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Chapter 4 Reading Facts

One of the elements of Direct Instruction I’ve often overlooked is the rationale behind the **focus activity**. I’ve always known a focus activity was used to bring focus to the lesson, but that was about all I could say about it. I guess what struck me most was the use of the focus activity to get the students to “shift gears mentally” away from whatever has happened at school or in their life up to that point and to truly focus on the lesson at hand.

Another big part of Direct Instruction is **providing the rationale** for the lesson. Today, many students mentally require this step in learning. Whereas in the past students were taught to memorize “because I said so”, this is not the case with students today. Today, students need to understand where this learning will fit into their overall learning and how it will impact them personally. By giving the students the necessary relevance to a lesson, they are more engaged in the lesson and will likely walk away with more than if no rationale was given.

The **V-A-K-T** approach to teaching is a great way to ensure the lesson “sticks”. By exercising several senses, students are more engaged and will retain more from a lesson. While finding ways to tie in the visual, auditory, kinesthetic and tactile senses into the lesson may be a challenge, it is well worth the time invested.

Having your class **think aloud** is a great tool for learning. You are able to follow a student’s thinking as well as determine the overall class progress as the lesson moves forward. By acknowledging and praising the right behaviors, you encourage other students to explore possibilities and further develop higher order thinking skills.