

T.H. Rogers Elementary School; Houston, TX

About the School:

Grades: K-5
Number of Students: 300
Test(s): SDAA
Reduced Price Lunch: 42%

About the Students:

African American: 16%
Caucasian: 25%
Hispanic: 30%
Asian: 29%
Other:
ELL

Houston Blue Ribbon School's Deaf Population Achieves AYP With Direct Instruction

Deaf students at T.H. Rogers Elementary School have achieved remarkable advances in language development by using SRA/McGraw-Hill's Direct Instruction programs. The school includes three populations: gifted and talented, multi-impaired, and deaf students. Once educators implemented Direct Instruction in Grades K-8 at the start of the 2002-2003 school year, they witnessed an increase in phonemic awareness among younger students and improved sentence structure among older students.

Direct Instruction is a teaching methodology that provides a structured learning process, breaking learning strategies into sub-skills that students practice to mastery and continuously review. Two programs, *Language for Learning* and *Reading Mastery*, are taught in Grades K-3, and a third program, *Corrective Reading*, is used in Grades 3-8 with struggling readers.

Principal Nancy Manley said that diagnosticians who re-evaluate students every three years have seen a dramatic increase in students' reading skills since the Direct Instruction programs were implemented.

"Direct Instruction is a very phonetic program. Because our students can't hear sounds, we first teach them *Visual Phonics* (from the International Communication Learning Institute) by signing. Once they are able to see that sound, we introduce them to *Language for Learning* and *Reading Mastery*," Manley explained.

Special Education Students Achieve AYP

Special education students are part of Texas' education accountability system. Consequently, deaf students at T.H. Rogers Elementary School are held to the same standards and must take the State-Developed Alternative Assessment (SDAA) each year to measure progress.

They continue to score well, thanks to Direct Instruction, and even achieved Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) the first year it was measured among special education students in Texas during the 2003-2004 school year. They achieved AYP again during the 2004-2005 school year. AYP is the cornerstone of the *No Child Left Behind Act* and measures academic achievement among all schools and their subgroups of students. T.H. Rogers Elementary School also was named a Texas Exemplary School for 2005, which Manley said would not have been possible without Direct Instruction.

Dr. Beverly Trezek, Assistant Visiting Professor in Deaf Education at The Ohio State University, analyzed student data collected during the 2004-2005 school year. She noted that, given one year of Direct Instruction, supplemented by *Visual Phonics*, Kindergarten and Grade 1 students who are deaf or hard of hearing demonstrated improvements in beginning reading skills.

She assessed their progress using the Wechsler Individual Achievement Test-II to measure Word Reading, Pseudoword Decoding, and Reading Comprehension. When raw scores were calculated into grade equivalents, students performed better than the national population average for students who are deaf or hard of hearing.

“When using the Direct Instruction reading programs supplemented by *Visual Phonics*, we can begin to see measurable progress on standardized measures of reading achievement for students who are deaf or hard of hearing. This is an encouraging finding given that this population of students historically has struggled to acquire critical beginning reading skills, such as phonemic awareness and phonics,” Trezek said.

Manley said teachers at T.H. Rogers Elementary School are convinced that Direct Instruction helps students meet their goals. “Parents of our deaf children have seen a higher incidence of them reading at home, and our teachers know that Direct Instruction is the reason,” she said.

About T.H. Rogers Elementary School

The U.S. Department of Education named T.H. Rogers Elementary School a No Child Left Behind Blue Ribbon School in 2004. The Blue Ribbon School Program recognizes schools that make significant progress in closing the achievement gap, as is the case with the school’s deaf population.

Serving approximately 300 students in Grades K-5 in the Houston Independent