the sense of teamwork the students built. Sally expanded, "The fact they're working together, as a whole class,

means there's a sense of a great teamwork," she said. "Students don't want to let themselves down. They support each other." For Sally, this was something that she found to be a big and positive change.

Sally talked around how the students got to grips across different subjects. To start with, she said the literacy took a little while to bed down, but that after a couple of weeks in a new teaching rhythm, things settled into place.

## Student Feedback

When asked how her students had found the move to a different teaching style, Sally said they were initially a little shocked, but because "they are year 7, they are very pliable and able to change easily", she said.

Sally also pointed to anecdotal evidence of her students enjoying their Direct Instruction classes, and how some of her learners actually skip into class.

Additionally, Sally recalled a time when an Education Advisor came to watch her in action. The Education Advisor spoke to a boy who was prone to being disruptive in class. He carried with him a copy of *The Boy in The Striped Pyjamas*. When asked about the book, the boy responded that he was excited to read it, because he never believed he could have read it before. After a few weeks, Sally asked the boy if he had read the book, and the boy reported that he hadn't just read it—he had loved reading it.

This story was similar to another that Sally was able to share, around a learner asking if it would be okay to read comic books, which was a significant and marked change in behaviour from a learner who previously had shown little engagement with literacy.

On the numeracy perspective, Sally highlighted that one of her students was overjoyed during a maths class focusing on algebra since he had "never understood" the subject before.

## The Results

On top of the positive behavioural changes Sally has seen, she has also been keen to track progress across her group of 50 students. She has 2 groups of Numeracy classes and 3 groups focusing on Literacy.

On the Literacy side of things, Sally is pleased to see that **92%** of her students are making good progress.

She used data from the DI Mastery tests students are given every 10 lessons to build this score, along with words per minute, class assessments and enrichment tasks. "One student is actually new to the DI classes," Sally said, "so it's actually a little higher, with just 2 pupils not making as much progress as we would like to see."

For Numeracy, Sally is also thrilled since **100%** of her cohort are making good progress.

On reflecting on these results, Sally commented that she is "buzzing".

"It's really simple: we are seeing amazing results both behaviourly and academically." Sally Tymoczko

"What more you can ask for? For students to achieve academically and be building behaviours that are helping their learning-- that's great for me."

#### The Results

With students physically delighted in entering their Direct Instruction classes, and results showing that this engagement is boosting learning, Sally is pleased with the progress they have made. And her passion is inspiring her peers, too, with other teachers interested in DI now as well. Sally is especially delighted with this, as the interest comes from colleagues who are teaching classes further up the school. For Sally, Direct Instruction works wonderfully with getting those students who need extra support learning fast, "but there is no reason why we shouldn't use it in other areas to push the more able" she added. With her students "enjoying themselves" in their lessons and the gap being closed, it seems only natural that this would be an exciting venture to pursue.

#### For further information on DI, please visit mheducation.co.uk/schools

Any queries relating to implementation and training of Direct Instruction, please contact the Direct Instruction Hubs. McGraw Hill are proud to be working in partnership with them to help you on your DI journey.

Midlands Hub Email: directinstruction@saint-martins.net | South Hub Email: DISouthHub@avonbourneacademy.org.uk

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