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# Dishing Direct Instruction: Teachers and Parents Tell All!

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## Dishing Direct Instruction: Teachers and Parents Tell All!

### **Abstract**

This qualitative study assessed overall parent and teacher satisfaction with Direct Instruction reading for students having low incidence disabilities at an approved, private-licensed school for exceptional children in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Results of four parent and four teacher interviews coupled with document analysis disclosed inadequate teacher training in Direct Instruction methodologies, an incomplete understanding of Direct Instruction on the part of the parents interviewed, and high rates of teacher and parent satisfaction with Direct Instruction methodology for teaching reading. Secondary findings included teacher infidelity to the Direct Instruction methodology and inadequate communication concerning reading instruction between school and parents. Recommendations for enhancing the teachers' and parents' experience of Direct Instruction are offered based upon the findings.

### **Keywords**

Special Education, Direct Instruction, Reading Instruction, Teacher Perceptions, Parent Perceptions

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## **Dishing Direct Instruction: Teachers and Parents Tell All!**

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*This qualitative study assessed overall parent and teacher satisfaction with Direct Instruction reading for students having low incidence disabilities at an approved, private-licensed school for exceptional children in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Results of four parent and four teacher interviews coupled with document analysis disclosed inadequate teacher training in Direct Instruction methodologies, an incomplete understanding of Direct Instruction on the part of the parents interviewed, and high rates of teacher and parent satisfaction with Direct Instruction methodology for teaching reading. Secondary findings included teacher infidelity to the Direct Instruction methodology and inadequate communication concerning reading instruction between school and parents. Recommendations for enhancing the teachers' and parents' experience of Direct Instruction are offered based upon the findings. Keywords: Special Education, Direct Instruction, Reading Instruction, Teacher Perceptions, Parent Perceptions*

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### **Dishing Direct Instruction: Teachers and Parents Tell All!**

Direct Instruction has long been hailed as a viable method for providing reading instruction to students having disabilities. While a large number studies conducted to test the efficacy of this approach have been done with students having high incidence disabilities, a relatively few have been conducted with students having low incidence disabilities. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 defines low incidence disabilities as “a visual or hearing impairment, or simultaneous visual and hearing impairments; a significant cognitive impairment; or any impairment for which a small number of personnel with highly specialized skills and knowledge are needed in order for children with that impairment to receive early intervention services or a free appropriate public education” (20 U.S.C. 1462 § 662(c)(3)). With the inclusion of students having low incidence disabilities in high stakes statewide testing programs, additional emphasis has been placed on identifying instructional methodologies that produce results with this population. As a classroom teacher of students having low incidence disabilities, I used a Direct Instruction program to teach beginning decoding skills to my students. I have been most satisfied with the results obtained through this approach to reading instruction. In fact, perhaps it works too well in some cases. I modeled the title of this paper after a tabloid headline because one of the parents participating in the study reported that her son, after participating in a Direct Instruction reading program, has now taken to reading the headlines of the tabloids when they are waiting in line at the grocery store.

While I believe that Direct Instruction works with students having low incidence disabilities, I wonder how other teachers perceive the program and how parents of students taught using this methodology perceive the program. Therefore, I conducted this qualitative study to answer the following research questions:

1. To what extent do teachers utilizing Direct Instruction in Reading express satisfaction with this methodology as compared to other methods in Reading instruction they have utilized?
2. To what extent have teachers utilizing Direct Instruction in Reading received formal or informal training in the methodology of Direct Instruction?
3. To what extent do parents express satisfaction with their children's progress in the acquisition of decoding skills through Direct Instruction in Reading?
4. To what extent do parents understand the methodology utilized in Direct Instruction reading approaches?

### **Literature Review**

Much has been written over the past 30 years about the efficacy of Direct Instruction for teaching students with disabilities. The overwhelming preponderance of this literature has focused on the methodology's use with children having high incidence disabilities, and has established fairly consistently the efficacy of Direct Instruction with this population (Branwhite, 1983; Chabernain, 1987; Cooke, Gibbs, Campbell, & Shalvis, 2004; Haring & Krug, 1975; Kuder, 1990; Marston, Dena, Kim, Diment, & Rogers, 1995; O'Connor & Jenkins, 1995; O'Connor, Jenkins, Cole, & Mills, 1993; Richardson, DiBenedetto, Christ, Press, & Winsberg, 1978; Stein & Goldman, 1980). Less research has been conducted investigating the use of Direct Instruction with students having low incidence disabilities, but what has been done supports its use with this population (Bracey, Maggs, & Morath, 1975; Booth, Hewitt, Jenkins, & Maggs, 1979; Flores, Shippen, Alberto, & Crowe, 2004; Glang, Singer, Cooley, & Tish, 1992; Gersten & Maggs, 1982; Gregory & Warburton, 1983; Maggs & Morath, 1976; Young, Baker, & Martin, 1990). In a review of the literature base on Direct Instruction, only two studies employed qualitative designs (Dakin, 1999; Woolacott, 2002). Dakin (1999) interviewed three teachers concerning their philosophies of teaching reading and their styles and methodology of phonics instruction (p. 5). She found that the three teachers she interviewed demonstrated a common philosophy that emphasized systematic, phonics-based instruction. She further observed that "teacher consensus and attitude was a highly relative and pivotal component to the reading program success" (p. 40).

Woolacott (2002) used a series of three semi-structured interviews to assess the beliefs and methods of two reading teachers, as well as to identify factors impacting the development of their philosophies. She found that neither teacher emphasized decoding skills, but this is not surprising because both teachers were working with students at the upper primary level, where the focus would have shifted from "learning to read" to "reading to learn."

The dearth of qualitative literature concerning Direct Instruction suggests a need for the current study, which adds to the body of quantitative literature on this topic.

### **Methodology**

This descriptive study utilized the techniques of ethnography to identify common themes that might shed light on the research questions proposed. Interviews and document analysis served as the primary tools for data collection.

## Setting

The setting for this study was an approved, private-licensed school for exceptional children. The school serves approximately 85 students, ranging in age from 4 to 21. The school is staffed by 10 female teachers, as well as approximately 25 classroom or personal care aides. The school operates under budgetary constraints. These limited resources impact teacher salaries, which are well below the average earned by public school teachers in the general region, and the availability of resources, including professional development opportunities for the teachers.

The students enrolled in the school typically have multiple cognitive, communication and behavioral disabilities. Their public school districts sponsor most of the students to attend the school. However, there are a small number of students whose families choose to pay the tuition for their enrollment.

## Participants

The participants in this study included four teachers and four parents. The teachers were selected because they utilize a Direct Instruction reading program in their classrooms. The teachers ranged in age from 24 to 46 years old, and had various levels of teaching experience. The teachers' demographic information is summarized in Table 1 below.

TABLE 1: Demographic characteristics of Teacher Participants

Teacher	Education	Experience	Certification Areas	Ages of Students
Suzie	B.A., Special Ed M.S., Special Ed	26 <sup>th</sup> year teaching	Special Ed	11-13 years old
Jennifer	B.A., Elementary Ed M.Ed., Special Ed.	14 <sup>th</sup> year teaching	Elementary Ed Special Ed Vision Ed	5-8 years old
Chris	B.S. Elementary Ed M.S., Special Ed expected 5/2007	2 <sup>nd</sup> year teaching	Elementary Ed (not yet certified in Special Ed)	9- 11 years old
Marie	B.A., Music Ed M.S., Special Ed expected 12/2006	1 <sup>st</sup> year teaching	Music Ed Special Ed	8-12 years old

The parents participating were all female, ranging in age from mid-30s to mid 40s. These mothers were diverse in terms of their educational experience. The parents' demographic information is summarized in Table 2 below.

TABLE 2: Demographic Characteristics of Parent Participants

Parent	Education	Age of Child	Child's Disability	Number of Years Child in DI Program
Iris	B.A., Special Ed	9 years old	Down Syndrome	In 2 <sup>nd</sup> year
Fern	2 years college	11 years old	Down Syndrome, ADHD, Hearing Impairment	In 5 <sup>th</sup> year
Holly	High School	12 years old	Down Syndrome	In 3 <sup>rd</sup> year
Rose	High School	9 years old	MR	In 2 <sup>nd</sup> year

## Data Collection

I used two primary methods to collect data. First, I conducted a structured interview with each participant. I developed separate interview protocols for use with teacher and parent participants. All teacher interviews were conducted at the school during one week. The parent interviews were conducted in a variety of settings across a 2-week period that included the same week that the teachers were interviewed. Each interview was audiotaped and transcribed verbatim. Interview tapes, field notes and transcripts were encoded to ensure confidentiality. I asked the parent participants to select a pseudonym from women's names with a floral or plant theme. Teachers were asked to select a woman's name as a pseudonym. Each participant reviewed her completed interview transcript to ensure accuracy in the transcription process and to verify that the transcript contents accurately portrayed her point of view.

The second method of data collection I employed in this study was document analysis. I reviewed two sets of documents. Publisher program materials related to the Direct Instruction program being used by the teachers were evaluated. Additionally I analyzed correspondence between the teachers and the parent participants to identify themes relating to the Direct Instruction program that might be present in the correspondence. This correspondence took the form of a "take-home" notebook that the teachers and parents use to write notes to each other as the need arises. Teachers and parents review the notebooks each day to identify and respond to any new entries. The content of the notebook entries deals with a wide assortment of topics related to school and classroom administration, reports of student behavior and other typical classroom events.

## Data Analysis

In this study, the combination of structured interviews, member checking and document analysis provided for triangulation of data. Triangulation, or evaluating the data from multiple, independent sources, is important for validation of research findings and adds credibility to the research conclusions. First, the use of a standard protocol with each participant insured that all participants answered the same questions, asked in the same way. Second, member checking enabled the teachers and parents interviewed to review their individual transcripts for accuracy. Third, an additional analyst independently analyzed the data. Findings were then compared to ensure accuracy. A fourth means of triangulation was document analysis. Both publisher training materials and students' take home notebooks were analyzed to determine whether these artifacts agreed with the teachers' and parents' reports.

## Results

### Teacher Interview Data

To analyze interview data, I conducted case-comparative inductive analysis of interview data across participants to identify any themes arising from the interviews that might shed light upon the research questions. In case-comparative analysis, data across individual cases are compared to identify common themes and patterns. An inductive approach qualitative analysis "involves *discovering* patterns, themes, and categories in one's data. Findings emerge out of the data, through the analyst's interactions with the data, in contrast to *deductive analysis* where the data are analyzed according to an existing framework" (Patton, 2002, p. 453). Emerging themes and patterns were then used to identify the teachers' perceptions concerning the effectiveness of Direct Instruction methodology.

Using this process, I considered each teacher's response to each interview question. Having typed their responses, I laid out each question with its associated responses and then considered whether there were similarities between the respondents. Where consistency was noted, as seen below, I considered a theme to have emerged from the data. This is consistent with Khan and VanWynesberg (2008), who describe cross-comparative analysis as "a research method that facilitates the comparison of commonalities and difference in the events, activities, and processes that are the units of analyses in case studies" (p. 1).

My analysis of the teacher interview transcripts disclosed three major themes: (a) a lack of training in the Direct Instruction reading program adopted for use in their classrooms; (b) divergence from the publisher's teaching script and prompting conventions; and (c) an overall satisfaction with the results of Direct Instruction with their students having low incidence disabilities.

### **Training**

Each of the teachers interviewed commented on her lack of training in Direct Instruction. I noted this when I asked, "What kinds of training have you received in Direct Instruction methodologies?" The first teacher participant, Suzie, responded,

Well actually I haven't had much training in that area. What I learned I learned from observing, reading the manuals, and also from the [audio] tape. The Reading Mastery program always comes with a tape that demonstrates the way each lesson should be presented.

Jennifer echoed this theme, stating,

Actually there was no formal training. I read the manual to the book, and it's accompanied by a cassette, too, that I just played, so I kinda, you know, there was no formal instruction, read the manual and listened to the cassette. Oh, and I did observe another teacher presenting a lesson.

Chris and Marie reported this same dearth of formal training as well. Of her college course in reading instruction, Chris observed,

It wasn't really that detailed. I mean we basically looked through a textbook series of Direct Instruction, just kind of saw how it was laid out, and you know, it wasn't anything like teaching a Direct Instruction lesson while in college, but we were able to look at the books and kind of see how they were structured and then kind of got a basic overview of why they were structured the way they were structured, and the repetitiveness and that kind of thing.

Marie noted,

As far as the technical aspects of Direct Instruction, I really don't know anything because in my reading class that I've taken as a Masters [degree requirement], it wasn't even brought up. Direct Instruction was not even brought up. I had to bring in a manual to show the class what Direct Instruction even was, and all that I know about Direct Instruction was what I was shown by the teacher that I worked with previously before I took over the classroom.

Each teacher interviewed reported minimal informal training and no formal training at all.

### **Presentation**

The second theme that emerged through the teacher interviews revolved around the issue of fidelity to the publisher's lesson script. Although one of the hallmarks of Direct Instruction is precision and fidelity to a scripted lesson, including verbal and manual prompting procedures, the teachers disclosed only moderate levels of instructional fidelity to the program. When asked about fidelity to the procedures, Chris confessed,

The teacher's manual has a real concrete way of presenting it and I don't really do it that way because I think that the kids find it boring when I have tried to do it like the exact way they said out of the book, and using the exact wording that they use in the book.

Jennifer and Marie also admitted to modifying the verbal and physical prompting for their students. In fact, of the four teachers interviewed, only one, Suzie, claimed to adhere to the DI script in her lesson presentation,

Well, as far as flexibility, there is some, but I found that if you could stay as closely to the materials as possible and use them in the format that has been offered, it is much more beneficial to the students because they get into a certain routine.

### **Teacher Satisfaction**

The third theme that emerged during the teacher interviews was a common sense of satisfaction with the use of the Direct Instruction methodology for teaching reading to children having low incidence disabilities. When I asked, "Some teachers have said that they like Direct Instruction reading. Others have shared that they hate Direct Instruction. How do you feel?" Suzie responded,

Well I really like it. I could see how the people that said that they hated why they would hate it because it seems stilted and monotonous, but I like it because when you see the results of the students' progress, it totally outweighs that one little area.

Marie and Chris echoed Suzie's point of view, and Jennifer summed up her response saying, "Again, if you would have asked me probably a year ago, I would have been one of the haters, but I'm a firm, strong believer in it."

Thus the data suggests that each of the four teachers I interviewed, expressed, in her own way, a high level of satisfaction with Direct Instruction as a methodology for teaching reading to students having low incidence disabilities.

### **Parent Interview Data**

My comparison of data collected from the parent interviews disclosed three additional themes:

1. parents demonstrated an incomplete understanding of Direct Instruction methodology;



2. parents believed that they received consistent communication from teachers regarding their children's progress in Direct Instruction;
3. parents reported high levels of satisfaction with the Direct Instruction program being used to teach their children reading.

### **Parents' Understanding of Direct Instruction**

Each of the parents interviewed disclosed an incomplete understanding of how their children's reading program operates. In response to my question, "Can you tell me about how the Direct Instruction program operates?" Iris expressed uncertainty, giving an answer that was representative of the four parents' responses,

I don't know exactly how it operates. It's a thing, a very basic understanding if it's correct, it's a lot of repetition, a lot of group work, (pause) and that's about rhyming kind of thing, I think there's rhyming in there, isn't there too?

### **Communication with School**

With regard to my question concerning how much communication they received from school about their children's reading program, the parents' responses were mixed. Iris described the communication as

Notes, paperwork that come home with him. Practice words for him to practice saying and writing, there were workbook pages that we were doing at home, circling and identifying words that were the same and matching them.

Fern observed that the communication she receives is

not as much as I would like, and I know that most of that comes from them [teachers] being very busy and not having time to write me the lengthy notes that I would really like to see. So most of the time I feel pretty out of the loop as far as how they're teaching him; what they're working on.

Holly felt differently. She notes

I'm pretty well informed. I mean I know what the goals are through the IEPs and different ways that they're trying to teach her and, you know, from the spelling words that are coming home I'm seeing that it's, you know, all the same pattern with all the different phonics.

Rose also believes she has been kept well informed.

I'm very involved with my son and his school. His teachers and I write back and forth everyday. We actually email and we talk if there's any problems on my end or any problems on their end. I get the sight words or the spelling words.

## Parent Satisfaction

Each of the parents I interviewed disclosed a high level of satisfaction with their children's progress in the Direct Instruction reading program. This was evidenced by comments like the following from Fern,

well, he's reading quite fluently now at probably a second or third grade level – that's a guess . . . Oh he's reading all the time now. If we're in the grocery store, he's reading,

he's reading all the containers, all the boxes, plus we're standing in line, he's reading the front of the tabloids (laughs) which wouldn't be my first choice for him.

When he's watching a movie, he likes to put on the subtitles so that he can read along with whatever he's watching; so he reads or attempts to read all the time, and he'll even try to make sense of license plates and things that maybe aren't words. He's using his decoding skills to try to figure them out . . . at this point, he's doing as well as I would expect him to be doing in his reading, so I'm very pleased with where he is right now.

Holly notes,

In the last year it's been amazing how she has just really come along. I mean honestly, the past six to nine months it has been amazing because more and more there are words that she knows and she's reading, I forget, on her last IEP it was I think 49 words a minute, and that wasn't anywhere near that at all last year at this time. So I'm very happy with her progress.

Rose also demonstrates satisfaction, stating,

I like it. I think that it's, I don't know if it's structured is the right word, but it's, it's – Daniel needs to get from point A to point B – you can't change up on him. So he needs to start at one point, know what he's doing, understand what he's doing – and I think that's what that program does. It starts, and it starts out small, and then progresses and gets into longer sentences or more words but it's — I think it's very understandable for him and he knows where it's going to go or how it's going to lead, and I think that's very important for him.

While Iris declined to express her level of satisfaction with the Direct Instruction program, saying, "I don't have an opinion yet about it," she notes about her son's progress, "he's picking up and learning, the words he recognizes are increasing and so I can tell that he's really learning and he's picking up more words that he recognizes in the books that we read."

Based upon the interview data, I surmise that the parents interviewed are satisfied with Direct Instruction as a reading program for their children with low incidence disabilities.

## Discussion

A total of six themes emerged from the interview data. The three themes relating to the teachers were:

1. a lack of training;
2. deviation from structured scripts;
3. a high level of satisfaction.

The themes relating to the parents were:

1. an incomplete understanding of the program;
2. a belief that they are adequately informed about the program; and
3. a high level of satisfaction with the program.

### Themes Relating to Teachers

Each of the teachers interviewed reported having received minimal informal training and no formal training in Direct Instruction. The training that they received came from their own efforts to review the manuals that the publisher provides, to listen to the audiotape of instruction that the publisher provides and to observe a colleague presenting Direct Instruction lessons. In an effort to triangulate the interview data relating to training, I reviewed the publisher materials for the programs that the interviewed teachers use. I noted that each “kit” included a Teacher’s Guide, a Testing and Management Handbook, a Teacher’s Take-Home Book and a pamphlet outlining behavioral objectives for the series. There was also an audiocassette included in each kit that enables teachers to listen to a sample lesson being presented. Three of the four teachers interviewed indicated that in addition to reviewing these materials, they had observed another teacher presenting a lesson.

The implications arising from this data are twofold. First, the school does not provide adequate training in the methodologies and materials being adopted for classroom use. Second, none of the four teachers interviewed were exposed to Direct Instruction methodologies during their teacher preparation programs. Inasmuch as Direct Instruction has been increasingly adopted in recent years as a part of school reform models to respond to No Child Left Behind, this may indicate a revision to college curricula and in-service teacher training is needed. The expectation of the publishers of Direct Instruction curricula is that the script and the prompting hierarchy provided in the teacher presentation manual are going to be followed meticulously. This is important because the script and the prompts have been designed in such a way as to maximize each student’s exposure to the concepts being taught as well as to maximize the students’ opportunities to respond, and therefore, to be reinforced. Because Direct Instruction is rooted in the behavioral contingency of stimulus-response-reinforcement, teacher fidelity is critical. Absent adequate training at either the pre-service or in-service level, such fidelity is not to be expected. Indeed, the teachers interviewed mentioned departing from the scripted procedures during their teaching.

Therefore, the second theme arising from the teacher interview data related to their level of fidelity to program implementation. Direct Instruction involves teaching from a field-tested script which has been honed to provide the most effective and efficient instruction possible. Each of the teachers interviewed disclosed varying degrees of infidelity to the programmed script. The implication that this has for instruction is that their lessons may not be as effective in terms of student rates of acquisition as they might be were the teachers to present the scripted lessons verbatim. This finding raises questions for future

research, particularly since Direct Instruction reading programs have typically been developed for use with high incidence disability populations. It may well be that modification is acceptable and even necessary in order to achieve similar results with students having low incidence disabilities given their diversity.

Despite their admitted lack of training and deviation from scripted DI procedures, the third theme that emerged from the teacher interviews was an overall satisfaction with the use of Direct Instruction reading programs in their classrooms. All of the teachers interviewed indicated that they liked using the programs. The reasons that they offered centered around the fact that it provided a routine to which their students could easily adjust. Each of the teachers indicated that having a script from which to work, even if she modified it during lesson presentation, made her instruction easier. The teachers expressed satisfaction with their students' progress in the program as well. Even though they admitted lack of training in the mechanics and theory of Direct Instruction, these teachers found the program beneficial for their students with low incidence disabilities.

### **Themes Relating to Parents**

Three themes also emerged from the parent interviews. These themes included

1. an incomplete understanding of Direct Instruction;
2. a belief that they are adequately informed about the program; and
3. a high level of satisfaction with the program.

Each of the parents interviewed evidenced an incomplete understanding of the program. All of the parents interviewed understood that the instruction included phonetics and repetition. They understood that it was structured in some way. However, all four of the parents talked about their children's progress in terms of sight word vocabulary. They described the sight word lists and spelling lists that were sent home for practice as being an integral feature of the Direct Instruction programming. This is noteworthy because sight word acquisition is not a feature of Direct Instruction, which focuses entirely on letter-sound correspondences and decoding skills. While spelling is introduced at higher levels of the program, its introduction at the level of the curriculum where these parents' children were being instructed represents a teacher supplementation. Additionally, the teachers of these parents' children have implemented a sight word drill program based on the Dolch List that is separate from the children's Direct Instruction reading program. The implication of this finding is that clear communication about the program is lacking in the school's correspondence with parents. It may be that parents simply trust that schools will provide whatever is needed for their children. However, it would seem reasonable that if parents understood *how* their children were being taught, they could be more effective in supporting and reinforcing that instruction at home.

A second theme arising from the data dealt with the parents' perceptions of the communication they received from the school. Three of the four parents interviewed indicated that they were well informed about their children's reading program and that they received regular communication from their children's teachers concerning their progress in the reading program. However, document analysis contradicted their statements. Review of the children's correspondence notebooks from the preceding school year disclosed a total of nine messages concerning reading, six of which were from the teachers to the parents. Four of these messages concerned sight word drills. One message was sent concerning Direct Instruction and one message conveying a progress report. Of the messages sent from parents to teachers, two messages concerned sight word lists and one expressed satisfaction with the

child's progress. The other form of communication sent from the school to the parents were the children's quarterly IEP reports, which outlined the students' progress toward their IEP goals, which included progress in the Direct Instruction reading program. While the parents reported being pleased with the level of communication that they have received concerning Direct Instruction and their children's progress, the documentary evidence suggests that such communication has been minimal. Only one parent, Fern, noted dissatisfaction with the level of communication, reporting that the communication received is,

not as much as I would like, and I know that most of that comes from them being very busy and not having time to write me the lengthy notes that I would really like to see. So most of the time I feel pretty out of the loop as far as how they're teaching him; what they're working on.

These findings suggest that parents may not be as aware of what goes on in their child's school as perhaps they should be. While the exigencies of a busy classroom, especially one which serves several children with multiple disabilities, make it difficult for teachers to write lengthy and frequent progress reports to parents, I would suggest that some kind of parent training opportunity about Direct Instruction be provided so that parents are better informed about the philosophy and theoretical bases of Direct Instruction. If parents knew what to look for, then they will be better equipped to reinforce reading behaviors in the home. I see that as a necessary first step to assisting the students to maintain their reading skills over time and across environments. Skill maintenance and generalization outside the training setting is a concern with children having intellectual disabilities. Additionally, the better that parents understand the mechanics of Direct Instruction, the simpler the progress reporting format can be. A simply designed progress reporting form might make it easier for teachers to provide more frequent progress notes.

The third theme observed in the data related to parent satisfaction. Each of the four parents interviewed indicated that she was satisfied with her child's progress in reading. Despite the apparent lack of understanding of the mechanics of their children's reading program and the minimal communication received, these parents believe that their children are making progress at a rate that is commensurate with the parents' expectations.

### **Limitations**

The small number of teachers and parents interviewed, as well as the fact that the study involved only one school, limits the generalizability of the findings of the present study. However, the findings do provide insight into teachers and parents understand about Direct Instruction reading programs and what they believe about its efficacy.

### **Conclusion**

This study was undertaken to address four research questions. Both the teachers and the parents interviewed reported satisfaction with the Direct Instruction methodology, and for the most part, they reported being highly satisfied. Consequently I can conclude that from the perspective of the teachers and parents interviewed, Direct Instruction is an effective method for teaching reading to students having low incidence disabilities. Teachers reported a very limited informal training in the methodology and parents demonstrated an incomplete understanding of the methods being used to teach their children reading. These findings lead to the following recommendations:

1. Professional development or in-service training should be provided to teachers in the area of Direct Instruction;
2. An orientation to the Direct Instruction reading program should be provided to parents at the beginning of each school year.
3. More consistent communication should be established between school and home concerning the students' reading progress.

The research base on Direct Instruction has overwhelmingly been targeted toward students having mild disabilities. The findings of the current study suggest that Direct Instruction may be effective with the low incidence population as well. The findings here highlight the need for additional research, but at least from the perspective of these teachers and parents, Direct Instruction works, and sometimes, too well. As one parent, Fern, notes, "Oh he's reading all the time now. If we're in the grocery store, he's reading all the containers, all the boxes, plus we're standing in line, he's reading the front of the tabloids..."

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