

Fargo Public Schools Embraces Explicit Instruction: Bringing Research-Based Practices to Every Classroom

In March, members of Fargo Public Schools' Standards-Based Instruction (SBI) team attended the North Dakota Science of Reading (NDSor) *Explicit Instruction Academy*, deepening their understanding of research-backed practices outlined in *Explicit Instruction: Effective and Efficient Teaching* by Anita Archer and Charles Hughes. The training emphasized that even experienced educators benefit from ongoing learning—in Archer's words, "*How well I teach = how well they learn.*"

Explicit instruction is about clarity, intentionality, and active engagement. It's built on the belief that "*learning is not a spectator sport,*" and that students need structured lessons that include modeling, guided practice, and independent application. Throughout the academy, the SBI team explored the power of "*teaching the stuff and cutting the fluff.*" In other words, we learned how to focus instruction on the most essential content and skills while eliminating distractions that do not directly support learning.

Key strategies included:

- **Active Engagement:** When we say "*Everyone does everything,*" we mean that all students are expected to think, respond, and participate. Engagement is not optional—it's essential.
- **Lesson Design:** Thoughtfully sequenced instruction avoids gaps in learning because "*if you avoid the void, they won't fill it.*"
- **Instructional Feedback:** Timely, specific feedback is a game-changer. As Archer reminds us, "*Feedback feeds forward*"—it's how students learn, adjust, and grow.
- **Purposeful Practice:** Learning takes time and repetition. The academy emphasized the importance of practice aligned to learning targets and gradually releasing responsibility to students.
- **Vocabulary Across Content Areas:** Embedding vocabulary into every subject enhances comprehension and supports equity in access to academic language.
- **Good Teaching is Universal:** Whether teaching kindergarten math or high school science, "*Good instruction is good instruction.*"

Armed with tools, resources, and the ability to train others, the SBI team is prepared to support teachers across Fargo Public Schools in applying these strategies. Our next steps include embedding explicit instruction practices into coaching conversations, professional learning sessions, and classroom walkthroughs.

As we move forward, we are excited to keep learning, sharing, and growing—because when instruction is intentional and student-centered, every learner can succeed.