



## REL Southwest Ask-A-REL Response

October 2017

### Question:

**How (if at all) is Conscious Discipline related to student outcomes, both academically and non-academically?**

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### Background:

“Conscious Discipline is a comprehensive classroom management program and a social-emotional curriculum. It is based on current brain research, child development information, and developmentally appropriate practices.

Conscious Discipline has been specifically designed to make changes in the lives of adults first. The adults, in turn, change the lives of children.

Conscious Discipline is a way of organizing schools and classrooms around the concept of a School Family. Each member of the family—both adult and child—learns the skills needed to successfully manage life tasks such as learning, forming relationships, communicating effectively, being sensitive to others’ needs and getting along with others.”<sup>1</sup>

NOTE: “Conscious Discipline” is a program for which there has not been a large number of research reports. As a result, we have included a few sources that speak to positive and negative reinforcements in schools, which surfaced in “conscious discipline” searches.

### Response:

Following an established REL Southwest research protocol, we conducted a search for research reports as well as descriptive study articles on conscious discipline. We focused on identifying resources that specifically addressed how conscious discipline might be related to students’ academic and non-academic outcomes. The sources included ERIC and other federally funded databases and organizations, research institutions, academic research databases, and general Internet search engines (For details, please see the methods section at the end of this memo.)

We have not evaluated the quality of references and the resources provided in this response. We offer them only for your reference. Also, we searched the references in the response from the

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<sup>1</sup> “Conscious Discipline” by Becky Bailey (psychologist/creator), The Little School with Joy—<http://www.thelittleschool.net/duke/5-big-ideas/conscious-discipline>

most commonly used resources of research, but they are not comprehensive and other relevant references and resources may exist.

### ***Research References***

Caldarella, P., Page, N. W., & Gunter, L. (2012). Early childhood educators' perceptions of conscious discipline. *Education, 132*(3), 589-599. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ991113>

*From the ERIC abstract:* “Classroom management is a significant challenge for school teachers and administrators, often rated as the primary area of concern for first-year teachers and the most common reason many choose to leave the profession. Recently there has been an increased interest in social and emotional learning and its' relationship to improved student behavior, academic outcomes, and emotional health, particularly during the early childhood years. This study examined the social validity of Conscious Discipline, a classroom management program which incorporates social and emotional learning. Seventeen early childhood special educators rated the significance, appropriateness, and effects of the program in a preschool setting. Results indicated that the program had high social validity, with ratings positively correlated with both teaching experience and experience using the program. Limitations and implications of this study are discussed. (Contains 1 table.)”

Donovan, M., Galatowitsch, P., Hefferin, K., & Highland, S. (2013). How Fern Creek is beating Goliath. *Educational Leadership, 70*(8), 66-70. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1029012>

*From the ERIC abstract:* “The "David" is Fern Creek Elementary, a small urban school in Orlando, Florida, that serves an overwhelmingly disadvantaged student population. The "Goliaths" are the mountains of problems that many inner-city students face-- poverty, homelessness, mobility, instability, limited parent involvement, and violent neighborhood surroundings. Although Fern Creek's "war" with these Goliaths is ongoing, the school has won some major battles. Several years ago, Fern Creek put into place a process of defeating its Goliaths by arming its slingshot with three big rocks. The first rock was creating a strong school family. The school implemented consistent routines, Conscious Discipline practices, and school family rituals. The second rock was increasing community involvement. Here, the school looked to important community partnerships; a 100-member-strong mentoring program; and a foundation created expressly to meet the needs of the school, its students, and their families. The third rock was implementing best practices in instruction and intervention. This required a focus on Response to Intervention, professional learning communities, and lesson study.”

Hoffman, L. L., Hutchinson, C. J., & Reiss, E. (2009). On improving school climate: reducing reliance on rewards and punishment. *International Journal of Whole Schooling, 5*(1), 13-24. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ834298>

*From the ERIC abstract:* “This study examined the impact of training early childhood teachers in an emotional intelligence and classroom management program titled Conscious Discipline[R]. The researchers conducted eight one-day workshops monthly from September through April to an initial group of more than 200 participants. To assess

attitudinal changes teachers answered a survey about their school climate and classroom management methods. The survey was initially given in September to participants (n=206) consisting of pre-kindergarten through sixth grade teachers with no exposure to the Conscious Discipline workshops and then again in April to a subset of the group who completed the workshop (n=117). The statistical discriminant analysis found significant improvement in the teachers' perceptions of school climate and in their knowledge and use of these new classroom management techniques (p less than 0.05). The study demonstrates that the untrained group was unaware of the social relationship and cultural principles of Conscious Discipline that include releasing external control, embracing conflict resolution and implementing a more emotionally targeted reward structure in the classroom. Initial participants also expressed being unsatisfied with their school climate. However, those teachers who completed the workshops and were highly committed to using the Conscious Discipline skills exhibited a heightened positive feeling about school climate. Though, the more fully-engaged teachers scored somewhat lower on the favorable school climate dimension than those teachers who were only minimally using Conscious Discipline techniques. Many teachers also showed improvement in student/teacher relationships (r=0.325) and in mutual support among teachers (r=0.306). (Contains 3 tables and 1 figure.)”

Jeffrey S. R. (2014). Conscious discipline program research study. An Independent Quasi-Experimental Design Study, Rockledge, FL: Rain & Brehm Consulting Group, Inc. <http://54.69.93.38:4003/downloads/research/CD%20FINAL%20Research%20Report%20for%20NREPP%202014.pdf>

*From the abstract:* “Targeting early social emotional development through early childhood curriculum is associated with a number of behavioral and academic outcomes. However, these typically manualized efforts are, necessarily, universal programs that focus solely on changes in child behavior. Conscious Discipline is a social emotional development intervention that uniquely targets teachers as well as child behaviors in a universal intervention approach, but can be applied in vivo to address the specific needs of individual students. A multi-site, quasi-experimental effectiveness study examined differences in social emotional development, school readiness, and school climate collected from multiple rating sources (teacher, observer, and parent).

Outcomes were compared between intervention and comparison classrooms drawn from 66 prekindergarten teachers (representing 24 school-based and center-based sites, 1,386 children, and three states) over an 8-month period. Implementation fidelity was monitored through teacher and observer reports. Potential threats to study integrity from attrition and confounding variables were examined. Repeated measure analysis of variance (ANOVA) and moderated multiple regression were the main statistical analyses.

Results showed significant improvement in social and emotional skills for both teachers and children exposed to Conscious Discipline. School readiness (Language, Literacy, and Mathematics) were significantly higher at posttest for children taught by Conscious Discipline trained teachers. Sites with school-wide implementation of Conscious Discipline show significantly higher organizational and relational support than do sites operating “as usual”. Eta-square and semi-partial correlations indicate moderate to large effects.

Viewed collectively, results reveal Conscious Discipline produces significant positive results for the quality of student-teacher interactions, improvement in social and emotional behavior skills for teachers and students, student academic preparedness, and overall school climate. Multiple rating sources and multi-site participation suggest the effects of Conscious Discipline are robust at the pre-kindergarten level.”

Jones, S., Brush, K., Bailey, R., Brion-Miesels, G., McIntyre, J., Kahn, J., Nelson, B., & Stickle, L. (2017). *Navigating SEL from the inside out: Looking inside and across 25 leading SEL programs: A practical resource for schools and OST providers*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, Graduate School of Education.

*From the abstract:* “Without access to detailed information about the specific content and approach of pre-packaged SEL programs, few schools and OST organizations are able to use data to aid them in selecting and implementing SEL programming, and they struggle to select and use programs that are best suited to their contexts and the specific challenges they face. There is thus a need for resources that comprehensively describe program content in a way that enables schools, OST organizations, and other practitioners tasked with developing young people’s social and emotional skills to see inside programs in order to make informed decisions about SEL programs or strategies. This report addresses that need by looking inside 25 leading SEL and character education programs to identify and summarize key features and attributes of SEL programming for elementary-age children. Schools and OST organizations vary widely in their missions, structures, pedagogies, and target populations, as do SEL programs. The goal of this report is to provide schools and OST organizations with detailed information about the specific curricular content and programmatic features of each program in a way that enables them to look across varying approaches and make informed choices about the type of SEL programming that is best suited to their particular context and needs.”

*From the authors:* “This report is a living document. Its content will grow and change over time as we add new programs and continue to refine our coding system to provide increased nuance and depth. In the future, updated information will be available online at: <http://easel.gse.harvard.edu/>.”

The full report can be accessed at <http://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/Documents/Navigating-Social-and-Emotional-Learning-from-the-Inside-Out.pdf>.

Moberly, D. A., Waddle, J. L., & Duff, R. E. (2005). The use of rewards and punishment in early childhood classrooms. *Journal of Early Childhood Teacher Education*, 25(4), 359-366. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ839412>

*From the ERIC abstract:* “Much has been written about the problems associated with reliance on extrinsic rewards and punishment in controlling behavior and motivating students. This study explores the use of extrinsic rewards and punishment by prekindergarten-grade 3 teachers in Missouri. The purpose of the study was to (a) determine the most common motivational practices and classroom management strategies being used by prekindergarten--grade 3 teachers; (b) determine the range of costs of rewards given to children and the source of these funds; (c) determine administrative and parental support; and (d) determine what influenced the teachers' choices of behavior

management strategies. Results of the study indicated that a significant majority of the respondents chose good instructional practices of the teacher as having the most positive influence on child behavior. However, most of the teachers responding continued to use extrinsic rewards and punishment to achieve acceptable behavior management and student motivation. In addition to reviewing the recent literature on extrinsic rewards and punishment, the authors discuss the implications of the findings for teacher educators and for those responsible for professional development programs for teachers.”

Thomas, D. V. (2011). Implementing a new social-emotional philosophy: The struggle in one head start classroom. *Early Childhood Research & Practice*, v13(1).

<https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ931231>

*From the ERIC abstract:* “The implementation of a social-emotional philosophy in any early childhood program plays out differently in every classroom. This study focused on the teaching team and children in a single Head Start classroom as they interacted with each other, with families, and with administrators, particularly in relation to the use of Conscious Discipline[R], a newly adopted program-wide "social-emotional philosophy." Data sources for the study were classroom observation, informal conversations, interviews, and document analysis. This particular teaching team struggled with several factors--the demands of fitting Conscious Discipline to every child and to various classroom situations, questions or doubts from some parents, the apparent lack of response and incomplete communication from program administrators, discrepancies between the administrators' and teachers' views of the implementation and efficacy of Conscious Discipline, and the conflicting demands of addressing both academic and social-emotional outcomes. ["Implementing a New Social-Emotional Philosophy: The Struggle in One Head Start Classroom" was written with Michaelene M. Ostrosky.]”

### ***Additional Organizations to Consult***

**Conscious Discipline: Resources—**<https://consciousdiscipline.com/free-resources/>

Some resources provided at the site include:

Crosswalk of Conscious Discipline Skills and Structures and CLASS Indicators

[https://consciousdiscipline.s3.amazonaws.com/Free-Resources/Alignments/FREE\\_Alignment\\_Crosswalk-Conscious-Discipline-and-CLASS-with-questions.pdf](https://consciousdiscipline.s3.amazonaws.com/Free-Resources/Alignments/FREE_Alignment_Crosswalk-Conscious-Discipline-and-CLASS-with-questions.pdf)

**Implementation Plan for PreK–Grade 5: PreK - 5th Grade Implementation Guide—**

[https://consciousdiscipline.s3.amazonaws.com/Free-Resources/Implementation-Staff-Development/FREE\\_Implementation\\_PreK-5th-Grade-4-12yrs.pdf](https://consciousdiscipline.s3.amazonaws.com/Free-Resources/Implementation-Staff-Development/FREE_Implementation_PreK-5th-Grade-4-12yrs.pdf)

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## Methods

### *Keywords and Search Strings*

The following keywords and search strings were used to search the reference databases and other sources:

Conscious discipline and student outcomes

Conscious discipline

Rewards and punishments

### *Databases and Resources*

We searched ERIC for relevant resources. ERIC is a free online library of over 1.6 million citations of education research sponsored by the Institute of Education Sciences. Additionally, we searched Google Scholar and PsychInfo.

### *Reference Search and Selection Criteria*

When we were searching and reviewing resources, we considered the following criteria:

*Date of the publication:* References and resources published for last 15 years, from 2001 to present, were include in the search and review.

*Search Priorities of Reference Sources:* Search priority is given to study reports, briefs, and other documents that are published and/or reviewed by IES and other federal or federally funded organizations, academic databases, including ERIC, EBSCO databases, JSTOR database, PsychInfo, PsychArticle, and Google Scholar.

*Methodology:* Following methodological priorities/considerations were given in the review and selection of the references: (a) study types – randomized control trials, quasi experiments, surveys, descriptive data analyses, literature reviews, policy briefs, etc., generally in this order (b) target population, samples (representativeness of the target population, sample size, volunteered or randomly selected, etc.), study duration, etc. (c) limitations, generalizability of the findings and conclusions, etc.

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This memorandum is one in a series of quick-turnaround responses to specific questions posed by stakeholders in the Southwest Region (Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas), which is served by the Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Southwest at SEDL. This memorandum was prepared by REL Southwest under a contract with the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences (IES), Contract ED-IES-12-C-0012, administered by SEDL. Its content does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of IES or the U.S. Department of Education nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.