

## DIRECT INSTRUCTION

### There's more to consider

Only the most firece proponents of science of reading are still out there banging that drum and preaching the accolades of the SOR movement. And that's OK. SOR will get pushed aside in favor of the next buzz word in education. The true proponents of reading instruction remain in the trenches, continuing to do what they have always done for decades: use best teaching practices to deliver effective reading instruction.

Direct instruction (DI) is just one factor to effective teaching. The idea behind DI is to provide information and instruction in a prescriptive, structured, and sequenced manner. As dry as that may sound, it doesn't have to be.

DI is most effective if delivered creatively. It is up to the teacher to make lessons as fun and exciting as possible. Be a sage on the stage....entertain.....do what you need to do to keep the students' eye on the prize.

Keep in mind, with direct instruction, we are trying to prevent misunderstanding and misinterpretation of concepts; especially those involved in learning to read. With a much stronger push for children to learn these reading skills at a much younger age, DI will definitely

speed that process and present strategies that can be used repeatedly as more complex skills continue to be introduced.

Direct instruction is very well suited for students in grades K - 4. This is the primary level where structure is needed. There needs to be a strong foundation of rules that can be relied on before we turn loose the creative abilities and the development of logical reasoning and problem solving.

Studies have shown that students with a strong foundation based on direct and systematic instruction have a better ability to fine tune their creative brain cells. We usually don't start seeing these creative quirks come out until late elementary and into Jr. and Sr. high.

Because the direct instruction approach was



used in the early years, foundational skills are strongly imbedded. Faster learning and creative problem solving skills were a residual effect of

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## Systematic Review

are free to download. You'll need Alphabet Playing Cards (**Item APC**) or 30-Sided Letter Dice (**Item LD**). Both of these items can be ordered from the site. Games let kids practice previously taught skills without them even realizing they are practicing.

### BIG PICTURE CONCEPTS

Basic sound and word skills are important but don't miss the big picture. Understanding things like what vowels/consonants are, what a digraph is, what a syllable is, and what the different syllable types are will be helpful as students learn each of their rules. In addition to the sound and word reviews, complete a "syllable type review" each week. Strong recognition of the different syllable types and their rules helps students break down longer words. Give students words and ask them to identify the different types of syllables. Have students build words within these different syllable types as well.

### WHERE TO BEGIN

You will work through a variety of previously learned concepts. Use a scope and sequence that is clearly outlined, since you will always instruct patterns in the same order.

Record data day-to-day, if not, week-to-week noting what patterns are causing students to struggle. You should be able to pull from your "games" tool box to review, reinforce and enrich.



## 30-Sided Letter Dice

(Item LD)

These have been a staple in VoWac's list of recommended materials.

A pair is included with every teacher kit. They can also be purchased individually, as pairs or a class-pack of ten.

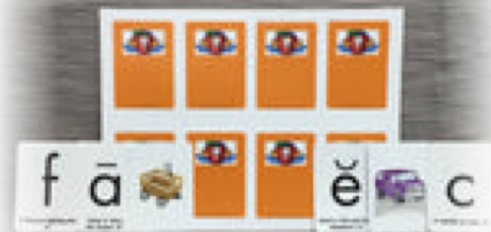


## Alphabet Playing Cards

(Item APC)

Available only from VoWac, Alphabet Playing Cards can be used in countless ways.

They come with blue or orange backs. Each 64-card deck contains a card with the letter and catchphrase and a corresponding picture card. The APC can be purchased in single decks or a class-pack of ten.



## FREE GAMES & ACTIVITIES

Visit VoWac's website, [www.vowac.com](http://www.vowac.com), and download free games and activities for the Alphabet Playing Cards and 30-Sided Dice.

**IN A TYPICAL CLASSROOM...** about 15-20% of your students will learn to read **with no direct instruction**. It won't hurt them, but they don't need it. On the other hand, about 40% of your students will learn to read **as long as direct instruction** is provided. 20% of your students will learn to read with **additional supports and direct instruction**. 15-20% of your students need **significant support through explicit, systematic instruction**.

# Somethin's gotta give...

Editorial Comment  
John Pfeifer, President  
VöWac® Publishing Company

Nation-wide, the statistics are telling us that 60% or more of our children are NOT proficient in math and language arts... 60%.....60%!!!

Having given this much thought, there are things I simply cannot blame. Oh, I want to, but I cannot. One thing I cannot blame is parents....even though I strongly believe that education starts at home, I believe most parents are doing the best they can with the parenting skills they have. Quite frankly, most parents are doing a pretty darn good job.

So how do we come to 60% of our children being nonproficient in key subject areas.

Breaking it down, I come up with three possible points of contention.

1. We have children that simply cannot be taught. Yeah, I don't buy that for a second!

2. We have a country absolutely full of incompetent administrators, teachers. and school board members. OK...there may be a fair number of this group that should give up their day job. But for the most part, I don't believe the level of incompetence stretches that far.

3. The curriculum choices provided to schools are lacking - at best. Schools form committees every year to recommend adoptions of this publisher's curriculum or that one - doesn't matter. Curriculum selection by committee often ends up being an exercise in mediocrity.

So let's stay on this third possibility and peel it

open a couple of layers. Let's call this machine the educational establishment. This establishment includes ALL of schools' leadership - teachers, administrators and school boards. We expect the decision wheel to be data based, sensible, sensitive to children's needs, and empathetic in terms of what we're doing to improve performance.

The futures of school boards, administrators and teachers too often have nothing to do with student success. We introduce and implement wall-to-wall failures; a blind experimentation that certainly would not be permitted in any other field. And it's done year after year, after year. Education needs a big kick in the pants. Bringing back 60% of our children will be impossible through evolution. There are far too many things way out of place.

Education is routinely placed in the hands of legislators, most of whom have no idea of the inner-workings of a classroom. Why do legislators vote the way they do?!? FOLLOW THE MONEY! Education publishing is a BIG BUSINESS! There is a ton of money that exchanges hands. The major publishers are going to protect that at all cost - no changes in curriculum offering unless it is legislated. There's the tail wagging the dog.

Back to square one... curriculum choices provided to schools are lacking. I hope you have some other food for thought. Over 60% ... Really? Are you ok with that?

**All things being equal, a student in an effectively organized school achieves at least a half-year more than a student in an ineffectively organized school over the last two years of high school. If this difference can be extrapolated to the normal four-year high school experience, an effectively organized school may increase the achievement of its students by more than one full year. That is a substantial school effect indeed.**