

Research Guidelines & Recommended Assessment Instruments



Schools implementing Conscious Discipline® often want to know how to track results. This document provides a general outline for collecting data and interpreting the outcomes of Conscious Discipline® after implementation in a school. Research – including data collection, analysis, and interpretation of the results of specific interventions – can be quite complex due to the large number of variables in an educational environment. Schools are encouraged to contact your local university or other experienced education and child development researchers to work collaboratively to achieve your research goals. The following guidance is intended to help research teams succeed in performing high-quality research.



Choose Your Research Focus

When implementing a research plan, your first decision is to decide which outcomes you are trying to influence (e.g. teacher competencies, children’s social and emotional skills, classroom functioning, student achievement). This decision will dictate what data you gather. Ask yourself, “What data is best for my goal?” To narrow your research focus, it may be helpful to consider previous research regarding Conscious Discipline®.

Previous research has shown that Conscious Discipline®:

1. Increases social and emotional skills of children, including self-regulation
2. Improves young children’s readiness for formal schooling
3. Improves school climate and connectedness
4. Reduces aggression
5. Reduces discipline referrals
6. Helps children with severe behavior problems to demonstrate normal behavior patterns
7. Increases staff confidence in how to address child misbehavior
8. Enhances collegiality among staff

Depending on your situation, you may want to examine how Conscious Discipline® affects aggressive behavior or bullying. Another school may choose to measure Conscious Discipline’s® success by examining academic achievement scores. You may also wish to focus on adult emotion management and self-regulation skills to see how adult social-emotional skills influence students or classroom experiences.



Utilize Existing Data

An easy place to begin your research is to utilize the data your school or agency currently collects.

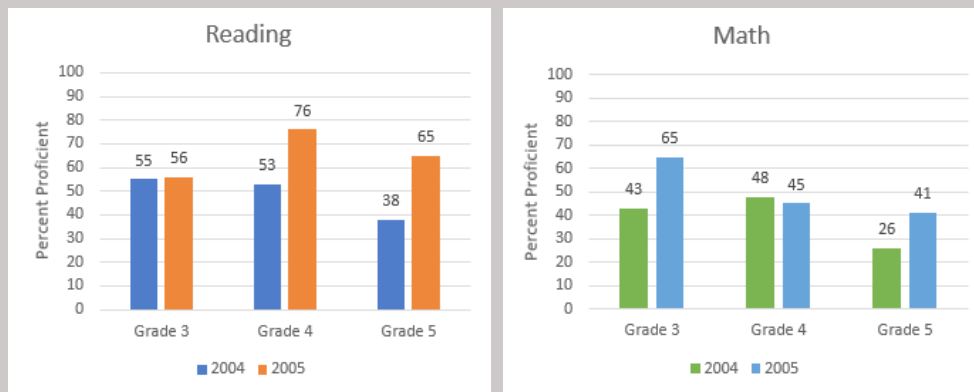
This data includes but is not limited to the following:

1. Discipline referrals
2. Attendance
3. Grades
4. Test scores
5. Child assessment results
6. Survey data

Data collected before Conscious Discipline® is implemented is called ‘pre-test’ or ‘baseline’ data. These data describe the condition prior to the intervention and are an important piece of the research study. This data should be examined before and after Conscious Discipline® is implemented into your school or program, and included in a research summary.

The graphs below show examples of how one program used existing data to show change in student achievement after Conscious Discipline® was implemented. These graphs display the 2004 and 2005 Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) math and reading scores for Fern Creek Elementary School. Conscious Discipline® was implemented at Fern Creek Elementary during the 2005 school year. The bar graphs show in grade 4 and 5 reading and grade 3 and 5 math, students’ scores are higher after implementing Conscious Discipline. However, the pattern is not consistent. Having the multiple grades and years to compare gives data to help the school think about why the scores may have varied across grades and subjects.

Example: Fern Creek Elementary Reading and Math Student Achievement in Grades 3-5, School Years 2004 and 2005, following CD Implementation



We also recommend that you supplement academic achievement or other quantitative data with qualitative information from administrators, teachers or students about the impact of Conscious Discipline®. Data about the context may help understand the quantitative score variation. This kind of data could include quotes.

One example quote is:

“I believe the main reason our students at Fern Creek Elementary School did better academically was because we used so many Conscious Discipline® strategies throughout the school to help the students feel safe, that the student’s brains were ready to learn and move the learning from short term into long term memory. Also, using the Conscious Discipline® strategies helped the faculty and staff members remain composed so we were ready to teach effectively.”

-- Kim Whitney, Principal, Fern Creek Elementary



Collect Survey Data

Surveys give you valuable information about perceptions of school climate and program or classroom learning conditions. Surveys can be completed by staff, families, and older students. Surveys can include both quantitative questions requiring yes/no responses, Likert scale options (e.g. strongly agree/strongly disagree, etc.), or open-ended qualitative questions (e.g. What new skill did you learn that worked the best for you?). Each type of question requires different levels of effort and techniques to analyze.

When using survey data, it’s important to realize that timing can impact results, so plan your survey schedule accordingly. Ideally, surveys will be completed both before and after Conscious Discipline® is implemented so you will have baseline and comparison data. To examine change over time, administer surveys within the first month of when the school year begins and then again during the last month. If offering surveys every year, try to keep the timing consistent so that each year’s staff and students gets the same or amount of time and exposure with Conscious Discipline®.between fall and spring surveys. Consistent timing will help in gathering valid and useful data.

To strengthen your survey efforts, you can assign survey respondents an identification number (thus keeping responses anonymous) so that each individual has a pre-test and post-test that can be compared within an individual instead of across the average of the whole classroom or school. If an individual takes the first survey, but is no longer with the school for the second survey, their survey would not be included in the results. Analysis looks at changes in responses at the individual level, reporting the proportion of respondents whose views improved, worsened, or stayed the same for each question or topic.



Research Designs

The following content is excerpted from the Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation (OPRE) [Program Manager’s Guide to Evaluation](#).

There are two commonly used evaluation designs:

1. Pre- and post-intervention assessments
2. Pre-intervention and post-intervention assessments using a comparison or control group

“Using a control or comparison group is the best way to determine the impact of your program on participants. A control group is formed by randomly assigning participants to either a treatment group (which receives services) or a control group (which receives no services). A comparison group is used when you cannot randomly assign participants; instead you identify a group of people similar to your participants but who do not receive your program’s services.”

Pre- and post-intervention assessments involve “collecting information on program participants at least twice: once before participants begin the program and again either immediately or some time after they complete or leave the program. You can collect outcome information as often as you like after participants enter the program, but you must collect information on participants before they enter the program. This is called baseline information and is essential for demonstrating that a change occurred.”

“However, if you want to assess longer-term outcomes of training and education programs or any outcomes of service delivery programs, the pre-intervention and post-intervention design by itself is not recommended. Collecting information only on program participants does not allow you to answer the question: Were participant changes the result of program interventions? The changes may have occurred as a result of other interventions, or are changes that might have occurred without any intervention at all.” If you would like to be able to answer these kinds of questions, you will need a study with a control or comparison group.

Please refer to the Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation (OPRE) [Program Manager’s Guide to Evaluation](#) for more information on research design types and best practices.



Utilize Standardized, Validated Instruments

Some standardized instruments have been researched to ensure reliability and validity. Both of these concepts are important. Reliability means if you measure a child on a Monday and you measured them again on a Wednesday of that same week, you’d basically expect to get a similar response. This means you can have some trust the measure is capturing something about that child that is accurate. Validity means the test is measuring the concept you want to measure. So, if you think prosocial skills are important, you don’t want to use a measure that actually measures discipline problems.

The chart below lists some valid and reliable instruments available for different types of data collection. Please note that Loving Guidance does not sell any of these instruments and many must be purchased from companies. Select the hyperlinked name of the measure to learn more.

Instrument	Type of Tool	Age Range
Individualized Classroom Assessment Scoring System (inCLASS) Observation	Child Assessment (Observational)	3-5 Years

Instrument	Type of Tool	Age Range
Minnesota Preschool Affect Checklist-Revised/Shortened (MPAC-R/S)	Child Assessment (Observational)	3-5 Years Preschool
Behavior Rating Inventory of Executive Function (BRIEF)	Child Assessment	5-18 Years
Behavior Rating Inventory of Executive Function-Preschool Version (BRIEF-P)	Child Assessment	2-5 Years
Minnesota Executive Function Scale (MEFS)	Child/Adult Assessment	2-13+ Years
Childhood Executive Function Inventory (CHEXI) Adult Executive Function Inventory (ADEXI)	Child/Adult Assessment	4-12+ Years
Behavior Assessment System for Children -Second Edition (BASC-2)	Multiple Reporters, Options	2-21 Years
Social Emotional Assets and Resilience Scales (SEARS)	Multiple Reporters, Options	5-18 Years
Devereux Early Childhood Assessments (DECA) <i>Note: The Conscious Discipline + e-DECA Assessment-Planning System is available for purchase.</i>	Parent or Teacher Questionnaire about Child	1-36 Months (Infants/Toddlers) Ages 3-5 (Preschool) Ages 2-5 (Clinical)
Infant Toddler Social Emotional Assessment (ITSEA)	Parent or Teacher Questionnaire about Child	12-36 Months
Preschool and Kindergarten Behavior Scales -2nd Edition (PBKS-2)	Parent or Teacher Questionnaire about Child	3-6 Years
Social Skills Improvement System (SSIS) Rating Scales (this is the updated version of the SSRS)	Parent or Teacher Questionnaire about Child	3-18 Years
Student-Teacher Relationship Scale (STRS)	Teacher Questionnaire about Child	Grades PreK-3
Teacher-Child Rating Scale (T-CRS)	Teacher Questionnaire about Child	Grades K-3
Parent-Child Rating Scale (P-CRS)	Parent Questionnaire about Child	Grades K-6
Toddler Behavior Assessment Questionnaire (TBAQ)	Parent Questionnaire about Child	16-36 Months

Instrument	Type of Tool	Age Range
Vineland Social-Emotional Early Childhood Scales (Vineland SEEC)	Parent Semi-Structured Interview	Birth-5 years 11 months
Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) Early Childhood	Program Observational Tool	0-18 Months (Infants) 15-36 Months (Toddlers) 3-8 Years (PreK-grade 3)
Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) Upper Elementary and Secondary	Program Observational Tool	Grades 4-6 (Upper Elementary) Grades 7-12 (Secondary)
Comprehensive School Climate Inventory (CSCI)	Program Observational Tool	Grades 3-12
Early Childhood Classroom Observation Measure (ECCOM) <i>[Unpublished -The measure may be obtained by emailing Deborah Stipek at stipek@stanford.edu]</i>	Program Observational Tool	4-7 Years
Preschool Program Quality Assessment, 2nd edition (PQA)	Program Observational Tool	Preschool
Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool (TPOT)	Program Observational Tool	2-5 Years
Attentive Parenting Survey Measure (developed by The Incredible Years program)	Parent Questionnaire	Parents of “young children”
Parent Interactions with Children: Checklist of Observations Linked to Outcomes (PICCOLO)	Parent Observational tool	10-47 months
Comfort Consults	Parent Observational tool	2-71 months

For measure descriptions, please download this attachment: [Selected Data Collection Instruments for School Research on Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Outcomes for Children and Staff](#)

A note about screeners: Screeners are useful tools to help identify potential developmental problems or areas needing further evaluation. Screeners are not appropriate tools for research on child outcomes related to Conscious Discipline® program implementation. For more information on screeners generally, [see this report](#).



Collect Qualitative, Anecdotal, and Testimonial Information

It is helpful to gather qualitative data to supplement the types of quantitative data mentioned above. This information can include testimonials or responses to open-ended questions.

Such questions might include:

1. What Conscious Discipline® structures and skills were you most successful at implementing and using consistently?

2. What old behaviors or approaches, if any, have you decided to let go of?
3. What are the three most helpful things you implemented this year?
4. What differences did you notice in children, coworkers, or yourself?

A helpful resource is *Studying Your Own School: An Educator's Guide to Qualitative Practitioner Research*. This book guides educators through the research process and examines ways to adapt traditional research methods to real-life classroom environments.



How do I fund my research? And who can help me do it?

Since the early 2000s, federal education policy changes have brought increased scrutiny to much of the research done in educational settings. Working collaboratively with experienced researchers can help in structuring an acceptable research plan that will provide meaningful results.

For example, many local university Departments of Education, Child Development, or Psychology have faculty and graduate students interested in schools using programs like Conscious Discipline®. Similarly, many school districts have in-house district level researchers that can assist you with your research and subsequent costs.

Some federal and state grants are available, as well as grants from foundations. If you are securing grant money for Conscious Discipline® training, consider including a budget for research in your proposal. Minimally, you could budget for the cost of the standardized instruments to be purchased and the consulting fees of a graduate student at the local university to help with data collection and examine your research results. If you have access to potentially more funds, consult with an experienced researcher about the myriad of costs that go along with quality research. For some guidance on how much to budget for evaluation, the Social Innovation Fund has developed a **Quick Guide** (as well as a longer **tool**).

Finally, Loving Guidance has small grants available for selected research that assists both your mission and ours.