Episode 6: Get Ready!

Zig Engelmann's Direct Instruction has a strong evidence base. So why is it so hard to find in schools? We look at why schools keep giving it up and visit a charter network in North Carolina that's stuck with it for more than a quarter century.

S2 EPISODE 6

Episode Length	Listen to the episode	Read the transcript
27:41	Apple Podcasts • Spotify • soldastory.org	Printable Transcript
Additional Materials	• Video: Scripted lessons make teachers cringe. Should they? • Article: Direct Instruction doesn't last in schools. Here's why	

Before Listening	• Is there anything you've heard so far this season that you want to be sure to talk about? • What are you curious to hear other people's thoughts on?
While Listening	In this episode, we visit a school that has been using Direct Instruction for decades. Then we learn why so many schools that adopt the program eventually drop it. As you listen, note what stands out to you and what questions you have.
After Listening	*From a teaching perspective:* In this episode, we heard Direct Instruction being used in classrooms today. Teachers explained the reasoning behind choral response, repetition and frequent questions. • Do you use techniques like these in your own teaching? • Did hearing the teachers explain their approach influence how you think about these techniques? *From a parenting perspective:* Parents in this episode described how Direct Instruction has helped their children. One parent said the back-and-forth between teachers and students was exactly what her daughter needed. • What stood out to you about the parents' experiences? • What do you believe works for your own child's learning? Why do you think that? *From a student perspective:*

	The students Emily interviewed described their school as "stable." They said they like the structure and the challenge. One student described the teaching as "much more clear." ● Have you experienced highly structured instruction? ○ What was the experience like? Did it help you learn? Why or why not? *From a community perspective:* In the second half of the episode, we heard about schools that adopted Direct Instruction and later abandoned it. Leadership changes, district politics, funding cuts and a lack of ongoing support all played a role. ● Have you seen anything similar happen in your school district? What happened? ● What can communities do to help schools sustain effective instruction, even when district leadership or priorities change? Throughout this season of *Sold a Story*, we've learned about lesson scripts and how they change the job of the teacher. In this episode, we heard: "If you go into teaching thinking it's your job to create your own lessons, the very idea of a script can seem like an insult. Like a violation of professional autonomy. Zig Engelmann's Direct Instruction requires rethinking what it means to be a teacher. Teachers do not design their own lessons. That job has already been done. The teacher's job is to focus on the teaching." ● What do you make of this idea? How does it compare to your understanding of what teachers do or should do?
Wrap Up	● What did you learn about why schools stop using Direct Instruction? At the end of the episode, Emily said: "It's kind of like Direct Instruction is a foreign object in the American education system. The system keeps rejecting it." ● What do you think she meant by that? ● What would it take for the system to adopt and stick with something like Direct Instruction?
Extend	*Activity 1* Watch the video Scripted lessons make teachers cringe. Should they? ● What reasons did you hear for why teachers *shouldn't* cringe at scripted lessons? ● Do you find those reasons convincing? Why or why not? Consider sharing your thoughts on this topic with Emily by sending video 

	of your discussion or emailing her at soldastory@apmreports.org. *Activity 2* Read more about why schools have a hard time sustaining Direct Instruction in the article Direct Instruction doesn't last in schools. Here's why. The article includes a list of patterns that emerged from interviews with districts that dropped Direct Instruction. ARTICLE ● Do any of the reasons surprise you? Why or why not? Hailey McCarthy, a principal who appears in both the podcast and the article, explains the struggles she had and the help she needed when learning Direct Instruction. ● Why might Direct Instruction be hard to learn? ● What do you think it would take to support implementation of Direct Instruction?