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**DIRECT  
INSTRUCTION  
CASE STUDY**

McGraw Hill

# Kevin Surrey and Suzy Cudapas, Head of Direct Instruction, Maths and English

## What is Direct Instruction?

- A teaching method built by Siegfried Engelmann proven after 50 years of extensive research
- A method that focuses on explicit demonstration and practice that has its grounding on children who are disadvantaged or who have little confidence
- Allows children to be taught at their current level as opposed to their expected grade
- Has been proven to accelerate academic progress and improve behaviour
- Emphasises the retrieval of previously learnt skills - 10-15% of new learning each lesson is included to ensure mastery of earlier topics and concepts
- Models itself on a tracked curriculum rather than a spiralling curriculum.

## Teachers utilizing the Direct Instruction model:

- Teach from the front using a script that allows them to focus on their interaction with their learners
- Do not allow pupils to opt out of answering questions
- Focus on questioning
- Include regular opportunities for testing
- Demonstrate a 'warm strict' manner.

## The Background

Suzy and Kevin, who have been teaching for 18 years between them across primary and secondary schools, have been teaching using the Direct Instruction framework for 3 years. Kevin believes it was their passion for learning and for their students, in addition to the style and structure of their teaching, that identified them to be selected by their senior leadership team to drive forward this initiative at their school.

Explains Kevin, "We were the right fit to transition into DI and it was an exciting venture as our Headteacher was clearly so passionate about utilizing this programme."

On top of the fact their teaching style was already aligned to the DI model, Kevin also commented that it felt like the right fit for him personally.

**"Coming from a primary background, I am passionate about helping the disadvantaged learners in a group so that they can be given the best opportunity."** Kevin Surrey

For Suzy, DI appealed for a similar reason. She explained, "I have always specialised in teaching children at the low attainers and Direct Instruction breaks the work down into smaller chunks to scaffold the learning. This opened my eyes to a different approach to teaching where all children can access the work more so than what I was doing before. It made me reflect on my own practise."

After being asked to lead the new programme with DI, the pair read up on the works of American educationalist Siegfried Engelmann.

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Whilst the research Engelmann described was persuasive, Kevin admits he had some reservations about the model initially. “We worried about the scripts and wondered if it would make our teaching a little boring,” he comments.

**“Direct Instruction ... opened my eyes to a different approach to teaching where all children can access the work more so than was I was doing before.”**

**Suzy Cudapas**

## The Solution

That concern was removed after the pair had their training in delivering DI. Over a 2-day course, Kevin and Suzy got up-to-speed with the requirements of the framework. The passion from the trainer was really evident, the pair noted. They began to deliver the programme with their classes soon after.

And far from being a disadvantage, Kevin now sees the scripts as something of a huge benefit. “These aren’t just scripts put together quickly; these are scripts that have been built over 50 years of research and tested in the field for their impact before they’re published. This is what works!”

## The Results

Suzy and Kevin are now passionate advocates for DI. As well as commenting on the close-knit nature of the groups, who are of similar ability levels, and highlighting the comradery and teamwork the groups demonstrated, they were also able to share their experiences of the impact of DI on one of their learners, Student A.

Student A started Direct Instruction in Year 7 and anecdotally admitted to being under-confident in reading. For Suzy and Kevin, this lack of confidence extended past her reading—it was across the board. She would hide away behind other students and frequently became tearful in lessons. She struggled

to read a sentence with simple words and, from a numeracy perspective, demonstrated a lack of fluency with basic calculation. Suzy and Kevin explained that her lack of ability in reading had a knock-on effect on her maths skills as it means she was unable to comprehend worded maths problems. Additionally, her logical reasoning was lacking.

After the first year, Student A had changed in a profound way. Her self-confidence and self-esteem had risen, and she was happy to volunteer herself in class to answer questions—something she had not done before. She smiled considerably more and it became evident she enjoyed learning. Suzy recalled a time in one of her core lessons with Student A where she asked all learners to read a page from Charlotte Bronte’s *Jane Eyre*. Student A not only read her allocated page but also asked to continue reading. Suzy also noted that Student A was voluntarily going above and beyond in what was asked of her in terms of her reading. She visited bookshops and began buying books.

Accidentally, Kevin noticed that her numeracy skills had changed for the better. She became much more fluent in reading and in calculation and so was able to develop a much broader mathematical knowledge. This left her able to answer worded maths problems with logical reasoning, and a range of strategies to help solve these problems.

When Student A was asked about her experiences with DI, Student A acknowledged the difference DI had made. “DI has helped me a lot,” she said, “Once I started it, I became a lot more confident.”

Kevin and Suzy were also able to share that Student A’s experience in DI, and the significant improvements made to both her learning and her confidence, had been noted by her peers. Her peers had noticed, prior to DI, that Student A wasn’t confident and wasn’t able to master specific topics. Since the embedding of the DI framework, a peer to Student A stated that,

**“Student A became an inspiration to not only me but all my class.”**

## GCSE Paper Score

Student A



**GCSE Score Commentary** | At the start of year 7, all pupils would be given a set of GCSE papers to complete. Student A's first paper score across 3 papers was 5%. Commented Kevin, "We typically see low scores for this exercise, as the students are only in year 7, but this 5% score is very low over 3 papers. It is wonderful to see the rise to 23% by the end of the academic year."

## DI Mastery Tests



## Reading Age

**Student A's reading age was 6.04 on entry and 11.9 by the end of year 7.**

For Suzy and Kevin, the results, and the change in character of Student A, demonstrate the journey DI can start students on, as well as the impact it can have.



Kevin reflected on his experiences using DI saying, "I'm passionate about teaching students under the radar – the ones who get missed – and DI gives children a real opportunity. Even if they don't get a great GCSE grade, they have basic numeracy skills: they can go out into the world and apply for jobs and they can deal with money and look after their finances, so this really is a great programme."

Suzy also ruminated on her experiences commenting that it is the expectations set by DI that she believes to work very well: "I love the way the DI approach works and the expectations are always clear and high. Although the challenge is there, the homogenous classes determined by the placement testing allows the class to move through the programme together, mastering the skills they have learnt."

**For further information on DI, please visit [mheducation.co.uk/schools](http://mheducation.co.uk/schools) or [www.direct-instruction.co.uk](http://www.direct-instruction.co.uk)**

**Any queries relating to implementation and training of Direct Instruction, please contact the Direct Instruction Hubs. McGraw Hill are proud to be working in partnership with them to help you on your DI journey.**

**Midlands Hub Email: [directinstruction@saint-martins.net](mailto:directinstruction@saint-martins.net) | South Hub Email: [DISouthHub@avonbourneacademy.org.uk](mailto:DISouthHub@avonbourneacademy.org.uk)**

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