

DELIBERATE AND DIRECT TEACHING

“Is rejection a sign of great innovation?”

Year 10 teacher Charles Peck asks his students. The students in his London classroom have been studying Ayn Rand’s novella *Anthem* and tracking the main character’s evolution. The class has just read a chapter in which the main character has presented a new invention to his society, only to be persecuted for it. Mr. Peck has selected an informational article that illustrates a complementary psychological phenomenon: that people often react negatively to new ideas because of fear of the unknown. He wants his students to have a better understanding of what motivates the characters in the text, so he chose to provide them with an outside source to consider.



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Mr. Peck recognizes that simply assigning a book and wishing for the best isn’t likely to have the impact he wants. The article he selected is a challenge for these 15-year-olds, and the author has a decidedly strong point of view, one that might cause students to simply go with the author’s opinion, rather than question it. The teacher knows that direct instruction is an essential aspect of his teaching, and he plans on using an element of the approach, called teacher modeling, to demonstrate to students how he interrogates a text to determine the author’s opinion. “Based on past evidence of impact that I’ve collected about my teaching, students tend to accept Rand’s perspective at face value. The question

isn't a matter of validity of argument, but rather whether a critical reader digs underneath assumptions to query positions." He continued, "I've learned that I need to be deliberate about modeling and thinking aloud using a critical reading stance. She's such a talented author, and many readers hesitate to read against the text, not just with the text." (Mr. Peck's full lesson plan can be found in Figure 3.1.)

Figure 3.1 Lesson Plan for Year 10 Using Texts in Context

<p>Assessed Need: I have noticed that my students need: <i>To evaluate texts by looking for loaded language to determine an author's opinion.</i></p>
<p>Standard(s) Addressed: <i>Key Stage 4 Reading: Understand and critically evaluate texts to distinguish between statements that are supported by evidence and those that are not, and identify bias and misuse of evidence.</i></p>
<p>Text(s) I Will Use: <i>"Why Rejection May Be a Mark of Great Innovation"</i></p>
<p>Learning Intention for This Lesson: <i>We will consider the author's message and point of view in relation to the structure so that we can evaluate the information presented.</i></p>
<p>Success Criteria for This Lesson: <i>I will write a response to this information that includes my opinion and supporting evidence, and compare or contrast it with the author's point of view (use argumentation rubric).</i></p>
<p>Direct Instruction:</p> <p>Model: Strategies/skills/concepts to emphasize</p> <p><i>Use of structure to convey opinion</i></p> <p><i>Name the strategy, state its purpose, explain its use: Use title to set the author's purpose (bold statement with corresponding headings). I am modeling how I look for structural cues that suggest the author's point of view. When I am reading an opinion piece, I look carefully for terms and examples that show the author's opinion.</i></p> <p><i>Analogy: Strategic organization is like a commercial in the sense that all the most convincing evidence is up front, while the less convincing "fine print" is always at the end (and stated really, really quickly!).</i></p> <p><i>Demonstration: Reverse outline the paragraphs and note the headings: <u>Blame it on the brain stem; No point of reference; No trust.</u></i></p>

Errors to avoid: I have to be careful that I don't form my own opinion too soon and stop reading altogether just because I might disagree. I need to keep reading and give the author time to make his case, before I settle on my opinion.

Assess the skill: Write at least one question in the margin of each paragraph that challenges the author's message.

Guide and Scaffold: Questions to ask

- 1: *How does the author use different techniques for conveying her message?*
- 2: *The author claims the reptilian brain causes us to fear change. What evidence might refute her idea that this part of our brains is no longer useful?*
- 3: *What do you want to independently verify in this paragraph? What statements might you challenge?*

Assess: These are the students who will need further support

Eugene, Alyssa, and Mandy will need me to support them through the second paragraph, while the rest of the class is reading independently.

Dialogic Instruction:

Teacher-Directed Tools

N/A

Student-Enacted Tools

After reading, students will meet in Four Corners to determine similar opinion groups (strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree), and then work together to list arguments in favor of or opposed to the idea that rejection is a mark of great innovation.

Assess: These are the students who will need further support

Amir, Tevin, and Stephanie

Feedback Opportunities: *I will meet with the smallest group first so that they receive feedback about their list. Given a smaller number, they may need further support.*

Independent Learning and Closure: *Students will write an exit ticket that provides their opinion with evidence, using the argumentation rubric as a way to self-assess before submitting. As part of the closure, I will summarize the main points of the lesson and foreshadow the next lesson.*



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The *VISIBLE LEARNER*

When asked about reading challenging texts, eighth grader LaShunna said, “It’s not always easy for sure, but it does keep things from getting boring. I like when the teacher gives a little clue on what to read for; then it’s my job to find those things. Having to dig for certain things keeps it fun and keeps me thinking pretty hard, but it feels like I can do it.”

Similarly, twelfth grader Terrence said, “My teacher is always giving us things that she says she read in college, and since that’s where I know I want to end up, I want to try to understand the reading. I’m motivated to do it because we practice all the time and keep getting better.”

The visible learner seeks, is resilient to, and aspires to challenge.

To be sure, direct instruction has gotten a bad rap in some quarters. In fact, it might be one of the most misunderstood instructional approaches out there. Impressions about direct instruction usually cluster into three categories:

1. It is scripted and didactic.
2. It is inflexible.
3. It devalues teacher judgment.

Yet walk into virtually any effective classroom and you will see direct instruction in action. Don’t believe us? Interview colleagues you have identified as being highly successful with their students, and ask them to reflect on the methods they frequently employ. You might ask,

- When planning, do you have a clear idea about your learning intentions?
- Do you consider it important for students to know what the criteria for learning success are, and to be held accountable for their learning?
- Is it important to draw students into the lesson by appealing to their interests, curiosities, and wonderings?
- Are modeling and demonstrating skills and concepts part of your repertoire?
- Does checking for understanding have a place in your lessons?

- Should a lesson include guided instruction such that learners can practice new skills and concepts, with feedback from the teacher?
- How important is it to close a lesson with a summary to organize student thinking and consolidate learning?
- Should students have time to try on new learning independently in novel situations?

Chances are good that the talented teachers you identified affirmed that each of these actions is vital for students' learning. Adams and Engelmann (1996), in their meta-analysis of direct instruction, named each of these as necessary components of direct instruction. To limit one's understanding of direct instruction to highly scripted programs is to overlook the practices that make it highly effective for developing surface level knowledge. With an effect size of 0.59, direct instruction offers a pedagogical pathway that provides students with the modeling, scaffolding, and practice they require when learning new skills and concepts. John notes that

when we learn something new . . . we need more skill development and content; as we progress, we need more connections, relationships, and schemas to organize these skills and content; we then need more regulation or self-control over how we continue to learn the content and ideas. (Hattie, 2009, p. 84)

In other words, whether we are 5 or 45, we follow a trajectory that moves from surface learning to deeper learning, and we transfer some of that learning such that we can utilize it in lots of new and seemingly dissimilar situations. It is quite possible that you have applied a teaching technique or two over the years to your own unsuspecting family members, even though no one told you to do so.

Perhaps you are still reluctant to entertain the possibility that direct instruction might be effective. We invite you to try it and evaluate it yourself using your students' learning as a measure. We would be remiss, and would fail to convey the full message of visible learning, if we did not restate that knowing your impact on your students is the truest yardstick you'll ever possess (Hattie, 2009). We don't mean your gut instincts, or your impressions, or your anecdotes, but the fact that you determine the impact of your teaching on your students and adjust accordingly. Finding out what they know and don't know at the beginning of a unit of study, teaching, and then assessing again at the end of the unit furnishes feedback to you about the impact of your teaching.

EFFECT SIZE
FOR DIRECT
INSTRUCTION = 0.59

To limit one's understanding of direct instruction to highly scripted programs is to overlook the practices that make it highly effective for developing surface level knowledge.

Figure 3.2 Questions About Direct Instruction in Your Lessons

- When planning, do you have a clear idea about your learning intentions?
- Do you consider it important for students to know what the criteria for learning success are, and to be held accountable for their learning?
- Is it important to draw students into the lesson by appealing to their interests, curiosities, and wonderings?
- Are modeling and demonstrating skills and concepts part of your repertoire?
- Does checking for understanding have a place in your lessons?
- Should a lesson include guided instruction such that learners can practice new skills and concepts, with feedback from the teacher?
- How important is it to close a lesson with a summary to organize student thinking and consolidate learning?
- Should students have time to try on new learning independently in novel situations?

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Imagine meeting a seventh grader who didn't know how to write a two-part thesis. It is hardly appropriate, then, to ask him to write a two-page persuasive paper with a clear controlling idea. Of course giving students a thesis to write with instead of having them develop their own wouldn't provide an opportunity for mastery either. They also need to practice and receive feedback. Telling students what a two-part thesis does and showing them how it works with a model text would help them begin to break the code for unlocking this type of writing. For example, let's say that there is a small group of students in class who struggle to find the thesis or controlling idea in the texts they read. The teacher might say, *"Today we are going to learn how to find an author's main idea, in other words, her thesis."* Reading the text aloud, the teacher could model, saying, *"When I see the title of this article, I realize that this can provide me with a heads-up of what this text might mostly be about. I also know that most writers will tell me their main idea in the first few lines or paragraph of their writing."*

The teacher might then provide students with opportunities to read the text together and collect other clues about the author's main purpose: *"Let's look at the main idea in each paragraph. Do they seem to have a com-*

mon theme? Can we find a line that ‘sums up’ what all these paragraphs seem to be about?” “Yes, this sentence seems to cover all of our paragraphs.” Over time, and with practice, the students will recognize how a thesis controls the body paragraphs of a text.

But that’s not writing a thesis; it’s learning how one works. To write one, students will need to see how their own writing should follow a logical organization centered around one controlling idea. Following the recognition of how a thesis works in a model, students could try to write a “thesis” for a one-paragraph response. For example, teachers might propose a topic and model how they might develop a paragraph around an idea related to this topic. Through direct instruction, the teacher may model what details to include and which to leave out. The teacher could then propose a new topic and have students try out the same process alone or in groups. After the students practice a bit, the teacher might change the topic again to practice the method again. The role of direct instruction cannot be minimized (see Figure 3.2).

Although this chapter is not about writing instruction per se, we seek to profile the many ways teachers provide direct instruction for students who are learning a wide range of skills, strategies, or concepts. Because the first two steps in the list—learning intentions and success criteria—have already been examined in the previous chapter, we will confine our discussion in this chapter to

- Relevance
- Modeling
- Checking for understanding
- Guided instruction
- Closure
- Independent learning

RELEVANCE

All learners, whether they are 16 years of age or 36-year-old educators, crave relevance. By that, we mean that an important driver of learning is in understanding *why* the acquisition of a new skill or concept is important in one’s life. Think about all of those ubiquitous how-to videos on YouTube. Quite frankly, many of them are boring, unless you actually have a need and desire to learn something. Figuring out how to tie a necktie, or making the new tortilla iron work (something Doug had to figure out one evening), makes those videos infinitely more interesting, because there’s a reason to learn something.



Video 8 Relevance

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Relevance facilitates intrinsic motivation, and those who are intrinsically motivated to learn tend to persist in their learning when they confront challenges.

Importantly, relevance facilitates intrinsic motivation, and those who are intrinsically motivated to learn tend to persist in their learning when they confront challenges (Meece, Anderman, & Anderman, 2006). Relevancy doesn't mean that all your lessons need to ensure success in a career, but rather that learners can see how the learning intentions apply in their lives. Why are writing conventions important? It helps us communicate with precision and accuracy. Why are literary devices important? Knowledge of them helps us interpret the underlying meaning of a text.

Tenth-grade teacher Theodore Taylor knows that relevancy is key for his students. For instance, at the beginning of a lesson on identifying how an author uses counterclaims, Mr. Taylor set the learning intention and success criteria and then said, *"It's always important that we think about why we are learning something. If you're not sure, you should always ask, 'Mr. Taylor, why are we learning this?' I want to make sure we can always explain why we are learning something."* He then points to the board and reads his purpose statement: *"Today we are working on identifying how an author uses counterclaims for a specific audience in order to understand how arguments change depending on their audience."* After noting the success criteria for this learning target, he then goes on to explain, *"Skilled writers anticipate counterclaims and address them. Your use of counterclaims prevents others from punching holes in your argument."*

The **VISIBLE LEARNER**

Kaitlin, a student in Mr. Taylor's class, asks his teacher during a small group conference, *"I know counterclaims are really important, but I'm wondering if they can ever 'undo' the hard work I put into my argument. Is there a way I can use them to show I know what the audience is thinking?"* Mr. Taylor responds, *"That's a really important point, Kaitlin. I think we should keep this in mind as we look at how different writers do this before we start writing our own counterclaims. How confident do you feel in pointing out the counterclaims in this text?"*

Kaitlin responded, *"I think I found, one, but I know there are more in there. I'm looking for signal words or phrases that we learned earlier, so I think I'm on the right track. I'll check in with Shayna [another student] after I finish annotating this to make sure I didn't miss any."*

Visible learners can articulate their next learning steps.

TEACHER MODELING

There was a fascinating series of studies that began with neuroscientists in the 1990s who noticed something surprising. When they measured brain cell activity of monkeys that were watching the movements of other monkeys, such as picking up a banana, they found that specialized brain cells called motor neurons in the observing monkeys were active, even though these observing monkeys were sitting still. Interestingly, these were some of the same neurons that became active when the observing monkey was the one doing the motion. So, the monkey *watching* and the monkey *doing* used a lot of the same brain cells, and the cells were similarly active (Rizzolatti & Craighero, 2004). Later, researchers showed that these mirror neuron systems in the human brain function similarly to understand the intentions of others (Iacoboni et al., 2005). When you observe someone else doing something, you use many of the same neural pathways as when you perform the same action yourself. These mirror neuron systems may help explain the power of teacher modeling, not to mention how babies learn and why fads and trends spread so quickly.

Teacher modeling processes can trigger similar responses in observing students. Through modeling, students can be taught to think aloud about their own cognitive decision making and problem solving, providing teachers with further insight into students' grasp of skills and concepts. Providing examples of thinking is useful, but effective modeling includes an explanation of *why* teachers are doing what they are doing, so that students understand *how* the teacher was able to think, not just *what* the teacher was thinking.

Pair With Think-Alouds

When teachers explain their expert thinking in a way that students can understand, students are better able to imitate the thinking of their teachers. We're not looking for students to simply replicate the work of the teacher but rather to explore the ways that other people think. Thinking is invisible, so teachers have to talk about their thinking. By listening to a teacher think, students are guided through the same cognitive processes that the expert uses, as if they were apprentices. Teachers who open up their minds to describe their cognitive and metacognitive processes for their students call these narrations *think-alouds* (Davey, 1983). As noted in Figure 3.3, there are common steps in teacher think-alouds (Fisher, Frey, & Lapp, 2009). Of course, teachers don't use all of these each time they think aloud. They pick and choose the aspects of the think-aloud necessary to build students' strategic thinking.

Teaching Takeaway

Model for students such that they can approximate the thinking of an expert.



Video 9 Modeling

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Figure 3.3 Design a Think-Aloud

Possible Features to Model	Features You Plan to Model
1. Name the strategy, skill, or task.	
2. State the purpose of the strategy, skill, or task.	
3. Explain when the strategy or skill is used.	
4. Use analogies to link prior knowledge to new learning.	
5. Demonstrate how the skill, strategy, or task is completed.	
6. Alert learners to errors to avoid.	
7. Assess the use of the skill.	

Source: Adapted from Fisher, D., Frey, N., & Lapp, D. (2009). *In a reading state of mind: Brain research, teacher modeling, and comprehension instruction*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.



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The “I” and “Why” of Think-Alouds

Think-alouds use “I” statements. A lot of teachers say “we” or “you” in their explanations, but “I” statements—using a first-person pronoun—do something different and more powerful for the brains of students. They activate the ability—some call it an instinct—of humans to learn by imitation. We have worked with teachers who actually think that they are using “I” statements, when they are saying the word “you” (a second-person pronoun) in their explanations. Or, they will start their think-alouds with “I” and then switch to “you” at some point in their explanation. The second-person pronoun is directive; the first-person pronoun signals the sharing of intentions.

These people are not delusional. Rather, teaching is such a complex skill that it can be difficult for teachers to use the exact words that they’d planned on using, or to remember exactly what they said at a time when they were also thinking about 32 (or more) young people, considering formative evaluation results, wondering whether they’d been talking for too long, and thinking as an expert, all simultaneously. Allowing

teachers to video- or audio-record their think-alouds, and then giving them the opportunity to watch or listen to the recording, has been very useful in helping teachers over this hump. Knight (2014) and his colleagues at the University of Kansas have analyzed the work of teachers and instructional coaches as they interacted with video- and audio-recordings of lessons, and found that these tools propelled improvements in instructional quality more effectively than lesson debriefing alone. Similar effects were seen with individual teachers who coached themselves by watching videos of their own teaching. Advancements in digital technology have made it possible for teachers to wear a small device that remotely signals the video camera to turn and follow them as they teach, eliminating the need for another person to operate the camera.

Another strategy is for teachers to use written notes that include the word *because*. It's important to explain *why* you're thinking what you're thinking. If you don't, students experience an example but do not know how to do what you're doing on their own. Using *because* reduces the chance that students will be left wondering how you knew to do something or why you think a certain way.

For example, while modeling the comprehension strategy of predicting, the teacher might say, *"Based on what I just read in this paragraph, I'm anticipating what might come next. I expect the writer to explain [insert content] because she referred to it but didn't provide an explication yet."*

A teacher modeling word solving might say, *"When I encounter a word or phrase I don't know, I look first for structural cues, such as affixes to figure out the part of speech, and derivations, such as Latin and Greek root words."*

Including the *why* or *because* while modeling increases the chance that students will be able to imitate the expert thinking they have witnessed, because they are provided with examples and the reasons for those examples. Thinking about your thinking is a metacognitive act, and students will start to think more metacognitively when they hear others, including their peers, do so.

Seventh-grade teacher Simone Okeke's students have been working on analyzing how elements of a story interact to create meaning. This is a complex skill that is developed over many lessons, so Ms. Okeke routinely models how she applies this comprehension skill using the many texts they read. The previous few days, she read the opening chapter from *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*, a novel about racism in America during the Great Depression. The story features a family of sharecroppers and follows the experiences of Cassie Logan, a nine-year-old girl. As Ms. Okeke reads the chapter aloud, students became acquainted with the struggles Cassie and her classmates encounter when they are given

"I" statements do something different and more powerful for the brains of students. They activate the ability—some call it an instinct—of humans to learn by imitation.

EFFECT SIZE
FOR METACOGNITIVE
STRATEGIES = 0.69

subpar materials to learn from. Once the students have a foundational knowledge of the conflict of the story, Ms. Okeke returns to the chapter to model and think aloud about how she connects this isolated experience the characters have to the time and place of the novel (her full lesson plan can be found in Figure 3.4 on pages 58–59). After establishing the learning intention and success criteria, she begins,

Today I'm going to model and think aloud about how I understand clues from a text and what they tell me about the effect the setting has on the characters in the story. [names strategy]

We've done this before, and today I'm going to use it with part of Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry, the novel we're currently reading. Understanding how setting drives a story helps me to understand deeper themes of the book. [describes purpose]

Authors don't usually tell us directly how the setting affects the characters, because if they did the book would be really long and seem like an informational article rather than a story. Most authors give us subtle clues to find. That's what I mean by reading like a detective. I need to find the clues to unravel the mystery about the choice of setting. [provides analogy]

The clues I'm looking for are words, actions, and details about the setting or objects in the story. [explains use]

Ms. Okeke reads aloud a section consisting of six lines from the selected passage, and then she demonstrates where she locates clues.

As I'm reading I keep track of clues like a detective, to see how the environment my characters are in might affect them. One clue I am noticing is here [points to passage]. The narrator says Little Man is sucking in his breath and throws down his school book. I know he's upset and it has to do with the books, but I wonder why? I know this book must have something to do with the way the children feel they are treated, because the narrator also makes a point of telling me the books are dirty. I know if I was given something damaged or dirty, I would feel upset, but I'm still not sure why the children actually received the books this way. I'll keep looking.

Rereading, she pauses on the phrase “stamped on the inside cover was a chart that read. . . .” [Cassie sees that the book has been used and given to them after it has been discarded by classes of White children].

That's a huge clue! The author was hinting that something was wrong with the books, but now I know why. Not only were the

students given subpar materials, I see now that it is because the children are African American. I know I would be so upset if I was treated unfairly because of how I looked, and this is what is happening to the children in the story. I would probably act very poorly, actually. What do you think will happen to Little Man after he throws the book?

Ms. Okeke continues, now demonstrating how she makes connections between the setting and the characters' behavior.

It says now that Little Man is getting whipped for acting out. Now, that might have been expected at the time this story takes place. It's the 1930s, and hitting a child might have been seen as a just punishment for throwing a book, but now I see why Little Man did it. Is he just a brat?

[The class responds with a resounding "No!"]

Right. He was reacting to something unjust, which is a product of the time he lives in. I feel like I understand him, and where he lives, much better.

She then explains that she needs to put these clues together to avoid an error:

When I read, I sometimes just want to follow the plot of the story without asking myself why the author made certain choices, but I know there is much more to learn about how elements like a setting shape how characters act, like in the part where we discover why Little Man is so upset. [rereads] Now that I know the why, I can reread the beginning of that scene and really understand why Little Man appears to be acting like a brat. It also gives me insight into Cassie and Miss Crocker, and I can compare how racism affects them similarly to or differently from the way it affects Little Man. [assess the skill]

In the next part of her lesson, she will use questions to scaffold their learning, in order to check for their understanding of the comprehension strategy she modeled for them.

STUDENTS SHOULD THINK ALOUD, TOO

Have you ever had a student come to the front of the room to show how she figured out a solution, only to watch her explain it in a way that guarantees nobody else will learn from it? Students leading the class

If you want students to explain their thinking or their solution, you will need to teach them how to do this explicitly.

Figure 3.4 Lesson Plan for Seventh Grade Inferring the Affect of Settings on Characters Using Multiple Clues

<p>Assessed Need: I have noticed that my students need: <i>To connect setting with character development.</i></p>
<p>Standard(s) Addressed: <i>EKS Grade 7: (6) Reading/Comprehension of Literary Text/Fiction. Students understand, make inferences and draw conclusions about the structure and elements of fiction and provide evidence from text to support their understanding. Students are expected to:</i></p> <p><i>(A) explain the influence of the setting on plot development.</i></p>
<p>Text(s) I Will Use: <i>Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry</i></p>
<p>Learning Intention for This Lesson: <i>We will look for character reactions and plot details to assess how setting influences character development.</i></p>
<p>Success Criteria for This Lesson: <i>I can find and explain evidence of how setting affects characters in a graphic organizer.</i></p>
<p>Direct Instruction:</p> <p>Model: Strategies/skills/concepts to emphasize</p> <p><i>Use the passage where Little Man throws the book to model my thinking about the word clues I find about how setting influences the character's actions. Since we read the entire chapter this week, this will be a "zoom in" on the text.</i></p> <p><u>Name the strategy, state its purpose, explain its use:</u> <i>Authors don't directly tell us when parts of a story are related--that would be boring and take too long. They expect the reader to infer the character's feelings by using words, actions, and pictures. I am going to look closely at the first part of the schoolhouse scene to find these clues.</i></p> <p><u>Analogy:</u> <i>When I read, I am always looking for clues like this, just like a detective does when she's solving a mystery. I gather up the clues to figure out what might be happening.</i></p> <p><u>Demonstration:</u></p> <p><i>Actions to model: "Little Man bit his lip. . . ."</i></p> <p><i>Relation to setting: "The blank lines continued down to line 20 and I knew that they had all been reserved for black students."</i></p> <p><u>Errors to avoid:</u></p> <p><i>If I just read for plot points, I may think Little Man is just being a brat, when in fact he is rightly upset.</i></p> <p><u>Assess the skill:</u> <i>Read the passage again using the correct vocal tone.</i></p> <p>Guide and Scaffold: Questions to ask</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>1. What are the words, actions, and picture clues that tell us how Little Man is feeling? How Cassie is feeling?</i> <i>2. What clues are we given as to why Little Man and Cassie are so upset? How does this relate to the surroundings they live in?</i>

3. Miss Crocker is upset with the students now, but why? What words and actions, by her and the children, help us understand this?

Assess: These are the students who will need further support

I will reread the text with Aubrey, Ignacio, David, and Alexis because they struggled with the fantasy element of the story yesterday when we read it for the first time.

Dialogic Instruction:

Teacher-Directed Tools

Students will complete a simple graphic organizer about Little Man, Cassie, and Miss Crocker, listing three pieces of evidence + inferences about how the setting is related to the actions of the characters.

Student-Enacted Tools

Students may use the graphic organizer provided or one of their own choosing.

Assess: These are the students who will need further support

Marla seems to have trouble with the graphic organizer--check if it is a misunderstanding about the tool or the text. Also, Jacqueline and Brandon both lacked evidence in their last submission.

Feedback Opportunities: I check for understanding with students at tables 2, 4, and 5 to listen to their evidence. These same students will then partner with classmates at tables 1, 3, and 6 to share their evidence.

Independent Learning and Closure: Students are finding evidence on their own, and after meeting with partners, will add any new examples. They will be provided opportunities to reflect on this experience and ask questions about areas of confusion and what they still would like to learn.

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through their solution paths can be very powerful, and the way this is done shouldn't be left to the pedagogical skills of an untrained child. Rather, if you want students to explain their thinking or their solution, you will need to teach them how to do this explicitly. One way to do this is to debrief after your think-alouds, explaining what you did. Figure 3.5 includes a checklist useful in self-assessing aspects of a think-aloud. If you use this checklist to debrief your think-alouds, your students can use it as a guide when they are leading. Other students can hold the demonstrator accountable for following the guidelines, and, ideally, they will hold you accountable when you do yours as well.

Figure 3.5 Student Think-Aloud Checklist

- Let your listener(s) read through the entire question or text before you begin your think-aloud.
- Use “I” statements.
- Summarize the text/comments/claims briefly.
- Speak loudly enough for your partner(s) to hear.
- Don’t go too fast or too slow.
- Locate contradictions when possible and resolve them.
- Identify areas for more research.
- Make sure your think-aloud doesn’t go on for more than five minutes.



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The eleventh-grade students in Sandra Lopez’s class have been reading Richard Hofstadter’s “Abraham Lincoln and the Self-Made Myth,” a selection from *The American Political Tradition*. In this piece, Hofstadter challenges widely held beliefs about Abraham Lincoln in order to compel his readers to think about how we understand history. Ms. Lopez and her class have read all of the selections previously, and she wants her students to use the think-aloud checklist to explain their thinking when faced with a text that invites questioning and extra research.

To refresh their memories, she reviews the checklist using one of the readings from the book. “I selected Luis to be my partner because of his distractibility. Being in the fishbowl with me will keep him focused,” she said.

After completing the teacher think-aloud, Ms. Lopez hosts a short discussion, using questions to guide students’ thinking in order to circumvent possible difficulties. She asks students, “*When I lost meaning in the second paragraph, what did I do to regain understanding?*” and “*How did Luis use the headings to keep himself on track?*” After the class discussion, she has each student partner with another student to think aloud about a section from the text. Ms. Lopez’s lesson is in Figure 3.6 on pages 62–63.

Greg and Maritza choose Part IV, the section about Lincoln’s visit to a New Orleans slave auction. Greg speaks first:

EFFECT SIZE FOR
SELF-VERBALIZATION
AND SELF-
QUESTIONING = 0.64

Okay, so this part is basically about the famous legend that Abraham Lincoln saw slaves being sold and felt like he was pierced in his heart. Essentially, he swears he will get rid of slavery if he ever gets the chance. But, Hofstadr is saying that isn't true! I can't believe it, but the guy who was supposedly with him wasn't ever there. According to this. I personally would like to research this a little bit because I'm just not convinced yet that this huge part of the Lincoln legend is a lie.

Now Maritza continues:

When we looked at this part earlier, we were told to look out for any sort of language that would show the author's bias. I agree that the part where Hofstadr says, "We know that he refused to denounce the Fugitive Slave Law, viciously unfair though it was," shows that the author is upset. I'd like to investigate more where Hofstadr got his information so I can really trust him.

The pair then evaluates each other's performance, agreeing that they both used "I" statements, spoke loud enough to be heard, and identified areas of the text that they had questions about for further research. "We also were right to the point and didn't drag it out too much," said Maritza.

The **VISIBLE LEARNER**

Greg and Maritza, students in Sandra Lopez's eleventh-grade class, do not tell each other answers. Rather they support each other through questions and prompts. They provide hints to one another, much like their teacher has modeled. For example, when Greg gets frustrated with a section of the text, Maritza says, "It's okay, let's just think about what we know already about this guy and his ideas and see if we can't figure the rest out. It's kind of fun to see how annoyed he is with the Lincoln legend."

Visible learners positively support their peers' learning.



Video 10
Visible Learners
Support Their Peers

<https://resources.corwin.com/vi-literacy6-12>

CHECKING FOR UNDERSTANDING

Effective teachers check for understanding throughout their lessons, using a variety of approaches, especially by examining the oral and written language of their students. The most common method is in posing questions to students, especially to gauge comprehension (Durkin, 1978/79). However, the type of question posed signals to students what kind of knowledge is of value, and what is not. Studies of the knowledge

Figure 3.6 Lesson Plan for Student Think-Alouds

<p>Assessed Need: I have noticed that my students need: To use academic language to express ideas.</p>
<p>Standard(s) Addressed: 11–12.1.D: Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives; synthesize comments, claims, and evidence made on all sides of an issue; resolve contradictions when possible; and determine what additional information or research is required to deepen the investigation or complete the task.</p>
<p>Text(s) I Will Use: Passage from “Abraham Lincoln and the Self-Made Myth”</p>
<p>Learning Intention for This Lesson: We will use spoken language and visuals to share ideas with others.</p>
<p>Success Criteria for This Lesson: Think-aloud checklist</p>
<p>Direct Instruction:</p> <p>Model: Strategies/skills/concepts to emphasize</p> <p>Review the student think-aloud checklist to reinforce knowledge of elements.</p> <p><u>Name the strategy, state its purpose, explain its use:</u></p> <p>I am going to model how I use the think-aloud checklist to help me remember all the things I should do when I think aloud for a partner. When I remember to do these, I help my partner understand.</p> <p><u>Analogy:</u> When I go to the grocery store, I have a list so I don't forget to buy something I need. The think-aloud checklist helps me remember everything.</p> <p><u>Demonstration:</u> Think aloud using sections from “Abraham Lincoln and the Self-Made Myth.” I am going to think aloud today with Luis. First, I will read the checklist to myself to make sure I remember everything I am looking for. I know I need to let my partner read first, so he knows what I am talking about. Next, I will use “I” statements to summarize what I think the section is about. I will point out areas that I find to be particularly effective, keeping in mind that I also want to identify areas where I am left with questions. For example, this passage makes it sound like the author is jealous: “No man ever had an easier time of it in his early days than Lincoln. He had . . . influential and financial friends to help him; they almost fought each other for the privilege of assisting Lincoln. . . . Lincoln was a pet in his family.” I wonder if there is a way to confirm this statement. Maybe I could do more research.</p> <p><u>Errors to avoid:</u> One mistake would be to talk too softly. It would be hard for my partner to hear if I am too quiet.</p> <p><u>Assess the skill:</u> I will check with my partner to ask how I have done. Luis, can you give me feedback using the checklist?</p> <p>Guide and Scaffold: Questions to ask</p> <p>What can be hard about thinking aloud?</p> <p>How will you know you have been successful?</p> <p>If you are having a difficult time, how could you get help?</p> <p>Assess: These are the students who will need further support</p> <p>I am thinking aloud with Luis as my partner so he can be more actively engaged in this lesson.</p>

Dialogic Instruction:

Teacher-Directed Tools

Students will complete the checklist with their partners to rate how they did.

Student-Enacted Tools

N/A

Assess: These are the students who will need further support

David, Kenny, Angelica, Omar, and Kimberly need to be monitored for use of the checklist.

Feedback Opportunities: I will listen to the think-alouds that Scott, Miteesha, Jacque, and Thomas perform with each other. The rest of the class will get written feedback on their checklists.

Independent Learning and Closure: Students will select a section of "Abraham Lincoln and the Self-Made Myth." They will receive feedback from their peers using the checklist and note at least one area in which they would like to grow.



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type needed to answer the majority of teachers' questions are discouraging, as the evidence suggests that the majority require only recall and recognition, the lowest order of critical thinking (Bintz & Williams, 2009; Zohar, Schwartz, & Tamir, 1998). In order to engage in deeper levels of thinking, students need questions that scaffold and probe, rather than interrogate.

Use Questions to Probe Student Thinking

Questions that check for understanding are a crucial aspect of direct instruction. But the best teachers probe deeper, for more specific information. They don't just want to know whether or not a student understands something. If the student does understand, they want to see if the student can explain their thinking and apply what is understood. If the student doesn't understand, these teachers probe deeper to find the point at which a misconception, overgeneralization, or partial understanding led her astray. Lurking in the back of the teacher's mind is the question, "What does this child's answer tell me about what he or she knows and doesn't know?"



Video 11

Checking for Understanding

<https://resources.corwin.com/vl-literacy6-12>

Effective teachers don't just want to know whether a student understands something, they want to see if the student can explain their thinking and apply what is understood.

The purpose of the question matters, that is, it matters what kind of knowledge you are hoping to surface. Closed questions that constrict student speculation limit student thinking to trying to determine what the “right” answer might be. (Doug calls it, “Guess what’s in the teacher’s brain.”) A series of closed questions strung together is called a *funneling* pattern, because the purpose is to lead the student through a procedure, without adequate attention to connections (Herbal-Eisenmann & Breyfogle, 2005). In contrast, open questions require students to notice their own thinking, and a string of these is called *focusing questions*. The difference at times may seem subtle, but it is the outcome that is more telling. A series of funneling questions result in channeling the student toward the predetermined correct answers, with little room left for students to consider possibilities and notice their thinking. On the other hand, a series of focusing questions can open up students’ thinking and provide you with more insight into their thought processes.

Eighth-grade teacher Matthew Stewart worked with his grade-level colleague Briana Taylor, a second-year teacher, to develop focusing questions that would open up student thinking. After examining questions Ms. Taylor had developed to use with the following day’s reading, she and Mr. Stewart discussed the concepts of funneling and focusing questions. Then they changed her questions just enough so that the revised ones might prompt richer responses (see Figure 3.7). After school the

Figure 3.7 Funneling and Focusing Questions

Funneling Questions	Focusing Questions
What did the character mean when she said, “I need a change of scenery”?	The character said he needed a “change of scenery.” What might have caused him to say that?
What two problems is the character facing at this point in the story?	Are there any connections you could make between that remark and any problems the character might be having?
Which problem would be solved if the character left town? Which problem would be made worse?	Would a change of scenery solve the character’s problems or make them worse? Why do you say so?
Can you predict what the character will do next?	Based on what you know about the character so far, what might he do next? Do you believe that is a wise thing for him to do? How would you advise him?

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next day, Mr. Stewart came back to Ms. Taylor’s room, and she said, “I got much richer responses from students when I used some of the questions we developed. It was much easier for me to ask follow-up questions that were meaningful, because I had more student ideas to work with. It was so much better than when I felt like I was pulling teeth to get ideas out of them.”

GUIDED INSTRUCTION

Using focusing questions is an excellent way to begin guided instruction, because it has the potential of expanding, rather than constricting, student thinking. Direct instruction requires that the teacher scaffold—only as much as needed—through strategic questions, prompts, and cues, with the goal of elevating students’ learning. It does *not* involve giving students the answers, or telling them how to solve a problem. Many teachers default to a pattern of questioning that has been labeled initiate-respond-evaluate, or IRE for short. In an IRE pattern, a teacher asks a question, a student provides an answer, and the teacher decides whether the answer is right or wrong. This is Durkin’s (1978–79) major criticism of teachers’ questioning—that it too often consists of interrogation, rather than activation of thinking.

One of the problems with IRE is that students tend to stop thinking the minute you tell them they’re right (Cazden, 1998). More damaging, however, is that giving students feedback that is limited to the correctness of their answers or methods hurts their long-term understanding and prevents them from transferring their knowledge to new situations (Schroth, 1992). Most harmful of all, however, is feedback that is limited, infrequent, and focused on the personal attributes of the student, rather than on the task, process used, and ability to influence their own learning. It takes away their ability to self-regulate (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). When you’re guiding students’ learning using questions, prompts, and cues, let students do as much cognitive work as possible to evaluate their own learning—especially if they’re correct. When they ask you, “Is this right?” reply, “*Tell me why you think it’s right and I’ll listen.*”

Effective teachers pose strategic questions to prompt the learner to move beyond answering the “what” by considering the “how.” Strategic questions prompt students “to think deliberately: What do I do next? How can I best approach this next step, this next challenge, this next frustration? What thinking tool is most apt to help me here?” (McKenzie, 1997, p. 4) One way to develop skills in this area is to video-record your

Teaching Takeaway

Use questions to better understand student misconceptions or partial understanding.

EFFECT SIZE FOR QUESTIONING = 0.48



Video 12 Guided Instruction

<https://resources.corwin.com/vl-literacy6-12>

EFFECT SIZE
FOR FEEDBACK
= 0.75

Teaching Takeaway

Structure the feedback so they have the space to hypothesize, reflect on their own learning, and evaluate their own approaches as well as those of their peers.

own teaching and then watch the video later, ideally with another person, so that you can analyze your moves and determine if you are guiding students, using direct explanations, or telling them what to think. Structure the feedback so they have the space to hypothesize, reflect on their own learning, and evaluate their own approaches as well as those of their peers.

At times, of course, student responses are incorrect or show only a partial understanding of the concept or skill in question. This is the point of departure that separates expert teachers from novices. Nonexpert teachers respond more often with corrections, rather than asking another question or two to uncover students' thinking. The knee-jerk reaction is to give students the right answer—"No, that word is *flout*"—rather than being confident enough to explore why the student might have misread a word. When the teacher says, "Read that sentence again and think about the meaning. Does what you read—*flaunt*—work in the context?" You're posing a question, one that should cause the student to think. At the same time, you're providing a prompt (a reminder) for the student to monitor sense-making while reading.

If that isn't sufficient, and the student is still stumbling, then provide him with a cue, which is a more overt signal designed to shift his attention to a physical space or cognitive task (e.g., pointing to the dictionary app on the tablet when a student is stuck on a term). Based on the student's next move, you now have a lot more information to work with: Is the difficulty because he isn't monitoring his understanding, or he doesn't have a good schema of the topic, or possibly that he doesn't know how to repair his errors when the meaning is lost? These are the "pivotal events" that Ross and Gibson (2010, p. 197) attribute to expert teaching—the ability to rapidly hypothesize what instructional move should come next to move student learning forward. Simply correcting errors over and over isn't going to result in learning that lasts. However, getting students to think metacognitively, although it takes a bit longer, will.

Formative Evaluation During Guided Instruction

The benefit of noticing errors and misconceptions is that it allows for additional instruction. By observing and taking notes, you'll know which groups or individual students are stuck or need help, which ones are flying and need enrichment, and who misunderstands the concepts or lacks foundational knowledge that you will need to scaffold for them. When you do move in to guide the learning, you will be able to do so in a strategic way that provides the right amount of

feedback, differentiation, and support that your students need—and not the excessive scaffolding that takes the rigor and engagement out of your tasks.

As the seventh reading comprehension lesson evolved, Ms. Okeke transitioned from modeling and thinking aloud to guided instruction, using a series of questions to probe her students' thinking and monitor their understanding. She had prepared a few of these scaffolding questions in advance, primarily focusing ones to draw her students' attention to incidents in the book when Little Man and Cassie react badly to their circumstances in school:

1. *What are the direct and indirect characterizations that tell us how Little Man is feeling? How Cassie is feeling?*
2. *What clues are we provided as to why Little Man and Cassie are so upset? How does this relate to the surroundings they live in?*
3. *Miss Crocker is upset with the students now, but why? What words and actions, by her and the children, help us to understand the source of her anger?*

She uses these questions to check in with students sitting at tables 2, 4, and 5. They'll later "pollinate ideas" as Ms. Okeke calls it, by partnering with students at tables 1, 3, and 6.

INDEPENDENT LEARNING

The learning continues, and in fact deepens, when students are able to employ what they have been learning. This can occur in four possible ways (Fisher & Frey, 2008):

- Fluency building
- Application
- Spiral review
- Extension

Fluency Building

Fluency building is especially effective when students are in the surface learning phase and need spaced practice opportunities to strengthen automaticity. For instance, students who play online vocabulary games, or who read books independently, are engaged in fluency-building independent learning.

EFFECT SIZE FOR
SPACED VERSUS
MASS PRACTICE
= 0.71

Application

Application is arguably the most common approach to independent learning. Students engaged in application of learning are consolidating their knowledge through the transfer of skills to contexts similar to the situation in which they initially learned. As an example, Mr. Peck's Year 10 students wrote an exit slip using evidence to either support or deny the claim that society rejects innovation out of fear of the unknown. Like the author, they are applying similarly loaded language to support their positions.

Spiral Review

Spiral review, a third approach to independent learning, is one in which students revisit previously mastered content in order to prevent learning recidivism due to infrequent use. For instance, eighth-grade teachers Matthew Stewart and Briana Taylor keep the learning alive by requiring that their students use previously read class novels to compare with their current readings.

Ms. Taylor said, "Matthew was the one who suggested this. He's been doing it himself for several years. By revisiting previous readings, they deepen their understanding. For instance, when I teach about a literacy device like the use of a particular archetype, I want them to see how it has been applied in so many stories, even if archetypes weren't an instructional emphasis when we read a story a few months ago."

Ms. Taylor's students, she noted, end up consulting texts read earlier in the year to locate examples. "It's like watching light bulbs going off over their heads. They can recognize the situational archetype of the quest in a book like *The Lightning Thief*, when I teach it. But when they revisit *Keeping the Moon*, which we read last quarter, now they see that the quest archetype was there all along, even though they didn't initially notice it."

Her colleague, Mr. Stewart, added, "Just teaching about archetypes and literary devices can consume an entire school year, and if I tried to stuff all that content into one book, we'd only get to a few titles a year. When we cycle back to books we've already read, they can analyze them and gain a new understanding."

Extension

Extension is a fourth kind of independent learning in which students are asked to use what they have learned in a new way. This often requires that they research on their own and find additional information. The text-dependent question: "What does this text inspire you to do?"

Teaching Takeaway

Use spiral review to foster transfer.

(Fisher & Frey, 2014b) is an organizing tool that can be used to design extension learning. Independent learning through extension includes

- Writing
- Presenting information to peers
- Participating in debates and Socratic seminars
- Engaging in investigations

This is especially effective when the text has been utilized over multiple lessons, including those that require close and critical reading. Eleventh-grade teacher Sandra Lopez did just that as an extension of the study her students did with *Abraham Lincoln and the Self-Made Myth*. Her students are still learning how to critique arguments, so Ms. Lopez curated websites using Diigo to tag resources her students might benefit from.

“I had them research other examples of critiques like Hofstadter’s,” she said. One team investigated the argument that Shakespeare the man remains a mystery.

One member, Theo, said, “*The Mark Twain piece ‘Is Shakespeare Dead?’ was hilarious and also gave us another great example of how an author uses rhetorical techniques to challenge these ‘larger than life’ people.*”

His friend Roberto added, “*Mark Twain is harsh! I would not want to be on his bad side because he makes valid and funny points to make his opposition look ridiculous.*”

CLOSURE

A robust lesson will fall short of its full potential if the lesson doesn’t include a solid closure. This is the time to return to the learning intention and success criteria in order to reestablish purpose and consolidate new knowledge. Importantly, it doesn’t necessarily mean the temporal end of the lesson. Rather, consider it to be a time when you are checking for understanding more globally and inviting students to consider their own learning so far. Lesson closure can include a combination of the following:

- Revisiting the learning intention and success criteria
- Reviewing the key points of a lesson
- Posing a question that asks students to summarize (e.g., “Tell me the three most important ideas you learned this morning”)

- Inviting students to draw conclusions or to notice similarities and differences based on the learning
- Asking students to rate their level of understanding (e.g., a fist-to-five method displaying the number of fingers that correspond to the level of understanding)
- Inviting further clarifying questions from students
- Previewing future learning opportunities and lessons
- Exhibiting evidence of student learning
- Creating a smooth transition to the next lesson

Using a direct instruction approach, Charles Peck has led his Year 10 students through modeling with think-alouds, guided instruction, and peer collaboration as they read and discussed the informational article on whether or not genius ideas are rejected because they are innovative and therefore frightening to society. Satisfied with their progress through frequent checks for understanding, he will soon be releasing them to further independent learning as they compose an exit ticket summarizing the author's use of loaded language in the informational article, using evidence from the text. However, before he does so, he spends a few minutes on closure to further consolidate their learning and invite self-assessment of progress toward goals. He begins with questions about the content, asking them for the most surprising facts they learned, before turning his attention to the learning intention, which concerned looking for loaded language to determine the author's point of view.

"Could you summarize, please?" he asks.

Jessica responds, *"Authors want to get their point across as strongly as possible, and their wording and structure gives you a clue as to what they think. This author in particular uses headings and strong, direct statements like 'We're literally programmed to be afraid of something we don't understand.'"*

After fielding a few more responses, he tells his students, *"Consult the writing goals you developed for yourself for this term. Since we're going to be doing some timed writing in class next, now's an excellent time to check in with them."*

CONCLUSION

Direct instruction has a solid track record for promoting acquisition, consolidation, and transfer of learning through intentional lesson design that uses an explicit approach. Although sometimes narrowly

The **VISIBLE LEARNER**

It is important for students to know what they are learning and why, but equally important is for students to know *how* they are learning. If students are able to articulate the strategies that they are using to learn, they are more likely to try those approaches again when the learning gets hard.

Arturo, a sixth grader and English learner, is developing the habit of summarizing as he reads and annotates. Although he knows how to summarize when prompted by his teacher, he does it less often when reading independently. Arturo says, *“I know I’m supposed to make some notes to summarize what I’m reading, but I don’t always do it. I’m reading Crossover right now, and a bunch of my friends are reading it, too. But I kept getting the two twins confused. My friend Hector showed me how he’s got a chart going in his notebook to keep the two straight.”* Arturo smiled as he said, *“When I met with Ms. Rivas about my independent reading, I showed her my chart. She said what I’m doing is a form of summarizing! I can see how this is something that helps me understand, and not just something you do for school.”*

Visible learners can talk about how they are learning—the strategies they used to learn.

defined as a heavily scripted program, direct instruction has elements that trace their roots to Madeline Hunter’s (1982) model of mastery learning. These elements of instruction include clear statements about the learning intention and success criteria, teacher modeling and think-alouds, guided instruction through scaffolding, checks for understanding, closure, and independent learning. These practices form a solid set of practices for making skills and concepts clear to learners. However, we do not suggest that these are the only valuable teaching practices. In the next chapter, we will turn our attention to the value of dialogic teaching, instruction that requires the effective use of talk to accomplish the learning. You might be wondering about the difference between direct and dialogic approaches, given that there has been a lot of talking described in this chapter. In the next chapter, we hope you’ll see a different type of talk, one in which the discussions rely on argumentation and inquiry.