

Direct Instruction



Standard #7: Planning for Instruction
Standard #8: Instructional Strategies

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this chapter, you should be able to:

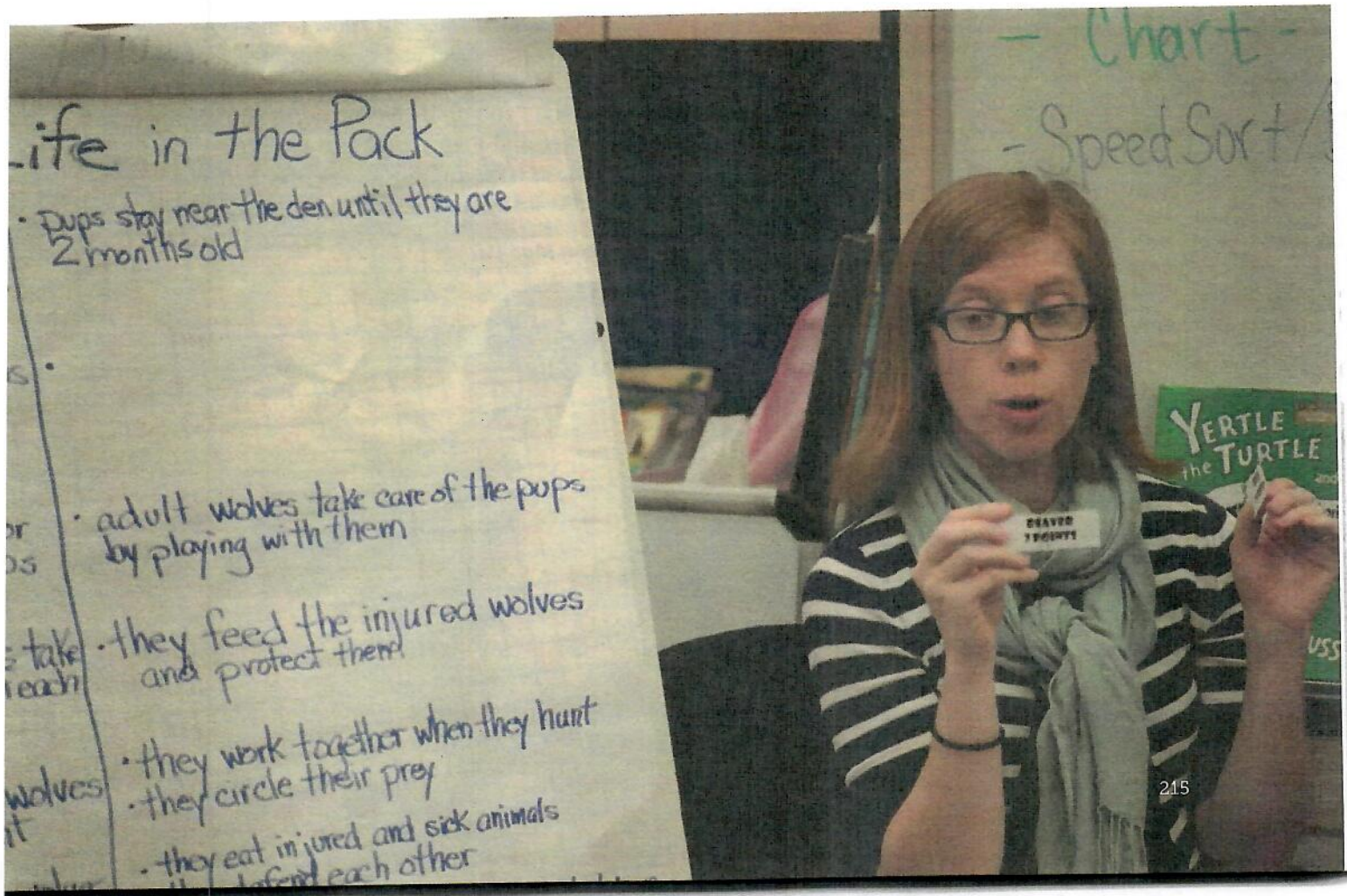
- 15-1** Summarize the fundamentals of the direct instruction lesson model.
- 15-2** Describe the teaching events that are part of direct instruction.
- 15-3** List the common uses of the direct instruction model.
- 15-4** Describe the key planning considerations for direct instruction lessons.

CHAPTER OUTLINE

- 15-1 THE FUNDAMENTALS OF THE DIRECT INSTRUCTION LESSON MODEL**
- 15-2 TEACHING EVENTS IN DIRECT INSTRUCTION**
- 15-3 USES OF DIRECT INSTRUCTION**

15-4 KEY PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

- 15-4a** Content Analysis
- 15-4b** Explanation
- 15-4c** Demonstration
- 15-4d** Supervised Practice



Introduction

A **lesson model** (see Figure 15.1) is an overall teaching approach that teachers use to guide student learning in a specific way toward the attainment of a lesson objective (Arends 2012). The first of three lesson models that we have included in this book is direct instruction. We selected it for inclusion because it is research based and highly effective. Its key

elements are straightforward, and critical teaching skills are embedded right into its lesson components. (See Chapters 4 through 8 for a review of those skills.) This model is relatively easy to learn and practical, making it an excellent addition to any teacher's repertoire of instructional methods and strategies.

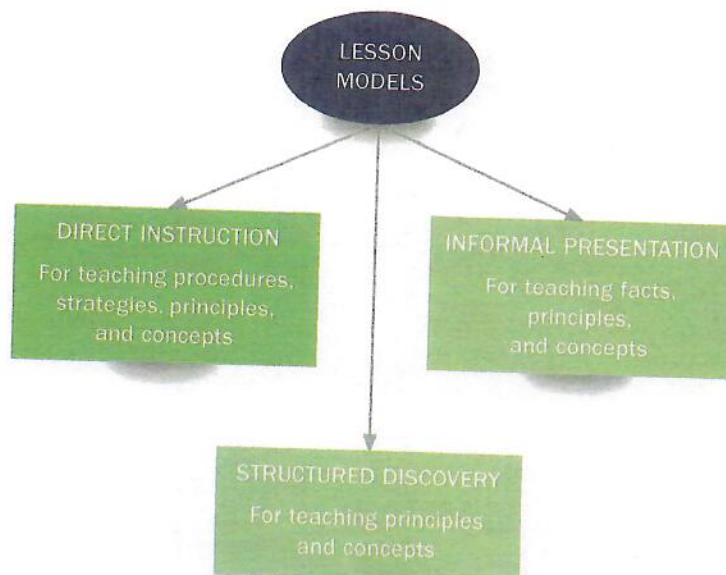
15-1 Fundamentals of the Direct Instruction Lesson Model

Direct instruction (di) is a teacher-directed lesson model, and it is an excellent example of **explicit instruction**. Archer and Hughes (2011) write, "In the quest to maximize students' academic growth, one of the best tools available to educators is explicit instruction, a structured, systematic, and effective methodology for teaching academic skills. It is called explicit because it is an unambiguous and direct approach to teaching that includes both instructional design and delivery procedures. Explicit instruction is characterized by a series of supports or scaffolds, whereby students are guided through the learning process with clear statements about the purpose and rationale for learning the new skill" (p 1). There is a large body of research that supports the effectiveness of direct, explicit teaching (Botts et al. 2014), and it is appropriate to be used at all grade levels

across content areas and in both special and general education classrooms (Archer and Hughes 2011).

There are a variety of terms that have been used to describe direct instruction. I do it—we do it—you do it, model-lead-test, and model-lead-reflect are a few. ("I do it" means that the teacher explains and demonstrates the skill, "we do it" means that the students do the skill with the teacher and peers, and "you do it" means that the students do it by themselves.) No matter the name, they all point to instruction where the teacher clearly and carefully guides the learning of students with an emphasis on success for all students. As the terms *direct* and *explicit* indicate, everything students need to know to meet the objective is clearly explained and demonstrated for them. However, students are active participants and the "we do it" and "you do it" elements are equally important. Fisher and Frey (2014) use the phrase *gradual release of responsibility* to describe the movement in a direct instruction lesson from the teacher taking all

Figure 15.1 Types of Lesson Models



responsibility for performing the task to the students assuming responsibility (i.e., becoming independent in using the new skill).

In this chapter, you will learn to create lesson plans following the direct instruction model. Knowing the components that need to be included allows teachers to develop their own lessons in any content area and at any grade level. Teachers plan how content will be explained and demonstrated, how students will be kept actively engaged, what practice opportunities will be needed, and how those activities will be supervised so that feedback can be given to students.

Note that you may also encounter the term *direct instruction* [often written as Direct Instruction (DI)] used to refer to published programs that provide scripted lessons. Reading Mastery, Spelling Mastery, and Corrective Reading are examples of these programs. Direct Instruction programs are designed to be used as written and can be highly effective in meeting the needs of a variety of students. DI programs are available in a variety of content areas and designed for a variety of grade levels, from preschool to high school. The term *Direct Instruction* used in this sense is different from the *direct instruction* we define in this chapter. See Figure 15.2.

McMullen and Madelaine (2014) write that researchers studying effective instruction suggest that both scripted DI programs and teacher-designed direct instruction plans have key elements in common, are explicit in nature, and find teachers

guiding students toward learning specific objectives—which is why the two terms are often used interchangeably.

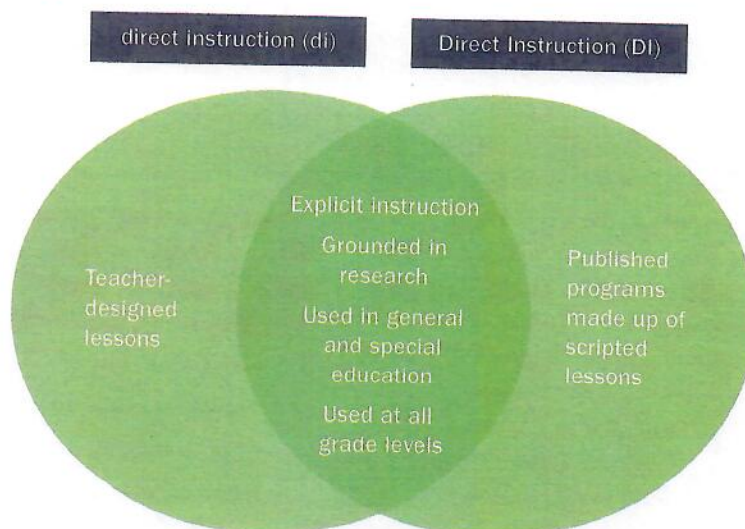
See Teaching Plans 1, 2, 4, 7, 9, and 10 in the Appendix for examples of direct instruction lesson plans.

15-2 Teaching Events in Direct Instruction

There are specific teaching events that occur in a direct instruction lesson as teachers lead students toward the short-term objective. (See Figure 15.3 for a more detailed description of each of the italicized words that follow.) Here is a description of the general sequence of those events:

- Teacher tells students directly what they will be doing and why, including clearly stating the short-term *lesson objective* and the *lesson purpose*.
- Teacher presents new information by using explicit *explanations*, *demonstrations/modeling*, and examples and uses frequent *checks for understanding* to determine whether students are learning the content or not.
- Teacher provides students with *supervised practice* opportunities before they work independently. Students receive feedback on their performance to ensure that they are practicing accurately.
- Teacher conducts an *evaluation* following successful practice where students perform the objective independently without help from anyone.

Figure 15.2 di vs. DI



- The teacher ties the lesson together with a *closing*.
- During the lesson, the teacher:
 - Presents content in small steps so students can master one part before moving to the next.
 - Keeps students actively engaged by including a variety of *active participation strategies* that prevent students from being just passive listeners.
 - Provides the students with *supports* and *scaffolds* as needed, but withdraws those as soon as possible.

Example 15.1 shows an example of these teaching events in a lesson about converting kilometers to miles.

EXAMPLE 15.1: SEQUENCE OF TEACHING EVENTS IN A DIRECT INSTRUCTION LESSON

TEACHER

- You're going to learn how to convert kilometers to miles; this is important if you are traveling in other countries. . . (point to objective on screen).
- Today you'll learn a quick way to estimate the answer in your head; tomorrow you'll learn how to use your calculator to get an exact answer.

TEACHER

- Imagine that your family is driving in Canada; your parent sees a police car and a sign that shows a 50-km speed limit and says, "Yikes! How fast should I be going?"
- Luckily, you know how to estimate the answer in your head:
 - Multiply the number of kilometers by 0.6 to convert to miles (point to formula on screen: $_\text{ kilometers} \times 0.6 = _\text{ miles}$).
 - A kilometer is shorter than a mile, so the answer in miles will be a smaller number than the number of kilometers.
- Watch and listen while I do this with our example: The number of kilometers is 50. I multiply that by 0.6 to change it to miles, so in my head I think 50×6 is 300, and then move the decimal: $50 \text{ km per hour} \times 0.6 = 30.0 \text{ miles per hour}$.

TEACHER AND STUDENTS

- What should you shout to the driver, everyone? 30 miles an hour!
- Let's try another: The family is hungry for lunch and the sign says it's 15 km to the next town—how many miles is that? Will they get lunch before they get too cranky?
- Point to the formula: What number do we put in the first blank? Everyone write it on their tablets and show me. Right—15. Now we multiply 15 by 0.6. Everyone do this in your heads and then write it on tablet and show me (and so on).

STUDENTS

- Practice by completing several new problems with a partner (alternating roles) as teacher monitors.
- Practice by completing problems individually as teacher monitors.
- Evaluation: Complete problems individually and independently

TEACHER

- Today, we've learned a practical skill and had more practice on multiplying decimals...

15-3 Uses of Direct Instruction

Direct instruction lessons play an important role in teaching a wide variety of content topics that lend themselves to being presented in steps or as sub-skills. Examples of this type of content are procedures (a series of steps), strategies (a specific type of procedure designed to help students learn, study or get organized), principles (relational rules, if/then), and concepts (categories of information). Take a look at Example 15.2. Notice that direct instruction is often, but not always, used to teach procedural knowledge (i.e., how to do something).

EXAMPLE 15.2: TOPICS THAT COULD BE TAUGHT USING THE DIRECT INSTRUCTION MODEL

PROCEDURES, INCLUDING

- How to serve in volleyball
- How to convert fractions to whole numbers
- How to initiate a conversation

(Continued from previous page)

STRATEGIES, INCLUDING

- How to read text with comprehension
- How to take multiple-choice tests
- How to proofread assignments

PRINCIPLES, INCLUDING

- If a sentence is a question, then it should end with a question mark.
- If $A(B + C) = D$, then $AB + AC = D$.
- When a CVCe word has a silent e at the end, it makes the previous vowel say its name.

CONCEPTS, INCLUDING

- Triangle
- Socialism
- Ecosystem

Direct instruction lessons also play an important role in lessons that emphasize higher-level thinking skills. Higher-level thinking cannot occur without having basic facts and information about which to think. The content taught in direct instruction lessons may form the foundation for lessons that emphasize critical thinking and problem solving. The following are some examples of how higher-level thinking is dependent on knowledge of basic skills and information:

- Mr. Singh wants his students to use the Internet as one resource for the reports they are writing about various countries around the world. He first teaches them Internet search strategies through direct instruction.
- Ms. Parker wants her students to design their own science experiments to test certain hypotheses. She first teaches them steps in the scientific method through direct instruction.

Direct instruction lessons also play an important role in the use of certain teaching methods (Arends 2012). For example, if you want to use cooperative learning groups or discussions in your lessons and activities, you will need to directly teach students skills such as reaching consensus, taking turns, active listening, and paraphrasing.

15-4 Key Planning Considerations

Figure 15.3 provides a summary of the components to be included in a direct instruction lesson. We discuss several of these components (content analysis, explanation, demonstration, and supervised practice) in more detail here, as they play an important role in teacher clarity.

15-4a Content Analysis

The content analysis for any lesson plays an important role in helping to make the instruction clear. This is because the analysis process requires the teacher to carefully examine the content so as to understand it better and to see its essential parts and their connections. This helps the teacher better organize the instruction to make it clear and easy to follow. Additionally, the teacher presents a written version of the content analysis to students and refers to it throughout the lesson. For example, suppose you are teaching a reading comprehension strategy. The steps of the strategy are posted for students to see, and as you teach the various steps, you refer to them as a way of emphasizing the steps. When you take time to thoroughly think through the content analysis, it can provide important focus for the entire lesson.

Content typically taught in direct instruction lessons are strategies, procedures, principles, and concepts. The content analyses for these lessons vary according to the content you are teaching. When planning “how-to” lessons (such as strategies and procedures), the content analysis will include a task analysis. When teaching a principle, you will write a clearly stated principle statement. Finally, when teaching a concept through direct instruction, include a concept analysis (see Figure 15.4). See Chapter 1 for more information on content analyses.

15-4b Explanation

Teachers need to plan how to **explain** the content of the lesson. This means the teacher tells the students all of the information they need in order to meet the lesson objective. Effective planning for this part of the lesson should include both a description of *what* you will explain and *how* you will explain it. The explanation section of the lesson body can occur before, during, or after the

each step or part of the information, followed by CFUs. Remember that calling on one student to paraphrase or give an additional example will not reveal whether all of the students understand. Include strategies that will allow you to check for understanding of *all* students. (See Chapter 7 for more information on how to check for understanding.)

15-4c Demonstration

Teachers need to **demonstrate**—show or model—the new knowledge or skill before, during, or after the explanation (see Photo 15.2). Sometimes it is helpful to demonstrate before the explanation and after it as well. Here are some things to think about when planning a demonstration:

1. Demonstrating can mean showing a *product* (e.g., “Here is a paragraph that includes a topic sentence and supporting details”) or modeling a *process* (“Watch as I make this foul shot,” or “Listen as I think out loud while developing my topic sentence”).
2. A skit or role-play can also be used to demonstrate a new skill. In most cases, the “doing” portion of a demonstration is accompanied by the teacher thinking aloud so students can hear what he is thinking.
3. Additional visual supports during the demonstration can help emphasize key points (e.g., point to steps on the poster as you think aloud).
4. It is typical for a teacher to show examples or demonstrate specific steps, but it is essential that they model the whole product or process as well (i.e., all steps together).
5. Teachers or other experts, rather than learners, should demonstrate the skill or process to provide a correct model for students to follow. This reduces the chance that students will misunderstand and incorrectly practice the new skill. You can certainly ask students to demonstrate later in the body of the lesson, but an expert should do the initial demonstrations/modeling (see Section 15-4d, Supervised Practice, for further information).

Note that teachers commonly forget to teach before asking students to practice. It is essential that teachers provide complete explanations, multiple

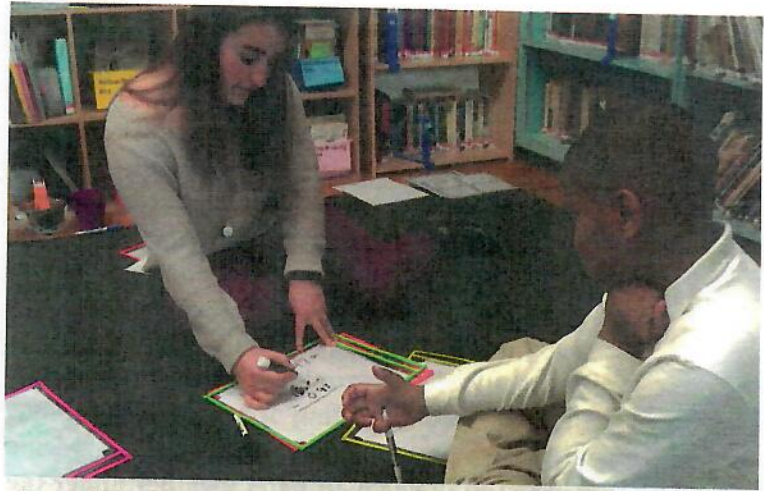


Photo 15.2 The teacher demonstrates decimal subtraction for her student.

examples, and thorough demonstrations. If you find this unnecessary, you are most likely planning a review or practice activity rather than a direct instruction lesson. Another common error that teachers make out of eagerness to promote active participation and involvement is to ask students to do the initial teaching. If students are able to do the initial teaching, you should be planning an activity rather than a lesson. You can keep students engaged in many ways without neglecting your responsibility to teach clearly and accurately.

Keep in mind that students may have difficulty staying attentive during long explanations and demonstrations even when you use active participation strategies. Consider dividing the content into steps or parts. Explain and demonstrate one part at a time, and have students practice that part. Then go on to the next part. Students will appreciate having more frequent opportunities to perform.

Recommendation 1b of the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) Practice Guide *Teaching Secondary Students to Write Effectively* is to “Use a Model-Practice-Reflect instructional cycle to teach writing strategies” (Graham et al. 2016). The level of evidence of support for this recommendation is strong according to the IES panel, and two of their key suggestions for implementing the recommendations are particularly applicable here: (1) Model strategies for students, and (2) provide students with opportunities to apply and practice modeled strategies.

or part of the skill/knowledge. You will follow this with supervised practice of the new content all together. When you are satisfied that students are accurate with the new learning, you will often go on to provide extended practice opportunities to build fluency and/or application of the knowledge/skill. Remember that although you will use

supervised (and extended) practice to assess student progress, these practice activities are not the formal evaluation. That will be a separate task or event to evaluate whether each student individually and independently meets the lesson objective (see Chapter 7 for more information on supervised practice).

Summary

Direct instruction is a very useful tool for teachers to have in their repertoire of methods and strategies. It can easily be used in conjunction with other models and provides high-quality instruction for all kinds of students and in all kinds of classrooms. Direct instruction is an important

model because of its strong research base and effectiveness across content areas and grade levels. Once a teacher has a solid understanding of the components of direct lessons, she can routinely create lessons that will be effective with a diverse group of students.

Key Terms & Definitions

Demonstrate: To show or model the new knowledge or skill to students.

Direct instruction: An instructional approach where the teacher explains and demonstrates, then the students perform the skill with support, then they perform the skill independently; a type of explicit instruction.

Explain: To tell students all of the information they need to know in order to meet the lesson objective.

Explicit instruction: A systematic, structured method of teaching where the goals and content are clearly and directly articulated for students.

Lesson model: An overall teaching approach that teachers use to guide student learning in a specific way toward the attainment of a lesson objective.

Practice activities: Opportunities for students to do/apply what was explained and demonstrated for them.

Portfolio Pointers

- Select lesson planning documents that show the use of direct instruction when that model is appropriate for the curriculum goal and for students' learning needs. (InTASC Standard 7: Planning for Instruction)
- Use videos to demonstrate your proficiency in using direct instruction strategies (explanation, demonstration, supervised practice) to support learner progress. (InTASC Standard 8: Instructional Strategies)