

Direct Instruction & ESL Fact Sheet

The Baltimore Curriculum Project has helped implement Direct Instruction in 17 Baltimore City public schools since 1996 with remarkable success. Direct Instruction is effective with a variety of populations including English language learners.

Research shows that the same characteristics that make language programs effective for English proficient children also hold true for English language learners.ⁱ Over 30 years of research supports the effectiveness of Direct Instruction. DI's focus on learning to mastery and ongoing student assessment are especially helpful for students who are learning English as a second language.

“A first grader recently asked his teacher how to pronounce a word in the storybook he had taken home the night before for homework. His teacher explained what the word meant and used it in a sentence. Then, she asked why he was so interested in the word. He told her that he teaches his parents to read each night from the storybook, and they too didn't understand the word.”¹

- Leanne Morse, Principal of Wilson Primary School in Phoenix, Arizona

RESEARCH

- **A 2004 review of effective reading programs** found that most of the programs that are effective with “language learners were adaptations of programs also found to be successful with English-dominant students.” The reviewers noted that Direct Instruction has “been extensively evaluated with a wide variety of students.”ⁱⁱ
- **A 2003 review of experimental studies of reading programs for English language learners** found Direct Instruction to be among the programs with the strongest evidence of effectiveness.ⁱⁱⁱ

“It's just an amazing program, and it works with so many kinds of students. Corrective Reading is particularly helpful within our ESL program because it teaches non-English speakers how to identify letters and sounds very quickly. The father of one of our students said now that his daughter can read, he can't keep her out of the library!”²

- Louise Ann Simon, Teacher at South Tahoe Middle School in California

- **A 2002 study in Sacramento, California** found that a model based on Direct Instruction had a positive impact on English language learners. (Grossen, 2002)^{iv}
- **A 2000 article from the Oregon Research Institute** discusses a study that evaluated the effect of Direct Instruction supplemental education on K-3 students. The study found that Direct Instruction had a positive effect on reading skills for Hispanic students.
- **A 1985 report on a study of Direct Instruction** in a structured immersion program for Asian language learners found positive effects for reading achievement.^v
- **A 1982 follow-up study of mostly Hispanic fifth and sixth graders** in Texas who had experienced Direct Instruction in grades K-3 found strong and lasting effects on reading achievement.^{vi}

CASE STUDIES

- **Eshelman Avenue Elementary, Lomita, California**

During the 1998-1999 school year at Eshelman Avenue Elementary only 18 percent of the school's "fourth graders were at or above the national average. This was compared to 40 percent of fourth graders statewide." After Direct Instruction was implemented test scores rose dramatically. For example, "during the 2000-2001 school year ... 33 percent of Limited English proficient students scored in the 50th percentile or higher on the SAT/9 compared to only 17 percent statewide." ^{vii}

- **Wilson Primary School, Phoenix, Arizona**

"After implementing Direct Instruction in Grades K-3 at the start of the 1998-1999 school year, Wilson Primary teachers noticed something else important: Spanish-speaking Kindergarteners began acquiring excellent English skills by November of each year. [Principal] Morse said their skills also continue to improve into Grade 1." ^{viii}

"Social studies instructor Jeff Smiley remembers one sophomore ESL student who maintained a 'D' average for the first half of the year. 'Corrective Reading proves its worth gradually. During the second semester, after only a few months with Corrective Reading, this boy became a model student. He was self-motivated and a joy to have in class. He jumped to a 'B' average in a short time. Corrective Reading certainly helped increase his motivation, feeling of self-worth, and ability to participate.'"

- Jeff Smiley teaches at Colonial High School in Orlando, Florida

Quote References

1. McGraw-Hill Education. Results with Reading Mastery, 17.
<http://www.mheducation.com/programs/files/Results_with_Reading_Mastery.pdf>
2. McGraw-Hill Education. (2003). Results with Corrective Reading, 21.
<http://www.mheducation.com/programs/files/Corrective_Reading.pdf>
3. McGraw-Hill Education. (2003). Results with Corrective Reading, 9.
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The Baltimore Curriculum Project exists to improve educational opportunities for all Baltimore City Public School students through direct operation of charter schools and advocacy of policies that provide equitable opportunities for all city schools and students.

We believe that all students can learn when their teachers have effective tools and the training to use these tools; that all students deserve access to teachers with these tools and training; and that effective teaching tools are developed and improved through scientific research.

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- ⁱ Slavin, R. E., & Cheung, A. (2003). *Effective programs for English language learners: A best-evidence synthesis*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, CRESPAR, 39.
- ⁱⁱ Slavin, R. & Cheung, A. (2004 March). How Do English Language Learners Learn to Read? *What Research Says About Reading*, 61(6), 55.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Slavin, R. E., & Cheung, A. (2003). *Effective programs for English language learners: A best-evidence synthesis*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, CRESPAR.
- ^{iv} Addison, K. & Yakimowski, M. (2003). *An Evaluation of the Direct Instruction Program: A Report Prepared for the Board of School Commissioners*. Division of Research, Evaluation, Assessment, and Accountability, Baltimore City Public School System.
- ^v Gersten, R. (1985). Structured immersion for language minority students: Results of a longitudinal evaluation. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 7(3), 187–196.
- ^{vi} Becker, W. C., & Gersten, R. (1982). A follow-up on Follow Through: The later effects of the Direct Instruction model on children in fifth and sixth grades. *American Educational Research Journal*, 19(1), 75–92.
- ^{vii} McGraw-Hill Education. (2002). *Results with Reading Mastery.*, 17.
<http://www.mheducation.com/programs/files/RM_Results.pdf>
- ^{viii} McGraw-Hill Education. *Results with Reading Mastery*, 17.
<http://www.mheducation.com/programs/files/Results_with_Reading_Mastery.pdf>