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Training Teachers in Classroom Management: Evidence of Positive Effects on the Behavior of Difficult Children

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This study examined the impact of training elementary school teachers in a classroom management program titled Conscious Discipline®. The workshops aid teachers in changing their perception and response to conflict. One of the goals of the program is to help teachers enhance social and emotional skills of those children identified as having behavioral disorders. A survey, answered by teachers about their students, was administered on 12 (n=2 control and n=10 experimental) students prior to the teachers receiving workshop instruction and the second administration occurred afterwards. The targeted population consisted of students in grades Kindergarten through 6th. This group of children who were placed in a classroom where the teacher had been exposed to the Conscious Discipline® program showed statistically significant improvement in behavior in a before versus after comparison to the control group. Children exhibited marked improvements in the areas of decreased hyperactivity, aggression and conduct problems.

When the 2003 Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes toward Public Schools (Rose & Gallup, 2003) asked respondents to identify the most pressing educational problem, they ranked discipline after finance. Marzano and Marzano (2003) report on a literature review on classroom management done by Wang, Haertel, and Walberg in 1993. Their meta-analysis of more than 100 reports covered research reviews, handbook chapters, government and commissioned reports and journal articles and identified 228 variables that affect school achievement. They report that classroom management has the greatest effect on student achievement. Among the conclusions offered was an ordering of influential factors for reducing disruptions: disciplinary interventions, teacher-student relationships and rules and procedures. The No Child Left Behind Act (U. S. Department of Education, 2002) suggests that factors such as these that positively impact student achievement should be investigated.

Lohrmann and Talerico (2004) present a number of support references along with school programs designed to address the discipline issue. Some approaches employ teacher training directed at enhancing classroom management and emotional intelligence. Jacobsen, Eggen and Kauchak (1999) define classroom management as everything a teacher does to make learning effective and efficient in the classroom. Salovey and Mayer (1990) define emotional intelligence as a subset of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one's own and other's feelings and emotions, to

discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions. A newly developed commercially available program titled Conscious Discipline® combines both classroom management and emotional intelligence principles. The instruction provides a skill set to improve teacher-student relationships and to develop discipline interventions to facilitate behavioral change. This study examines the impact of Conscious Discipline training on students whose teachers had undergone training.

Teacher training as a means to alleviate student behavior problems has received less visibility in recent literature. Clarke, Dunlap & Stichter (2002) show a decline in teacher-agent behavior intervention in research articles: from 32% of this subject area in the 1990-1994 timeframe to 6% in the 1995-1996 timeframe. These researchers believe that the decline in data can be attributed to the challenge of identifying meaningful "interventions," in carefully collecting data and in properly analyzing that data among others. Our research addresses all of the issues presented above.

This research was undertaken to investigate the hypothesis that there is a positive effect on difficult children behaviors when teachers use the precepts promoted by the Conscious Discipline® program. This program provides a skill set to improve teacher-student relationships and to develop discipline interventions to facilitate behavioral change. The anticipated change was measured using the Teacher Rating Scales (TRS) portion of the Behavior Assessment System for Children (BASC) system,

developed by American Guidance Services, Inc., and created by Reynolds and Kamphaus (1992).

Conscious Discipline® Design

Conscious Discipline®, developed by Bailey in 1994, claims to be based on current brain research, child development information and developmentally appropriate teaching strategies. Its goal is to provide systemic changes in schools by developing the emotional intelligence of teachers first and children second. One of the measurable outcomes is the improved behavior of a difficult child in that teacher's classroom. Bailey titled the program Conscious Discipline® because it fosters the development of a person's consciousness of his or her own modes of learning, of teaching and of self.

Langer and others (Langer, 1989; Langer & Weinman, 1981; Langer & Rodin, 1976) address mental set, or consciousness. They discuss the idea that molding behavior of students is best done by providing a constant, confident and consistent role model, who offers support and guidance when the student expresses anxiety and anger. These skills that teachers need to be successful in classroom management are those emphasized by the Conscious Discipline® approach: learning self-composure, the ability to offer encouragement to others, assertiveness, discovering and allowing for choices when allocating tasks, the framing of goals with positive intent, empathy, and couching events as having consequences. The workshops offer an educational process to help adults and children to develop these skills. Thus, the facilitators guide the teachers toward understanding that the environment can have therapeutic aspects and encourage freedom of emotional expression. The program's aim is to teach teachers how to teach children to deal with their emotions in socially acceptable ways. The trainers show teachers how to create classroom centers that support social and emotional expression. An example of one classroom center is a "We Care" area housed within the classroom where children can write "get well" cards to friends who are ill, thus teaching students a proper revelation of social connectedness. Another example is a "Safe Place" area where a child may go when feeling upset, sad, tired or anxious to learn about anger management.

Loving Guidance, Inc.

A trainer from Loving Guidance, Inc.—a company that specializes in the Conscious Discipline® program—conducts monthly workshops that teach Bailey's (1994, 2001) classroom management principles. Trainers usually meet with

the teachers for two hours each month over the academic year. Teachers learn to be agents for change through directed activities, lectures, discussions and role-playing. The classroom management principles are presented by incorporating specific structures and activities into the daily routine and existing curriculum offered by a teacher in his or her classroom. The Conscious Discipline® program teaches adults how to perceive daily conflict as an opportunity for children to learn social and emotional skills as opposed to viewing children as a disruption to the educational process. Conscious Discipline® educates teachers in how to transform resistance into cooperation through the use of seven basic skills (Bailey, 2001). Teachers are taught one basic skill in each of the monthly meetings.

Each teacher training session imparts knowledge and skills related to self-control, discipline and creating the "School Family." The lessons about self-control consist of principles and perceptions adults can use to maintain emotional objectivity, thereby depersonalizing student behavior. The trainer helps teachers to understand emotional triggers, reframe a situation and monitor their thoughts. When teachers learn these lessons themselves, they can then impart these skills to their students. The social group, (i.e. School Family), is the foundation for a motivational system. The workshops instruct teachers to build intrinsic motivation into the class climate by meeting every child's need for security, belonging and contribution. They can create a family climate through routines, rituals, safety and classroom centers supporting social-emotional learning and building relationships. Classroom jobs include door holder, attention helper, morning message writer and kindness recorder. Students come to depend on each other when children in the School Family have a job.

Research Instrument

The researchers developed their design to measure the impact that teachers who had been trained in the concepts of Conscious Discipline® had in their classrooms. The researchers believed that by training the teacher to better handle situations of conflict within the classroom, the behavior incidents such as hyperactivity and aggression could be reduced.

To measure their behaviors the researchers relied on the Teacher Rating Scales (TRS) portion of the Behavior Assessment System for Children (BASC) system, developed by American Guidance Services, Inc., and created by Reynolds and Kamphaus (1992). The BASC-TSR survey

instrument contains 150 self-administered questions that gather a teacher's responses regarding his or her identified "difficult" students. The test takes about 20 minutes to complete.

The BASC-TRS assesses the teachers' responses for validity and reliability and breaks out into multiple subscales that relate to Clinical Scales that deal with maladaptive behaviors of aggression, hyperactivity, conduct problems, anxiety, depression, somatization, attention problems, learning problems, atypicality and withdrawal. Adaptive Scales handle the positive behaviors of adaptability, leadership, social skills and study skills. The instrument combines the subscores into the four composite T-scores to analyze Externalizing Problems (EP), Internalizing Problems (IP), Behavior Symptom Index (BSI) and Adaptive Skills (AS) composite score.

The BASC-TRS rater selects an answer from Never, Often, Sometimes and Almost Always in response to behaviors observed. The responses correspond to 0, 1, 2 and 3 points. The researcher adds these points to create a raw score that is then converted to a normative score. The BASC-TRS software derives these scores by conducting a comparison to the population of 3065 students of varying ages (4-18) collected in 1988 through 1991. The reported T-Score is the student's distance relative to that age-equivalent population mean.

The BASC-TRS developers consider T-Scores for the Clinical scales to be "Clinically Significant" for 70 or above, "At Risk" for T-scores of 60-69, to be "Average" in the 41-59 range, "Low" in the 31 to 40 ranges and "Very Low" below that. The BASC-TRS developers consider T-Scores for the Adaptive scales to be "Very High" for 70 or above, "High" for T-scores of 60-69, to be "Average" in the 41-59 range, "At Risk" in the 31-40 range and "Clinically Significant" below that. Very large T-Scores on Clinical scales and small T-Scores on Adaptive scales signal troublesome activities by the student.

Participants

Teachers from two Florida schools attended the classroom management sessions during a school year. These teachers—kindergarten level through sixth grade—identified their disruptive students; the researchers randomly selected 15 student-teacher pairs to study. Ten of the 12 students were age five through eight.

The BASC-TRS researchers selected normative population children for the general population norm by excluding children from schools organized to serve exceptional children, such as the gifted, learning disabled, or emotionally disturbed. Test

creators selected the sites to provide diversity in geographic regions, socioeconomic status, culture and ethnicity. In each school, the researchers selected two classrooms per grade, two male and two female children for teacher ratings per classroom.

Demographically, the study kept the numbers of males and females in the study equal for nearly all age groups. The researchers kept minority groups at the same proportion as that of the entire United States population. Due to absences and non-participation, the present investigators acquired the results of the post-test from 12 of the 15 teacher-student pairs. This sample set consisted of 11 males and 1 female and were instructed by 12 different teachers (10 women and 2 men).

Method

The researchers administered the BASC-TRS tool before the Conscious Discipline® training in October 2001, and again in April 2002, after the Conscious Discipline® training. This design kept the teacher-student pair constant to reduce any variability in the rater, and thus permits a before and after comparison of the students' behavior numbers that will be indicative of changes perceived by the teacher. The difference in the behavior numbers can reflect either a true change in the student or a perceived change by the teacher. Educational literature indicates that both are good events since a better-adapted student learns more easily and disrupts classes less frequently (Jones & Jones, 2001) and also shows that a positive perception by a teacher encourages a student to excel in their work (Pigford, 2001).

Next, the researchers tested whether the control group was representative of the teacher-student pairs as a whole. Because two teacher pairs were unique in some factor—age, grade level or sex—then it is possible that the large differences attributed to Conscious Discipline® training, as depicted in Table 1, could be due to changes in behavior influenced by the age of the student. If, for example, all five-year olds are model student-citizens, and as the school year progresses they become six and convert to uncontrollable urchins, then a control group with two five-year olds would be inappropriate since the student age is the factor, not the use of Conscious Discipline®. Any comparison, therefore, to the experimental group would give a false sense of effectiveness. By looking at the diversity and the commonality of the teacher-student subject pairs, we can infer that the control group is representative of a general population of teachers paired with "difficult" youngsters.

The statistics in this paper show that BASC-

TRS simultaneously measures other factors that contribute to changes in these behavior numbers, but these changes are inconsequential because the variability within the control group and within the experimental group are small. Outside influences that might also affect behavior include home environment alterations, personal illnesses, and the like. These differences, again, are small compared to the very large differences found between these two groups. The large differences highlight the changes that the teacher-student pairs in the experimental group because of their exposure to Conscious Discipline® training.

When the researchers administered the BASC-TRS post-test, they asked each teacher if s/he used the concepts introduced in the Conscious Discipline® sessions; two reported only minimal use of the concepts. When compared to the 10 teachers out of the 12 who were using the new approach, they were not unusual: both were female; one taught first grade, the other third grade. Since both were from the same school, the investigators did an internal check within the 10 teachers to determine an across-schools effect; they found none. If the researchers had found one, then like the hypothetical 5-6-year olds mentioned above, the researchers would have had a non-representative example and the control to experimental group comparisons would be biased. Therefore, we denoted those two teacher-student pairs as our control group and the other 10 as our experimental group.

Results

The researchers checked the teachers' responses for reliability and bias and then aggregated them into scales and sub-scales. Table 1 illustrates the results of the BASC-TRS reported pre- and post-test composite scores with student demographics of age, grade level and gender. High Clinical scores—Externalizing Problems (EP), Internalizing Problems (IP), and the Behavior Symptom Index (BSI) values or low Adaptive scores (AS)—indicate mal-adjustment. No standard errors appear on Table 1, but are discussed below along with comparison of means for the control and experimental groups, both in the pre- and post-test settings.

Table 1 illustrates the groups' disparity by presenting two groups of teacher-student pairs and their BSI numbers, with BSI as a behavior rating. At the end of the training sessions, one of the two non-participant pairs has increased its anti-behavioral index by five points and one has decreased by two (pairs A and B). The 10 adherent pairs show that those improving have declining incidents translating to 4, 14, 7, 19, 16, 8, 9 and 23 points; two regressing

students each show an addition of two points (pairs C through L). The new classroom management training has obviously influenced these students' lives.

Those who did not use the Conscious Discipline® principles have shown both a gain and a loss, but the users have dramatic improvements with four students reducing their scores by more than 15 points. With the dramatic nature of these results, the researchers concluded that the use of Conscious Discipline® is a significant factor. The researchers can make this conclusion even with a small control group size of N=2 because a random choice from just two of the experimental group rather than all 10 could yield two teacher-student pairs that show big declines (or a small chance of getting the one with a two-point increase and one with a large decrease, i.e. greater than 15 points). This finding illustrates that statistics can be used on small samples when large differences result.

Comparative T-tests

The researchers requested 95% confidence intervals from the BASC-TRS reports and received half-widths (i.e. critical values multiplied by the standard error) of 4.0 for the Externalizing Problems and Behavioral Systems Index T-scores, 6.0 for the Internalizing Problems T-score and 3.0 for the Adaptive Skills T-score. Based on this information, the investigators were able to develop comparative T-tests to assess significant changes between the control and the experimental group when they viewed their composite scores both prior to and after the Conscious Discipline® training.

The researchers' approach relied on usual statistical methods to summarize, quantify and compare the observations, similar to those that they made at the beginning of the Method section. The pertinent means and associated differences appear in Table 1. The averages allow a summary of the two teacher-student pairs in the control group and the 10 in the experimental group. The researchers note that in all of the raw data on the BSI values, the large changes occur in the experimental group: the average BSI increased in the control group by 1.5 points and decreased in the experimental group by 7.6 points.

The 1.5 increase is obtained by looking in the ave_noCD row and by subtracting the BSI (for "before") from the BSI2 (for "after"). The findings support the researchers' intuitive inference that the effects of Conscious Discipline® are both dramatic and significant.

Table 1

Students' Pre-(EP=Externalizing Problems, IP=Internalizing Problems, BSI=Behavior Symptom Index, AS=Adaptive Skills) and Post-Test (EP2, IP2, BSI2, AS2) Composite Scores on BASC® TRS

Sdt	Age	Grade	Sex	Schl	Tch	CD	EP	IP	BSI	AS	EP2	IP2	BSI2	AS2
A	8	3	M	1	1	N	75	66	69	34	82	67	74	38
B	7	1	M	1	2	N	77	72	73	28	69	62	71	32
C	5	K	M	2	3	Y	69	76	81		73	75	77	
D	7	1	M	2	4	Y	81	65	71	31	81	60	73	34
E	11	6	M	2	5	Y	65	48	66	39	54	43	52	39
F	6	1	F	2	6	Y	70	50	57	38	58	45	50	44
G	7	1	M	2	7	Y	62	48	64	35	49	41	45	58
H	7	2	M	1	8	Y	63	61	63	32	49	47	47	44
I	19	5	M	1	9	Y	81	71	87	33	77	68	79	34
J	8	3	M	1	10	Y	75	44	64	36	85	49	66	34
K	6	K	M	1	11	Y	72	59	65	49	60	52	56	42
L	6	K	M	1	12	Y	79	67	80	35	64	48	57	39
Average no CD							76.0	69.0	71.0	31.0	75.5	64.5	72.5	35.0
Average CD							71.7	58.9	69.8	36.4	65.0	52.8	59.4	43.8
Average 2							69.4	57.4	67.8	35.8	63.0	52.8	59.4	43.8
Average 1							74.0	60.4	71.8	37.0	67.0	52.8	61.0	68.6
Diffsc1							-4.6	-3.0	-4.0	-1.3	-4.0	0.0	-1.6	5.2
Diffed							4.3	10.1	1.2	-5.4	10.5	11.7	12.3	-5.9

Diversity and Commonality of Teacher-Student pairs

When questioning the two teacher-student pairs in the control group, the investigators sought to determine something unique about the schools that might cause a bias, such as the hypothetical 5-6-year old children example. The row labeled "diffsc1" in Table 1 shows the difference in the means of the two schools' T-scores for all four composite scores, both pre- and post-testing (i.e. EP represents Externalizing Problems for the first survey and EP2 for the final surveying). Although each of the composite scores has a slightly different standard error, a global approximation for assessing significance can rely on a comparison that is 4.35 (a properly weighted average of the half-widths, those numbers 4.0, 6.0, 4.0 and 3.0 presented by the BASC-TRS program and shown in the preceding paragraph).

The researchers derived the first average difference for EP of -4.6 by subtracting the average EP of school 1 (ave_1) from the average of school 2 (ave_2); they similarly generated the remaining values in the "diffsc1" row. The averages in the "diffsc1" row in Table 1 range from -4.6 to 5.2 indicating plausibility for a no-school difference since they are barely different in absolute value from the standard error of 4.35. The investigators do generate exact confidence limits when discussing Table 2, which they produced with the aid of a standard computer package (SPSS®, 1999, Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). This establishes

that there is no difference between the schools. Thus, the control group that contains only school 1 teachers is not unusual and can be assumed to be representative.

The researchers next determined if there was a difference between those using the Conscious Discipline® principles (pairs C through L) versus those who did not (pairs A and B). They generated four averages to establish the before training similarity of the control and experimental groups. The row labeled "diffed" in Table 1 shows the difference in the means of the control (the two teacher-student pairs who claimed only minimal use of the new training) versus the experimental (teachers who are using the new methods) group. Again they applied the 4.35 measuring stick to highlight which differences are significant.

The first four scores are means for pre-test composites. For example, the value of 4.3 is the difference in the average EP value for the control group (see the 76.0 in the ave_noCD row) and the EP value for the experimental group (see the 71.7 in the ave_CD row). These differences in the means seem to indicate that the control and experimental groups differed initially (that is, prior to any training in Conscious Discipline®) on Internalizing Problems (note the 10.1 difference in means) and potentially on Adaptive Skills (with a -5.4 value). Conservatively, the investigators believe that they should not make conclusions regarding the effect of Conscious

Discipline® for students in these behavioral areas because the control and experimental groups differed too much initially on those two composite attributes. While the researchers attributed behavior changes to "more room for improvement," they later proved that the control group shows no statistical improvement in any of the four composite behavior areas and the experimental group improved in all four areas.

The researchers are most confident about the changes in the BSI and EP components. The last four numbers in that "diffcd" row are the post-test means of the composite scores. The raw mean composite score differences between the control and experimental groups do differ considerably in both the Externalizing Problems and the Behavioral Symptoms Index with mean score differences of 10.5 and 12.3 respectively. Both comparisons are strongly supported since the pre-test results indicated no differences (observe the 4.3 and the 1.2 mean score differences). The researchers employed exact confidence intervals using the differing individual score confidence interval half-widths for each different composite to generate Table 2. Table 2 shows the confidence intervals for the mean T-scores for the control and experimental groups for both the pre-testing (before use of Conscious Discipline®) and for the post-testing (after use of Conscious Discipline®) for all four composite scores. Recall that on the Clinical scales of Externalizing Problems (EP), Internalizing Problems (IP) and Behavior Symptom Index (BSI) movement downwards indicates improvement and on the Adaptive scale upwards movement shows improvement. None of the

control intervals overlap in the pairs in the far column of Table 2, indicating that there has been improvement in each of the behavioral areas for students when comparing the experimental group where their teachers are using classroom management techniques to the control group teachers who do not. In fact, by comparing the control groups' before and after columns, their overlapping intervals show that these teacher-student pairs did not improve in any areas while the experimental groups did improve in each of the areas. The set of confidence intervals in the first column of Table 2 shows that two of the confidence interval pairs (IP and AS) are separated (i.e. they do not overlap); indicating that perhaps initially the control and experimental groups differed. This initial difference introduced the concern that the two groups (those who will practice Conscious Discipline® and those who will not) might respond differently to the "Conscious Discipline® - intervention". Conservatively, the researchers could exclude the improvements shown in the second column of Table 2, but only in the areas of Internalizing Problems and Adaptive Skills because of the dissimilarities shown when comparing the control and experimental intervals in the pre-test time frame. Clearly, improvement in the EP and BSI index is attributable to the teachers' training and use of Conscious Discipline® techniques. If the initial differences in the IP and AS indexes are not a factor in the change mechanism, then we also see that improvements have occurred in the IP and AS areas as well

Table 2

Students' Confidence Intervals for the Mean Scores for Before and After Conscious Discipline Training on BASC-TRS Components (EP=Externalizing Problems, IP=Internalizing Problems, BSI=Behavior Symptom Index, AS=Adaptive Skills)

BASC-TRA Components	95% Confidence Interval for Mean (before training)	95% Confidence Interval for Mean (after training)
EP		
No CD (n=2)	(73.2, 78.8)	(72.7, 78.3)
CD (n=10)	(70.5, 73.3)	(63.7, 66.3)
IP		
No CD (n=2)	(64.8, 73.2)	(60.3, 68.7)
CD (n=10)	(57.0, 60.8)	(50.9, 54.7)
BSI		
No CD (n=2)	(68.2, 73.8)	(69.7, 75.3)
CD (n=10)	(68.5, 71.1)	(58.9, 61.5)
AS		
No CD (n=2)	(28.9, 33.1)	(32.9, 37.1)
CD (n=9)	(35.5, 37.4)	(39.9, 41.8)

Discussion

The 95% confidence intervals constructed for the control and experiment groups' mean T-scores indicate significant improvement in both Externalizing Problems and Behavior Symptom Index. Students whose teachers are using approaches learned in the workshops have moved from a BASC-TRS-labeled "Clinically Significant" description or nearly so (71.7 mean for Externalizing Problems and 69.8 for Behavior Symptom Index) to the less risky characterizations (65.0 for Externalizing Problems and 52.8 for Behavior System Index).

The composite Externalizing Problems score is comprised of scales involving hyperactivity, aggression and conduct problems. The Behavior Index is an amalgamation of all tracked behaviors weighting the adaptive ones against the non-adaptive ones. The results support our hypothesis of significant improvements particularly in the area of hyperactivity and aggression for student-teacher pairs when teachers claim use of improved classroom management skills. These results align with the aggregated findings of Marzano and Marzano (2003).

Significance of Findings

What does this mean for classroom teachers dealing with difficult children? Improved behavior in children is possible by developing the emotional intelligence of the teachers first and the children second. Teachers must look to themselves for change before they expect a change in the student's behavior. When teachers understand the need to provide a constant, confident and consistent role model they are able to offer support and guidance when students express anxiety and anger. Teachers must practice self-composure in volatile situations. They must strengthen their ability to offer encouragement to others. They must develop assertive behavior.

Teachers who want to develop the emotional intelligence of their students should allow for choices when allocating classroom tasks. They should create goals with positive intentions. They must learn to portray volatile events as activities that have consequences. Teachers need to teach children to deal with their emotions in socially acceptable ways. For elementary aged children, this can be done through classroom centers that support social and emotional expression and role-playing to help develop a sense of social connectedness.

Conclusions

This study examined the impact of training elementary school teachers in a classroom

management program titled Conscious Discipline®. The workshops aid teachers in changing their perception and response to conflict. Eaton (1997) suggests that developmentally appropriate practice applies to the teacher as well as the children. When teachers react appropriately to aggressiveness and hyperactivity, potential classroom disruptions can be reduced or eliminated. The researchers have shown that changing teacher behaviors can have a significant impact on student behavior. Because behavior problems in children require an inordinate amount of teacher time and attention, children who display hyperactivity and aggressiveness impact all students learning in the classroom. If the incidence of these behaviors can be reduced, learning for all children increases.

Kohn (1996) explains that problems occur in a context that teachers have helped to establish. He suggests that teachers may have to examine and consider modifying that context even if they are uncomfortable while doing so. The researchers have evidence that the workshops built around Conscious Discipline® are able to aid teachers in managing their classrooms, which in turn, directly and positively affects the behavior of difficult children in their classroom. One of the goals of the program is to help teachers enhance social and emotional skills of those children identified as having behavioral disorders. When teachers reduce aggressiveness and hyperactivity in their classrooms, they increase the safety of all students (Hall & Hall, 2003). Since it is known that well-managed classrooms management have a positive effect on student achievement, the researchers suggest that training pre-service and in-service teachers in the tenets of Conscious Discipline® will lead to increased student learning.

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